# MotherSchools Bangladesh
## Parenting for Peace in Dhaka

## Women without Borders
Impact Report | 2022

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**About Women without Borders**
Women without Borders (WwB), an international non-profit organisation headquartered in Vienna. WwB focuses on Female Leadership, Capacity Building, Gender Based Violence, Intercultural Dialogue, and Preventing Violent Extremism. We commit and apply ourselves to: Working from the bottom up and empowering the female leaders of tomorrow at the individual, community, and global levels, Supporting and inspiring women in the process of moving from victimhood towards agency; Advocating for a future without fear, suppression, and violence against women; Introducing and normalising the idea of mothers as the first line of defence against extremism in their homes and communities; Bringing the voices of impactful local leaders to the attention of the world

**About Manusher Jonno Foundation**
Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is a non-government and non-profit organisation that has been supporting vulnerable and marginalised communities since 2002. MJF is dedicated to mainstreaming gender and disability in its operation within the country in terms of participation, capacity, and programmatic focus.

# ABSTRACT

The issue of violent extremism in Bangladesh has persisted and indeed intensified over the past decade. While the government's dominant focus on hard power approaches has helped to foil imminent attacks, youths continue to be at risk of radical recruitment efforts. Responding to the community-level spread of violent extremism, Women without Borders (WwB) in cooperation with local implementing partner Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) rolled out its 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model in low-income communities across Bangladesh's capital of Dhaka between 2018 and 2019. Ahead of launching its three MotherSchools groups in parallel, WwB trained a pool of fourteen local professionals as prospective MotherSchools Teachers and Notetakers. Six of the qualified Teachers across three groups went on to deliver the Curriculum to sixty mothers who were concerned that their community environment could make their children susceptible to radicalisation. Upon graduating from the MotherSchools programme, the mothers as Participants had each received at least forty hours of training to become role models and prevention stakeholders in their families and communities. This report offers an overview of the MotherSchools project in Dhaka and presents WwB's impact findings with respect to the programme beneficiaries. Applying a qualitative data analysis to the 113 semi-structured Entry and Exit Interviews conducted before and after the programme, we found improvements on three levels. On the personal level, mothers built up the necessary self-confidence and individual capacity to become a first line of defence against extremism in their homes and communities. At the familial level, mothers restructured dynamics and adopted parenting styles that improved their relationships with their children and husbands. At the community level, they built prevention networks, broke the silence around and spread awareness of extremism, and strengthened resilience by disseminating their learnings to the wider community. As the sixteenth country to adopt the programme, Bangladesh is now a part of WwB's global effort to equip mothers with the knowledge and skills to become central violence prevention allies in at-risk communities around the world.

# ABBREVIATIONS

AQIS            Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent

CT              Counterterrorism

CVE             Countering Violent Extremism

DNCC            Dhaka North City Corporation

ISIS            Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

JeI             Jamaat-e-Islami

JMB             Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh

LIP             Local Implementing Partner

MJF             Manusher Jonno Foundation

MPVE            Mothers Preventing Violent Extremism

MS              MotherSchools

P/CVE           Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

PVE             Preventing Violent Extremism

QDA             qualitative data analysis

SAVE            Sisters Against Violent Extremism

WwB             Women without Borders

# GLOSSARY

**MotherSchools Model**

Developed by WwB in 2012, and implemented across sixteen countries since, to reduce the spread of extremist ideologies by training mothers and activating their potential to intervene in the radicalisation process of their children. Each MotherSchools programme typically graduates a total of sixty mothers across three MotherSchools groups running in parallel.

**Women without Borders**

In charge of overall project and programme development, project management, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. As the project lead, WwB is responsible for the entire project lifecycle and the development and refinement of all programmatic elements for the implementation of the MotherSchools.

**Local Implementing Partner**

Tasked with coordinating local project management, mobilisation process, logistics, and implementation. LIPs are local non-profit organisations with an understanding of the challenges on the ground, and the capacity and capability to partner with WwB to deliver and scale MotherSchools locally.

**MotherSchools Trainers**

Trainers are part of the WwB team and deliver the MotherSchools Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop in the project location to prepare prospective Teachers and Notetakers to deliver the MotherSchools Curriculum.

**MotherSchools Participants**

Mothers of adolescents and young adults who fear that their children may be susceptible to the lure of extremist groups. Participants each receive an average of forty hours of training across ten MotherSchools Sessions over the course of three months in order to become active MotherSchools Role Models and transfer their learnings to their families and communities.

**MotherSchools Teachers**

Teachers are local professionals and active members of their communities who deliver the MotherSchools Curriculum to Participants. They are identified jointly by the Local Implementing Partner, Mobilisers, and WwB. Following the completion of the WwB-run ToT Workshop, they are responsible for running a series of ten MotherSchools Sessions.

**MotherSchools Notetakers**

Observers in the MotherSchools Sessions responsible for keeping track of group dynamics and supporting the Teachers in the documentation and monitoring of the programme. They also partake in WwB's ToT and receive the necessary training to deliver weekly monitoring summaries.

**MotherSchools Mobilisers**

Working locally to assist in the process of identifying and mobilising suitable Trainers, Teachers, and Participants. Mobilisers engage with local partners and provide support at the grassroots level. Where the programme engages Mobilisers, there tends to be one Mobiliser per MotherSchools group or community of implementation, thus typically three in total.

# CONTENTS

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings presented in this report highlight how central contributing factors leading to radicalisation in Dhaka have been addressed through the MotherSchools Model. In a broader sense, the findings are the product of WwB's efforts in two central respects. First, in terms of local capacity built by virtue of training MJF in project management and coordination, and by WwB Trainers delivering the ToT Workshop to a pool of professionals, resulting in fourteen prospective Teachers and Notetakers. Second, regarding knowledge transfer, whereby six of the qualified Teachers were chosen to deliver the Curriculum to sixty mothers across three groups over the course of three to four months, thus ensuring that Participants each received over forty hours of training to become role models and prevention stakeholders in their homes and neighbourhoods.

To capture the transformation of programme beneficiaries over time, Women without Borders pursued a qualitative data analysis (QDA) of 113 semi-structured interviews that were conducted with all Participants, Teachers, and Notetakers before and following the MotherSchools roll-out. The Entry Interviews, conducted prior to the start of the programme, were analysed to establish the 'baseline context', which refers to the Participants' point of departure in terms of awareness, confidence, competence. The Exit Interviews conducted following programme completion were analysed to determine the 'distance travelled' by graduates, and thus to establish the impact of the three MotherSchools groups running in parallel.

The QDA method made it possible to code against significant themes and identify the following five building blocks that proved integral to developing the prevention potential of mothers, with a view to positioning them as familial and community role models who work to reduce the spread of violent extremism in vulnerable pockets across Dhaka.

**MotherSchools Impact Building Blocks**
1. Heightening Awareness and Developing Knowledge
2. Building Trust and Confidence
3. Addressing Push Factors by Upgrading Parenting
4. Addressing Hidden Drivers
5. Addressing Common Drivers & Strengthening Resilience

The following section provides an overview of the project's main findings in five parts (i.e. the five MotherSchools impact building blocks); it acts as a high-level summary of this report's second chapter, entitled 'Insights to Impact'. The below columns on the left present the Entry Interview analysis and provide the 'baseline context', i.e. the point of departure of prospective Participants. The impact findings analysis, in turn, is presented in the right-hand columns; these are based on the Exit Interviews. By making it possible to compare and contrast baseline and impact findings, the side-by-side presentation of the findings gives a clearer impression of the Participants' transformation through the programme. All insight and impact findings are based on Participant, Teacher, and Notetaker feedback during the 113 semi-structured Entry and Exit Interviews conducted by WwB in three communities across Dhaka.

## 1. HEIGHTENING AWARENESS AND DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE

| Concerned but Unaware \| Baseline | Aware and Knowledgeable \| Impact |
|---|---|
| Violent extremism was considered to be a fairly serious issue and mothers were apprehensive that their children could be radicalised, none initially spoke about being directly or indirectly affected.<br><br>Despite viewing violent extremism as a source of concern, most Participants' knowledge and awareness levels thereof appeared to be particularly limited; only a smaller number had a vague albeit incomplete understanding of its manifestations. | Approaching the topics of radicalisation and recruitment through a parenting lens alerted concerned mothers to their untapped potential as security stakeholders in their families and communities. This new understanding increased their receptiveness to the MotherSchools teachings, which both motivated and enabled Participants to close significant gaps in their theoretical and practical understanding of violent extremism.<br><br>In stark contrast to their baseline point of departure, mothers have developed a more nuanced and conceptual understanding of violent extremism. They are now capable of identifying examples of radicalisation, recruitment, and terrorism that they heard about or witnessed directly. |

## 2. BUILDING TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

| Silence, Fear, and Isolation \| Baseline | Empowered and United \| Impact |
|---|---|
| Violent extremism had not typically been discussed openly in families and communities. This missing conversation was owed chiefly to an environment where notions of shame and family honour create communication gaps that render topics like violent | In offering a safe and judgement-free space, Participants were able to nurture trusted relationships within the group and overcome the stigma and fear of addressing personal issues. Recognising and embracing the power of sharing |

extremism taboo. Adding to the risk of social marginalisation, fears around personal safety had deepened the silence around issues of recruitment and radicalisation.

Conservative community and family dynamics came at the expense of the mothers' individual freedoms and identities. Participants were deeply isolated, restricted in their movements, and few received help at home. They were not only expected to shoulder all of the responsibility and blame for their children but were also afforded less authority and respect than their male counterparts.

The mothers' resulting lack of self-confidence hindered them from addressing extremism and its drivers, and from recognising their own agency, self-worth, and potential as peacemakers. They had been missing the necessary support, trusted environment, networks, and relationships to move from inhibition and self-doubt towards an open climate of dialogue and unity.

and uniting moved them a significant step closer to activating their prevention potential.

MotherSchools group dynamics broke down the main barriers that had been standing in the way of the Participants' self-confidence and preparedness to address the taboo topic of violent extremism. Their heightened levels of confidence motivated them to claim the respect that they deserve, and to thus establish the necessary authority needed to spread awareness of radicalisation and recruitment in their families and surroundings. Strong support networks enable them to now employ both individual and group action when responding to issues at home or in the community.

## 3. ADDRESSING PUSH FACTORS BY UPGRADING PARENTING

| Familial Communication Disconnects \| Baseline | Resilient and Communicative Families \| Impact |
|---|---|
| Deficits in family dynamics were chief push factors heightening the youth's susceptibility to recruitment efforts. Teachers and Notetakers found that familial communication gaps and parental pressures in particular had left adolescents and young adults more isolated and prone to radicalisation. Yet mothers were largely unaware of these deficits and generally took their role for granted. | Heightened awareness around their prevention potential and an increased parenting knowledge base has instilled confidence in mothers to position themselves as safeguarding frontrunners. In adopting more advanced parenting styles and embracing the unique access and emotional proximity that mothers have to their children, the MotherSchools graduates of Dhaka are now challenging central push factors that accentuate youth vulnerabilities to recruiters. Asserting their authority at home and implementing contextualised parenting methods has enabled mothers to plug glaring communication gaps, restructure family dynamics, and build resilient families in the process. |
| Mothers lacked essential parenting concepts and methods: far from grasping developmental child psychology, they did not possess basic principles and skills such as listening to and investing time in children. | |
| In lieu of communication, authoritarian family structures took hold and parents opted for harsh disciplining methods, ranging from shouting to physical violence. Yet mothers had also been left to their own devices, with fathers tending to be absent from family life and poor role models to their children. | In applying new parenting practices and drawing on concepts from developmental child psychology, concerned mothers are creating an open culture of communication and consolidating their prevention role. Graduates have also begun harnessing closer family bonds to cooperate with their children and address acute problems, including various drivers of radicalisation. |
| | The mothers are going beyond merely abandoning authoritarian parenting styles and changing family dynamics by bringing the parenting for peace philosophy deeper into their own homes. With a view to building more resilient families, graduates |

are passing their knowledge on to their children and husbands.

Wives and husbands are improving their marital relationship and increasingly working as a united front to actively uproot family violence and counterproductive parenting approaches.

## 4. ADDRESSING HIDDEN DRIVERS

| Culture of Domestic Violence | Baseline Context | Ending Family Violence | MS Impact |
|---|---|
| While conceding that violence against women is a widespread issue affecting a disproportionately high number of women in Dhaka, barely any of the Participants prior to the beginning of the MotherSchools spoke about it on a personal level.<br><br>Despite being mothers who are concerned about or affected by violent extremism, neither the Teachers nor Participants initially linked everyday forms of violence to drivers of radicalisation. MotherSchools Teachers nevertheless recognised that women needed to build up their self-confidence and knowledge base to put an end to gender-based violence. | Participants broke their initial silence around the physical abuse that they were facing at the hands of their husbands or other members of their family. They also acquired a broader conceptual understanding of generational patterns of violence against women that sustain hidden drivers of extremism.<br><br>The MotherSchools confidence training, knowledge and awareness building, and support structure enabled Participants to erode cycles of violence at home. Participants who translated empowerment into action managed to put their husbands on a journey of self-reflection. As a result, many of the men purportedly stopped resorting to violence and began to take their role model responsibility as fathers more seriously. |

## 5. ADDRESSING COMMON DRIVERS & STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE

| Community Drivers from Peers to Drugs | Baseline Context | Prevention Networks & Resilient Communities | MS Impact |
|---|---|
| The mothers of Dhaka found their communities to be rife with violence and social problems. Many portrayed neighbourhoods as perilous and unsuitable environments for raising children. Those who opened up about community threats listed issues that are factors that render youths susceptible to radicalisation, including peer groups, gangs, and drug-related problems.<br><br>Adolescents and young adults were coming of age in an environment that offered limited social cohesion and perspectives. Isolated children appear to have | Graduates have been applying their MotherSchools confidence and competence training by uprooting context-specific drivers of radicalisation in their homes and communities. At the individual level, they are shifting their focus away from fatalistic attitudes about the community environment and towards unlocking their changemaker and role model potential through parenting. On a practical level, they are now able to both differentiate between and pursue effective prevention and intervention methods alike. |

been more prone to dealing with this human disconnect by spending their time connected to social media platforms, which thus exposed and made them more susceptible to content that Teachers identified as conducive to radicalisation.

A vast majority of mothers were anxious about their children's exposure to drug-related activities and negative peer group influences. Sons appeared to be the main source of concern, with some mothers citing examples related to their own child's problematic friendship milieu and descent into substance abuse. Most make the community environment responsible for their diminished parenting authority on the one hand, and for their sons' actual or potential future issues on the other hand.

Graduates are strengthening the social fabric of their neighbourhoods by creating new prevention and intervention networks. Having recognised their ability to effect community-wide change, they are transcending the safe space of their groups and family environments, asserting their role in security at all levels of society, and disseminating the parenting for peace philosophy within their broader everyday environment.

The mothers of Dhaka have translated their learnings into action, activated their networks, and are now directly applying individual and coordinated group action to confront manifestations of common drivers that can lead to violent extremism. In so doing, the graduates are confronting cycles of violence, undermining drivers of radicalisation, and strengthening community resilience in the process.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the impact findings of the MotherSchools Bangladesh programme in Dhaka. The introduction below takes the reader through seven sections, starting with a brief overview of the broader context of radicalisation in Bangladesh, how the threat has evolved, and which P/CVE approaches have been employed. The 'MotherSchools Model: Parenting for Peace in Dhaka' section lays out how WwB's MotherSchools programme in Bangladesh filled a void in local-level prevention programming and provides a basic introduction and rationale to the Model's roll-out across Dhaka. This is followed by a more comprehensive and semi-chronological description of the MotherSchools programme's operational scope and implementation between 2018 and 2019. Next, the chapter turns to a section on target groups, which offers a rationale and basic sociodemographic data on the MotherSchools Participants and their communities. The subsequent two sections describe the methodology by which data was collected, processed, and analysed to determine the programme's impact on Participants, and how the findings are structured and presented in this report. The introduction concludes with a summary of programme challenges as well as data gaps and limitations.

## 1.1. RADICALISATION IN BANGLADESH FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Politically and religiously motivated violent extremism in Bangladesh gained traction during the war for independence in 1971. At the time, a rift materialised between Bangladeshi secularists and the now banned Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) party.[1] Following the war, the newly formed Bangladeshi government established a secular state and prohibited the use of religion for political gains. Yet when in 1975 key political leaders were assassinated, the ensuing vacuum of power was swiftly filled by Islamists. Thousands of madrasas targeting youth from low-income backgrounds were subsequently established. By the 1990s, Islamist influence across Bangladesh had grown deep roots.[2]

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[1] *Bangladesh: Extremism & Counter-Extremism.*Report. Counter Extremism Project. https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/bangladesh#radicalization_and_foreign_fighters.

[2] London Couture, Krista, 'A Gendered Approach to Countering Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned from Women in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Applied Successfully in Bangladesh and Morocco' *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, July 2014.

The issue of violent extremism in Bangladesh has persisted and indeed intensified over the past decade. While the current government has doubled its efforts to maintain a secular system, there has been a marked uptick in terror attacks. Since 2013, some forty secular bloggers, foreigners, activists, and individuals from religious minorities have been murdered.[3] The extremist perpetrators have largely come from the ranks of local Islamist affiliates linked to Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).[4] The most notorious attack in recent memory occurred on 1 July 2016, when five militants attacked the Holey Artisan Bakery in the Gulshan neighbourhood of Dhaka. The terrorists targeted foreigners, took hostage and murdered twenty individuals, and killed two law enforcement officers.[5] While ISIS claimed responsibility, Bangladeshi authorities maintain that the assailants were part of the local militant group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).[6] Following the Holey Artisan Bakery attack, the government bolstered counter-terrorism efforts and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) launched its Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU). While terrorist attacks in the country have since declined, a Bangladeshi writer was murdered in 2018 and two non-lethal explosions were reported near police stations in 2019.[7]

Even as the number of fatal terrorist attacks in Bangladesh has dropped since 2016, extremist influences and common drivers of radicalisation have continued unabated. Against this background and when considering the country's longer history of terrorism, new waves of radicalisation and terrorism in the near future are conceivable and indeed likely. On the one hand, the government's dominant focus on hard power approaches—centring on arresting, prosecuting, or killing terrorists—has led to foiling imminent attacks.[8] On the other hand, the factors that have allowed individuals to become radicalised in the first place have persevered and in some respects have even intensified.

Despite mounting evidence on the importance of familial and local contexts in radicalisation processes, counter-terrorism efforts in Dhaka generally have not pursued efforts

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[3] *Bangladesh: Extremism & Counter-Extremism.*Report. Counter Extremism Project. https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/bangladesh#radicalization_and_foreign_fighters.
[4] According to the U.S. State Department, 'AQIS and ISIS together have claimed responsibility for nearly 40 attacks in Bangladesh since 2015'. See United States. U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2017*. Washington, D.C., 2018. https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2017/.
[5] Commonwealth Office. "Terrorism - Bangladesh Travel Advice." GOV.UK. June 24, 2019. https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bangladesh/terrorism.
[6] Islam, Shariful. "Attackers Were among a Dozen Missing Youths." *The Daily Star*, July 06, 2016. https://www.thedailystar.net/dhaka-attack/attackers-were-among-dozen-missing-youth-1250803.
[7] Commonwealth Office. "Terrorism - Bangladesh Travel Advice." GOV.UK. June 24, 2019. https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bangladesh/terrorism.
[8] On Bangladesh's hard power focus, see Saimum Parvez, 'Bangladesh and India', in Isaac Kfir and Georgia Grice (eds.), 'Counterterrorism Yearbook 2019' (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2019): 41—47.

that tackle the societal root causes. Community-led efforts to combat violent extremism in Bangladesh that complement but are not linked to their hard power counterparts are still rare, particularly with respect to programming without a law enforcement component that harnesses the prevention potential of communities and builds trust at the local level. The role of deficient family dynamics in leading to a child's heightened susceptibility to recruiters have been understated in particular. A recent study profiling some one hundred suspected extremists in Bangladesh revealed that many were male students attending secular institutions who had experienced pressures from family members.[9] Mirroring these findings, a similar research effort concluded that individuals in Bangladesh are also pushed towards radicalisation due to a series of factors 'caused by a broken family'.[10] In the light of lower terrorist incident rates in recent years, the country has entered a period during which community-based prevention efforts are most relevant and effective. During this stage it is possible to go beyond fighting the symptoms of terrorism by focusing on where they take root, and to thus effect changes long before radicalisation surpasses the stage at which hard power become the only viable response.

A thus far missing aspect of most programming has revolved around building up the necessary awareness, confidence, and practical skills of family members to become prevention actors in their homes and communities. Authoritarian parenting styles as well as communication gaps among family and community members, for instance, are central push factors that can further isolate children and may motivate them to emulate or adopt violent methods. In the absence of addressing these root causes in at-risk communities, structures and dynamics strengthening the youth's vulnerability to recruiters inevitably are sustained across generations.

## 1.2 MOTHERSCHOOLS MODEL | PARENTING FOR PEACE IN DHAKA

Women without Borders' (WwB) meetings with local stakeholders in Dhaka reinforced the view that the demand for contextualised family-based prevention efforts had not sufficiently been addressed by ongoing efforts. While on the ground for the first time, in December 2018,

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[9] Most suspects were part of either Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) or Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), local militant organisations with alleged ties to ISIS and Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), respectively. See: Ali Riaz and Saimum Parvez, 'Bangladeshi Militants: What Do We Know?' Terrorism and Political Violence 30/6 (2018): 944—961.

[10] Ali Riaz and Saimum Parvez, 'Bangladeshi Militants: What Do We Know?' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30/6 (2018): 944—961.

WwB team members met with a wide range of civil society experts and stakeholders who work in the field of PVE and women empowerment.[11] The majority of representatives suggested that the root causes of extremism are related to family structures, noting that while in Bangladesh there is a deep bond between parents and children, increasingly children are finding themselves more isolated.

When representatives of 'The Hunger Project' presenting their unpublished UNDP-funded research findings, they pointed to a heightened risk of extremism due to deficiencies in family dynamics. In collaboration with Bangladesh's official anti-terrorism unit, they had studied seventy-two suicide bombers. Based on these profiles and with a focus on their family milieus, the researchers found a lack of family cohesion to be the chief contributing factor in the radicalisation of adolescents and young adults. The organisation's 'Enlightened Women' group, as one of the project representatives pointed out, also made clear to them that while 'most of the mothers feel a heavy risk for their children', they are unsure how to deal with the children, and that this is due to 'emotional or psychological' factors. In summary and in line with WwB's desk research leading up to late 2018, the views of local experts and stakeholders pointed to how the intervention and prevention potential of parents, and of mothers in particular, had been insufficiently considered.

In response to the issue of radicalisation in South Asia on the one hand, and to close glaring gaps in extremist prevention programming in Bangladesh on the other hand, WwB in 2018 initiated its 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model in three of Dhaka's communities identified as vulnerable to violent extremism. By introducing the MotherSchools Model to Bangladesh in collaboration with its local implementing partner Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), WwB brought into the fold security allies who had been missing from contemporary security strategies: concerned and affected mothers of adolescents and young adults whose environment had made them prone to recruitment efforts. This community-based resilience building approach, which to date has been implemented in sixteen countries affected by terrorism, positions mothers as role models and the first responders to burgeoning signs of extremism in their homes and neighbourhoods.

The MotherSchools Curriculum employs developmental psychology, self-confidence training, and theoretical sessions to define radicalisation and prevention at the individual,

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[11] In mid-December 2018, WwB and its local implementing partner organisation Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) met with founders, heads, and representatives of the following civil society organisations and institutions: The Hunger Project Bangladesh; National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAP); Alor Pothe Nobojatray (APON) Foundation; Community Participation and Development(CPD); Voluntary Association for Family Welfare and Social Development (VAFWSD); Green University of Bangladesh.

family, and community levels. The Sessions allow mothers to re-visit, re-evaluate, and re-shape their notion of parenting by learning about the psychological dynamics and stages of childhood and adolescence. In refining their communication skills in the familial context, the programme equips mothers to react to early warning signs of grievances that can lead to radicalisation. Mothers also learn how to introduce and develop alternative narratives that foster a positive youth culture and strengthen resilience. In so doing, MotherSchools empower women to demonstrate leadership and promote family and community tolerance, forgiveness, and cohesion. The programme guides Participants through a process of gradual awareness-building in three successive stages: starting with the self, moving on to the family and community, and finally arriving at the individual's role in security. Sessions include exercises that facilitate dialogue, information exchanges, and critical reflection using context-based techniques that apply to the Participants' daily lives.

In cities like Dhaka, where youths are being misappropriated by terrorist organisations and face the risk of being recruited and radicalised, the MotherSchools programme provides confidence and competence training to groups of mothers in order to harnesses their hitherto untapped potential of identifying nascent indications and intervening in the initial stages of the process. Beyond creating actionable networks of women prevention stakeholders, the integrated and comprehensive nature of the Model ensured that local capacity is advanced in tandem.

## 1.3 MOTHERSCHOOLS IMPLEMENTATION

The multifaceted MotherSchools programme was rolled out across three communities in Dhaka over the course of one year, and end-to-end deployment was achieved through the following five steps: Programming & Local Assessment; MotherSchools Trainings; MotherSchools Roll-Out; Graduation Ceremony and Social Outreach; and Monitoring and Evaluation. The following section provides a high-level, chronological overview of the main operative activities carried out in the course of the MotherSchools Bangladesh project.

The project commenced with initial programming preparation and desk research on radicalisation dynamics. In December 2018, when WwB's formal relationship with local implementing partner MJF was consolidated, WwB's project leads travelled to Dhaka to deliver the three-day kick-off workshop to MJF project staff. The local visit helped to prepare MJF for effective implementation of the MotherSchools programme as LIP, and to guarantee

a deeper understanding of the Model's methodology and philosophy. During the trip, WwB also met with various experts and CSO representatives in the field. This exchange of ideas helped WwB advance its local network, gain deeper insight into radicalisation dynamics, and develop a more nuanced sense of possible implementation challenges in Dhaka.

Following this initial visit, MJF and WwB commenced the mobilisation process of suitable Teachers to deliver the MotherSchools Curriculum, and of Notetakers with the necessary degree of conceptual awareness in order to observe and record changing dynamics in the course of the MotherSchools Sessions. Ultimately, 11 Teachers and 3 Notetakers were chosen for the upcoming WwB Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop. A total of 60 Mothers were identified from three low-income communities, all of whom agreed to partake in the programme and fit the target group criteria.

WwB returned to Dhaka for the ToT Workshop and Entry Interviews in June 2019. WwB's Trainers spent three days training prospective MotherSchools Teacher and Notetaker candidates. These intensive sessions involved skills training, team-building activities, and education in child and developmental psychology as well as on radicalisation and recruitment processes. The ToT made it possible to further assess the capabilities and commitment of all Teacher candidates, and to choose 6 candidates to be the primary MotherSchools Teachers, with the remaining trainees serving as substitutes. WwB subsequently interviewed 65 of the prospective Participants, Teachers, and Notetakers. These Entry Interviews provide the baseline context and thus also the 'point of departure' of Participants in terms of their confidence, awareness, knowledge, and competence levels prior to starting the programme.

For the MotherSchools roll-out, the Teachers delivered the programme to three groups of mothers. All of the 60 mothers each completed ten Sessions between 5 July and 20 September 2019, and each Participant received over 40 hours of training. Throughout this period, the Teachers guided the mothers through the MotherSchools Curriculum, which fuses developmental psychology, self-confidence training, theoretical sessions, and hands-on exercises. The Notetakers observed the process and held weekly one-hour monitoring calls with a WwB project staff member who transcribed the conversations in real time. As part of the monitoring process and not taking into account regular calls with MJF, WwB staff conducted 30 monitoring calls and collected 60 monitoring reports from Notetakers and Teachers.

Following the implementation and completion of the three MotherSchools, WwB returned to Dhaka in late October 2019 for the final assessment and Graduation phase of the project. To allow for measuring impact—as laid out in the 'Insights to Impact' chapter—Exit

Interviews were conducted with all Participants, Teachers, and Notetakers over the course of five days by WwB staff at the venues where their MotherSchools Sessions had taken place. The subsequent Graduation Ceremony was held at the Institute of Diploma Engineering Bangladesh (IDEB) with over 200 people in attendance. The MotherSchools Graduation Ceremony is a central component of the MotherSchools Model, as it helps to position the graduates as role models in their families and communities, and to sensitise attendees to the MotherSchools learnings and philosophy. At the event, graduates are awarded certificates following an interactive presentation on the MotherSchools' successes, key findings, and its good practice qualities as a PVE approach for local government actors and policy shapers to consider. The Ceremony lasted for approximately five hours and consisted of remarks from local and international stakeholders, and it included speeches by Teachers and Notetakers. Finally, the project impact was evaluated based on the Entry and Exit interviews through a qualitative data analysis (QDA) process by WwB, as presented in this report and outlined in sections 1.5 and 1.6 below.

## 1.4   TARGET GROUPS

The intended demographic make-up of the MotherSchools groups was defined prior to the start of the programme. For this purpose, WwB drew on desk research, discussions between WwB and MJF, and insights from local and international stakeholder meetings. Given that most of the P/CVE research and activities have focused on affluent and educated youths and families in the wake of the 2016 Holey Artisan Attacks, vulnerable families from low-income parts of the city received sparse attention. As a result, those who have been the chief target group of recruiters since 1975—youths from poor and overwhelmingly illiterate families—were overlooked. The MotherSchools in Dhaka thus aimed to overcome the one-dimensional focus by targeting concerned mothers of less educated youths from low-income households.

Informed by the aforementioned background research and stakeholder discussions, WwB and MJF chose to mobilise and convene 60 mothers across three locations within Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), an autonomous governing body that comprises fifty-four of the capital city's northern wards.[12] Participants met their respective groups in the vicinity of

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[12] In 2011, the former Dhaka City Corporation split into two municipalities: Dhaka South and Dhaka North. Each City Corporation has its own elected mayor and governing body, providing services to their respective constituents. The Holey Artisan attack took place in the upscale Gulshan neighbourhood in Dhaka North.

their homes at Chad Uddan Gate in Ward 33, CCR refugee camp in Ward 29, and Shyamoli Housing in Ward 30. Most Participants had migrated to these communities in Dhaka from different rural locations across Bangladesh due to various reasons, ranging from rural poverty to climate change. The mothers who attended the Sessions are among the most vulnerable, isolated, and neglected individuals within the city.

A consideration of the Exit data reveals that among 49 Participants interviewed across all three groups, 38% had some formal education, versus 62% with none. Of the latter, many were illiterate and could not write their own name. In such cases, WwB and MJF used the fingerprint method for the purpose of signing the interview attendance sheets. Over 80% were employed, and not 'housewives'. The vast majority worked as maids in other households. The majority have between 3 and 6 children. On average, the daughter/son ratio was evenly split. Mothers had a combined total of 157 sons and daughters. Some of the mothers fell into the categories of arranged and early marriages, a number of whom were as young as 13 when they were married off and became mothers.

## 1.5   ASSESSING THE MOTHERSCHOOLS IMPACT

This report presents the impacts of the programme on MotherSchools graduates in Dhaka. For this purpose, it draws on two interview data sets with all Participants (concerned and affected mothers) and Actors (Teachers who delivered the curriculum and Notetakers who observed group dynamics). The first data set comprises the 'Entry Interviews', which establish the baseline context and thus provide insights into the confidence and competence levels of the target group prior to the start of their training. The second set comprises the 'Exit Interviews' that capture 'distance travelled' by the end of the mothers' parenting for peace education. When viewed in conjunction with each other, the contrasting data sets allow for an analysis of the overall impact on the beneficiaries.

To develop a context-specific understanding of local dynamics and measure attitudinal and behavioural changes by the end of the MotherSchools in Dhaka, WwB team members with the support of MJF conducted a total of 113 semi-structured interviews with Actors and Participants across the three groups. Both interview guides followed a similar structure. Each one-on-one interview lasted approximately one hour and was guided by a series of common themes and questions, focusing on self-confidence, family dynamics, and perceptions, understanding, and knowledge of threats and extremism in the community. For the entry

assessment, 56 prospective MotherSchools Actors and Participants were interviewed: 51 mothers divided into three groups, a pool of 11 potential Teachers, and 3 Notetakers. The Exit Interviews included interviews with 57 programme graduates: 49 mothers, 7 Teachers, and 1 Notetaker. The interview findings form the foundation of the Entry and Exit Assessment, as presented in the next chapter of this report.

The subsequent 'Insights to Impact' chapter is structured thematically in order to capture how the MotherSchools programme in Dhaka has been successful in positioning its graduates as the first line of defence against terrorism in their families and communities. The chapter reveals the success of Teachers in guiding the Participants through the MotherSchools Curriculum that fuses developmental psychology, self-confidence training, theoretical sessions, and hands-on exercises. Further, it takes a semi-chronological approach to show how the Curriculum took Participants through a process of gradual awareness-building, moving successively from the self, to the family, to the community, with reflections on one's role in security.

The MotherSchools insights and impact findings contained in the next chapter were derived through a structured approach to collecting and analysing the semi-structured interviews.[13] Drawing on all interviews, WwB applied a qualitative data analysis (QDA) method to code against significant themes. The final analysis thus provides a comprehensive understanding of changes in attitude, behaviour, and knowledge gained. The interviews were conducted by WwB at the respective Session venues, and with the support of MJF. Each WwB interviewer had a translator to assist the interview process, including the filling out of consent forms by interviewees. On average, each of the total 113 Entry and Exit interviews lasted over an hour. The majority of the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. In cases where WwB did not receive consent to record, interviews were transcribed in real time. This effort ultimately resulted in over 113 hours of transcribed conversations. The two data sets— i.e. all Entry and all Exit interviews in written form—were processed by WwB using the F4 software; a QDA tool that enables coding against themes to identify common patterns and concepts across all interviews. The themes WwB coded against include self-confidence and self-esteem; family dynamics; parent-child relationships and communication; conceptual understanding of concepts like radicalisation and violent extremism; and perception and knowledge of threats in their community. This report offers a summary and interpretation of

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[13] On semi-structured interviews, see Nigel Newton, 'The use of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research: Strengths and weaknesses' *Exploring Qualitative Methods 1/1*, 2010: 1—11.

the resulting findings to capture and better understand Participants' changes in terms of, inter alia, attitudes, awareness levels, knowledge base, behaviour, and familial and community dynamics.

## 1.6   PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Each of the chapter's five sections represents an integral building block of the mothers' transformation into security stakeholders. Every section, in turn, is divided into two parts to gauge 'distance travelled' by the mothers; the qualitative data analysis findings of the Entry and Exit Interviews are presented sequentially.

Following a brief thematic introduction to each building block, the first part of each section maps out the baseline context, which can be understood as the point of departure of prospective Participants in terms of confidence, knowledge, and practical skills levels. This analysis provides background details and insights into individual, family, and community dynamics prior to the start of the MotherSchools sessions. The second part of each section presents the MotherSchools impact findings to trace the extent of the graduates' personal transformations and their impact on family and community dynamics as a whole. The following five themes are generally structured in a chronological manner to reflect how each thematic layer is an essential building block that complements the next.

The opening chapter section, 'Heightening Awareness and Developing Knowledge', looks at the degree to which Participants have advance their baseline understanding of violent extremism beyond abstract notions of the threat; how aware they have become of the possible presence of recruiters and radical influences in their communities in particular.

The second section, 'Building Trust and Confidence', centres on the process of empowering group dialogue and breaking down the barriers that prevent mothers from relating their heightened awareness to personal and context-specific dynamics on the one hand, and to acknowledging their agency and potential role in security on the other hand. This building block explores whether a sufficiently safe and trusted space emerged that allowed for advancing individual self-esteem, challenging restrictive social constructs, and broaching taboo topics like violent extremism.

The third building block, 'Addressing Push Factors by Upgrading Parenting', attempts to go beyond the individual level to establish and unlock the mothers' prevention and role model potential within their homes. Building on their confidence and competence training, this

part revolves around equipping mothers with theoretical knowledge and practical tools to remove familial push factors like counterproductive parenting styles that render children more isolated and prone to radicalisation. This section also measures in what ways the graduates have restructured family dynamics and their communication infrastructure at home by understanding and abandoning counterproductive parental pressures, and by dealing constructively with their children's identity crises and feelings of alienation.

The fourth section, 'Addressing Hidden Drivers', traces the extent to which the mothers have been able to identify and reduce long overlooked familial drivers of radicalisation that make children more susceptible to violent extremist engagement. The focus here rests on domestic violence and how successful Participants have been in eroding generational and deeply engrained cycles of violence in their own homes.

The final of the five building blocks, 'Addressing Common Drivers and Strengthening Resilience', foresees the culmination of the MotherSchools education: mothers transcend the safe space and familial environment to position themselves as security stakeholders in their communities. On the one hand, this section probes whether mothers are now responding to early warning signs and grievances that also originate from within the community or the online space, including peer groups and drugs. On the other hand, it looks at the degree to which graduates have created networks of prevention actors, applied individual and coordinated group action to confront manifestations of common drivers that can lead to violent extremism, and strengthened community resilience in the process.

In summary, the qualitative data analysis of the MotherSchools interviews in Bangladesh shows that the programme has successfully built up the conceptual awareness of Participants that communication gaps and various forms of violence in their homes and communities are drivers of violent extremism, and that mothers have the power to prevent and counter their and their children's experience with violence and violent extremism. It speaks to the graduates' heightened awareness of early warning signs that put their children at risk, and to how Participants have succeeded in advancing family dynamics and resilience through improved communication with their families and communities. The analysis also reveals how they have built networks of likeminded security allies who are capable of building yet larger networks that uproot networks of recruiters in their environment. In activating their individual and group potential, a number of central factors that are known to encourage violent extremist engagement were addressed.

A close consideration of the findings in the subsequent 'Insights to Impact' chapter suggests that the MotherSchools Bangladesh has advanced WwB's theory of change in no

small measure. Namely, that in equipping mothers with the competence and confidence to translate their unique potential into action, they will become the first line of defence against extremism in at-risk communities around the globe.

## 1.7 CHALLENGES, GAPS, AND DATA LIMITATIONS

Prior to turning to the MotherSchools 'Insights to Impact' chapter, this section briefly considers possible and established shortcomings—including external and internal factors—relating to the community and country contexts, and to MotherSchools-related activities in particular. It will consider the degree to which some notable challenges were anticipated and mitigated while others have prevailed as conceivable and real limitations and 'gaps', especially with respect to the collection, interpretation, and understanding of the Entry and Exit interview data sets.

The first major project roadblock had been securing the necessary documentation for WwB staff to enter Bangladesh for training purposes. This process not only threatened to block or seriously delay project implementation; it also turned out to be a significant drain on resources for WwB and MJF. Owing to the perseverance and capacity of both organisations, however, mandatory NGO Affairs Bureau approval and entry visas were secured.

Owing to the announcement of Bangladesh's general elections in December 2018, another external challenge emerged soon thereafter. Against the background of an ever-widening rift between the two major political parties—Awami League and the oppositional Bangladesh National Party—violent riots were a distinct possibility ahead of, during, and following the elections. WwB and MJF therefore put together an elaborate safety plan and closely monitored events leading up to and following the elections. By limiting physical movements around Dhaka and maintaining close contact with MJF throughout its first country visit, WwB staff were able to deliver the kick-off training and meet stakeholders at MJF's offices. Despite isolated incidents across Dhaka, WwB-MJF coordination and safety measures ensured that all stakeholders remained vigilant and safely navigated the situation; nobody was not put at heightened risk and project implementation was not postponed.

The mobilisation process organised by WwB and MJF brought about a multitude of coordination challenges. While there are too many to mention here, some of the main logistical hurdles revolved around timetabling, securing the appropriate target groups and Session venues, and mobilising a sufficient number of Teachers and Notetakers with a good command of spoken and written English. These language skills are critical to the monitoring and reporting

aspects of the project. During the Entry interviews with a number of Teachers and Notetakers, for instance, it became evident that there were a handful of candidates whose English levels were not sufficient. Yet the possible language barriers had been anticipated, which resulted in WwB training a pool of fourteen Teachers and Notetakers to choose from, and thus five more than required. Based on interviews and the ToT Workshop, it was possible to identify those with the best blend of teaching, notetaking, and English language skills.

During the kick-off workshop and thus prior to the MotherSchools roll-out, MJF and WwB designed three implantation timelines, which each took into account internal and external challenges. Careful planning and consideration made it possible to pick the timeline that anticipated and addressed the highest number of the attendance roadblocks that beneficiaries could face, including religious and public holidays, political demonstrations, exam schedules of children, and time-related constraints in terms of programme planning and delivery. While attendance throughout the ten sessions was ultimately high and consistent, a few sessions saw lower attendance numbers due to inclement weather conditions, i.e. the rainy season between July and October. This challenge was mitigated with the support of the respective Teachers across all groups, who directly contacted each of the mothers ahead of the weekly Session to ensure the highest possible attendance rate could be reached. Beyond reminding the Participants, they would offer support to solve individual issues that inhibited a mother's attendance, including for example helping them to secure permission from their husbands.

The data collection and interpretation process conducted by WwB through Entry and Exit interviews with all Actors and Participants demands scrutiny; it must be critically examined since even the most laborious efforts and meticulous approaches result in discernible, inherent, and even hidden data limitations and gaps. This final part of the section therefore serves to caution and remind the reader that the insights and impact findings presented in the subsequent chapter ought not to be viewed through the lens of a laboratory study conducted in a hermitically sealed environment. Rather, every stage of the monitoring and evaluation journey—ranging from collecting and transcribing to processing and evaluating the 113 semi-structured interviews—has been prone to varying degrees at different times to flaws and limitations, both human and environmental.

A noteworthy data limitation stems from the fact that the bulk of all interviews were conducted with the support of interpreters who translated WwB staff questions into Bangladeshi and interviewee responses into English. On the one hand, the benefits of employing local interpreters arguably tend to outweigh the shortcomings, as they can offer valuable background context, understand and have access to the interviewee's community, and

may thus be a source of trust that helps to evoke more open and honest responses. On the other hand, culturally defined linguistic differences between English and Bangladeshi, as well as translations and individual interpreter styles, inevitably lead to a degree of questions and answers being 'lost in translation'. Beyond this, working with non-professional interpreters can result in a higher probability that some of the nuances or cultural context is lost, especially when the local interpreters possess limited knowledge of concepts like radicalisation and violent extremism.

That WwB staff are neither members of the community nor Bangladeshi nationals will likely have in some cases impacted on the readiness of interviewees to open up. Adding to this, some of WwB's interviewers were male, which may have further impacted on many in terms of their willingness to speak freely due to culturally conservative gender dynamics. In other cases, however, being 'foreign' to a community where notions of honour and reputation inhibit many from speaking freely proved to be an advantage. Taking into account that statements should never be taken entirely at face value, it nevertheless became apparent during the Entry interviews that prospective Participants were eager to share stories that they previously had never, according to many mothers, spoken about with anyone, often for fear of potential familial and community repercussions. To put the depth of this isolation in context is to understand that for a number of mothers this marked the first experience of speaking to someone outside of their community or country about themselves.

The authenticity of answers may have been further skewed by factors such viewing the Entry and Exit interviews as informal or formal forms of assessment, which can prompt respondents to concentrate on what they may deem to be expected of them in such a situation, such as seeking 'the correct' rather than offering 'the truthful' answer. Particularly during the first set of interviews it was apparent that mothers had a hard time telling stories and drawing upon anecdotes to answer some questions. This is likely because most participants had never been interviewed or asked about themselves before. In addition, during the Entry Interviews, many of the concepts such as radicalisation or security were entirely new to most prospective Participants. Their limited set of vocabulary and conceptual understanding in this respect also made the baseline to impact evaluation (i.e. distance travelled) more challenging.

On a related data observation and when considering the Entry versus Exits Interviews, there appeared initially to be a stark contrast between the stories shared by the prospective Participants on the one hand, and Teachers and Notetakers on the other hand. This is especially apparent with respect to the pressures that the mothers and their families face, the culture of violence within families, the suppression of women in Bangladeshi society, and the threat of

extremism overall. A possible explanation may be that the Teachers and Notetakers hail from higher socio-economic backgrounds than the Participants. However, following the Exit interviews, the observations from the Teachers and Notetakers were more aligned with what the mothers shared.

There are plenty of other data limitations to consider, such effects of an inherent chain of individual biases through which information passes in sequence: from interviewer to translator to interviewee, and vice versa. Or the 'situated knowledge' of the interviewers who pose questions and follow a line of enquiry that inevitably will at times fall short of taking into account cultural norms and practices that are not theirs. Or the physical and mental impact of environmental conditions on those interviewing and being interviewed—such as was the case during the Entry assessment, when WwB travelled to interview mothers in their communities, often in slum locations and humid tin huts where temperature at times exceeded 40°C and regular electricity shortages rendered ventilation devices useless.

With the aforementioned as well as other apparent and conceivable limitations in mind, readers of this report should be aware that quoted statements by all Actors and Participants as well as WwB's interpretations and conclusions must be reflected on. Not all responses on the part of the interviewees and not all resulting conclusions based on the QDA method can be taken entirely at face value. It is important for the readers to ask themselves critical questions, and to consider other data limitations. One may ask, for instance: to what extent can responses such as 'my husband no longer hits me' be taken for granted? In reality, this mother may still be subjected to domestic violence. Nevertheless, when coding against such themes, one can determine whether other mothers who were not part of the same group may have remarked similar changes. That is to say, the impact evaluation and conclusions put forward in this report are based on a common pattern which can each be corroborated by a series of statements, typically referred to as 'clusters'. Beyond this, one can understand how the conceptual awareness of mothers regarding normalised forms of everyday family violence has changed, seeing that many had not previously questioned it and its impact on children.

Finally, the reader of this report should keep in mind that an inherent bias in Exit data may be the result of the so-called 'Hello-Goodbye-Effect'. In the context of this programme, the ecstatic rush that often accompanies a mother's graduation from this education programme can lead to exaggerated expressions in terms of personal, familial, and community changes. To ensure that purported improvements have not been exaggerated and with a view to understanding longer-term impact, it would be insightful to return to Dhaka for additional with programme beneficiaries in a year down the line, resources permitting.

# 2. INSIGHTS TO IMPACT

This chapter evaluates the insights and impact findings of the MotherSchools Bangladesh programme. The analysis is the product of a qualitative data analysis (QDA) of the 113 semi-structured Entry and Exit interviews with Participants, Teachers, and Notetakers. Each of the chapter's five sections represents an integral building block of the mothers' transformation into security stakeholders. Every section, in turn, is divided into two parts to gauge 'distance travelled' by the mothers; the qualitative data analysis findings of the Entry and Exit Interviews are presented sequentially. Following a brief thematic introduction to each building block, the first part of each section maps out the baseline context, which can be understood as the point of departure of prospective Participants in terms of confidence, knowledge, and practical skills levels. This analysis provides background details and insights into individual, family, and community dynamics prior to the start of the MotherSchools sessions. The second part of each section presents the MotherSchools impact findings to trace the extent of the graduates' personal transformations and their impact on family and community dynamics as a whole. The following five themes are generally structured in a chronological manner to reflect how each thematic layer is an essential building block that complements the next: Heightening Awareness and Developing Knowledge; Building Trust and Confidence; Addressing Push Factors by Upgrading Parenting; Addressing Hidden Drivers; and Addressing Common Drivers & Strengthening Resilience.

## 2.1. HEIGHTENING AWARENESS & DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE

*Radicalisation is really a vulnerable issue and quite serious and there is a lot of silence. And mothers did not have proper knowledge about that. They didn't even think that extremism could happen everywhere. They first thought we were peace loving people and that their children would not mix with other people, and that is why we don't have to concern ourselves with these issues. But after explaining extremism to them—after they got the knowledge—they want to now keep their families away from these threats. And that's most likely the core of MotherSchools.[14]*

*– MotherSchools Teacher, Exit Interview*

Public awareness around the threat of violent extremism in Bangladesh has grown steadily over recent years.[15] A combination of the swift rise and demise of ISIS, the media's democratisation push through online platforms, and Dhaka's Holey Artisan attacks of 2016 all helped to alert the general population to the threat of terrorism in Bangladesh. Yet this increasing understanding has not reached all levels of society. In at-risk communities, lower literacy levels and limited access to information act as natural barriers. This became especially clear in the course of the MotherSchools Entry Interviews. The baseline findings revealed that MotherSchools Participants in Dhaka had been largely unaware of the possible presence of recruiters and radical influences. As a direct result, WwB recognised the need to put additional emphasis on heightening the awareness of mothers that violent extremism is a threat in their communities. As a precondition to reaching their violence prevention potential, growing the Participants' awareness around violent extremism was a central building block of their MotherSchools education. The following two sub-sections draw on the baseline and impact interviews to capture 'distance travelled', and to thus identify how MotherSchools actors have advanced their knowledge and awareness of extremism through the programme.

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[14] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 30)
[15] Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS), 'Local Drivers and Dynamics of Youth Radicalisation in Bangladesh' (research study, June 2017). See http://bipss.org.bd/pdf/Local%20Drivers.pdf

**Violent extremism was considered to be a fairly serious issue and mothers were apprehensive that their children could be radicalised, none initially spoke about being directly or indirectly affected.**

Prior to embarking on the MotherSchools journey, all of the actors involved—Participants, Teachers, and Notetakers—together painted a picture of Dhaka's mothers as relatively concerned about violent extremism and committed to keeping their children safe from community threats. In the words of one Participant, 'I am very worried about the threat like addiction, robbery, terrorism in the society. It is very difficult to raise a child in this society. As a mother, I feel afraid for my own son and the children of the society'.[16] Mothers are particularly concerned about their sons in this respect ('I did not face it yet but I am scared about violent extremism, as I do not want to have my son spoiled because of needs; I know that needs for money can make us do anything: robbery, petty crime, and also terrorism. And that is why I want to make sure that with my child everything is ok').[17]

**Despite viewing violent extremism as a source of concern, most Participants' knowledge and awareness levels thereof appeared to be particularly limited; only a smaller number had a vague albeit incomplete understanding of its manifestations.**

Among the select few who could link extremism to the Bangladeshi context, one described it as 'a challenging issue about Islam' that could lead to violence if 'people say something sensitive about Islam'. Symptomatic of a certain ambivalence and insecurity among mothers when talking about the issue, however, the same Participant went from stating, 'No, I do not think that it can happen in our society' to, 'Yes, there is a chance for violent extremism'.[18] Just one mother referred to religious extremism and connected it to recent terrorist attacks like suicide bombings, which she had learned about through the local news: 'We saw extremism on TV and in the newspaper. For example, one extremist person bombed himself near Dhaka. Happened about two months ago. It was religious extremism. That person made the bomb and

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[16] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 4, Paragraph 33)
[17] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 6, Paragraph 65 - 67)
[18] 'No, I do not think that it can happen in our society … Yes, there is a chance for violent extremism, a challenging issue about Islam, when people say something sensitive about Islam, people get angry and they can do something about it. People, they burn a house or something but not kill someone'.
(190619 BDN MSP EnL 1, Paragraph 86 - 89)

he burst [detonated] the bomb when police raided the place'.[19] For the most part, however, as a Teacher took note, 'mothers are not very aware of radicalisation; they can't talk about it'.[20]

## 2.1.2 AWARE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE | MOTHERSCHOOLS IMPACT

**Approaching the topics of radicalisation and recruitment through a parenting lens alerted concerned mothers to their untapped potential as security stakeholders in their families and communities. This new understanding increased their receptiveness to the MotherSchools teachings, which both motivated and enabled Participants to close significant gaps in their theoretical and practical understanding of violent extremism.**

Whereas incidents like Dhaka's 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery attack in particular had provided an initial frame of reference,[21] the general consensus among graduates is that most 'had no knowledge about extremism prior to these classes'.[22] Presenting parenting education as a means to safeguard their children from community threats made it possible to introduce mothers to the threat of violent extremism in the first place. By creating this direct link, Participants were able to imagine radicalisation in relatable terms and replace abstract notions of terrorism with knowledge and awareness. As one of the graduates revealed, 'I learned a lot from the sessions, especially the science of radicalisation, and how I can protect my children from the radicalised groups or extremist groups. It's important to know about these issues to keep all children safe'.[23] In strikingly similar terms, another explained that, 'I learned a very important issue that is terrorism. In our country terrorism has been increased, including in our communities. We learned about how to look after the children and how to protect our children from taking part in terror'.[24] Considering the low levels of awareness that mothers exhibited prior to the start of the programme, it is encouraging to learn that graduates have expressed a desire to build on

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[19] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 7, Paragraph 17-20, 22)

[20] 'The mothers did not understand even what we are talking about. Actually, this moment mothers are not very aware of radicalisation; they can't talk about it'. (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 32)

[21] 'I and my co-Teacher inform them about extremism, and they related that they knew about Holey Artisan attack. They could not relate extremism to anything else before MotherSchools; they treated it as a situation like political violence' (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 75)

[22] 'Actually I had no knowledge about extremism prior to these classes. Now, I am learning something from these sessions and now I can relate some issues with this. Extremism and radicalisation' (191028 BDN MSP ExRK 4, Paragraph 72)

[23] (191028 BDN MSP ExES 2, Paragraph 42)

[24] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 1, Paragraph 29)

their new understanding of the threat ('I want more schools like MotherSchools and more knowledge about these kinds of topics to enlarge our knowledge level regarding terrorism').[25]

**In stark contrast to their baseline point of departure, mothers have developed a more nuanced and conceptual understanding of violent extremism. They are now capable of identifying examples of radicalisation, recruitment, and terrorism that they heard about or witnessed directly.**

Graduates now have a theoretical foundation and can identify tangible examples. This transformation becomes most noticeable when considering their reflections on direct experiences with violent extremism. A notable story from the Exit Interviews exemplifies how mothers are capable now of applying their newfound awareness to identify manifestations of extremism that they had witnessed but could not preciously identify as such. One of the mothers relayed an account in the following terms: 'I saw incidents with my own eyes. One person rented a whole building and the owner didn't investigate why. It was a factory for bombmaking. There was a group of extremists there. This incident was three years ago. It is about fifteen minutes from this place. The house was beside the river and the terrorist group tried to detonate the bomb and they got caught by the police. And whenever we saw it and shared it with others, their influential people, they said to not discuss it'.[26] Beyond highlighting a leap in their knowledge, such cases also point to the mothers' increased confidence to speak about the taboo topic of extremism; an integral part of the MotherSchools programme that is discussed in more detail in the next section of the report. As a direct result of their heightened awareness, graduates have started to consider hidden dynamics, and to reflect critically on past experiences and potential signs of extremism ('The mothers are more aware now. Three or four work in an institution and do not know what the activities are. They are more curious and cautious now').[27] The Exit Interviews also reveal that mothers are now equipped with the knowledge to recognise instances of recruitment attempts and specific grievances that extremists are exploiting: 'There is a gang that is trying to recruit the young generation. The group is saying that they will give money and food. We are poor families, so good food is big deal for us'.[28]

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[25] (191028 BDN MSP ExRK 4, Paragraph 82)
[26] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 1, Paragraph 64);
[27] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 75)
[28] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 1, Paragraph 64)

# Awareness of Violent Extremism | Impact Case

## Impact Summary

Approaching the topics of radicalisation and recruitment through a parenting lens alerted concerned mothers to their untapped potential as security stakeholders in their families and communities. This new understanding increased their receptiveness to the MotherSchools teachings, which both motivated and enabled Participants to close significant gaps in their theoretical and practical understanding of violent extremism. In stark contrast to their baseline point of departure, mothers have developed a more nuanced and conceptual understanding of violent extremism. They are now capable of identifying examples of radicalisation, recruitment, and terrorism that they heard about or witnessed directly.

## Baseline Example

*'Participants are the mothers of young children who are adolescent and growing up as youth. Now there is a chance to be radicalised. In this class, the community is not aware. Mothers are not aware. How to handle their children. Even the educated mothers do not know how to handle these kinds of children. If we can give them proper knowledge, they will be able not only to save their child but also the neighbours. If we teach twenty mothers and they can take lessons from us, if they deliver it to the others, I think this way they can eradicate the problem'.* [29]

## Impact Story

*'If I see that something is wrong like extremism, I can understand it now. I am well prepared to talk to my children and talk to the community and prevent these activities. Before the MotherSchools we have seen the action of extremists, but in the MotherSchools we learned why this action is being taken and what the reason behind something like that is. Why it is happening and how it can be prevented. We learned how to make our children understand that it is wrong'.* [30]

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[29] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 10)
[30] (191028 BDN MSP ExLK 4, Paragraph 90 - 94)

## FURTHER BASELINE EXAMPLES

**Teacher and Notetaker interview extracts:**

- 'Say, even if I join a militant group or I support a militant group, my mother will talk to me, my mother will understand me, but she can't do anything to prevent me from being militant because she doesn't have that much knowledge, or maybe she has knowledge, but she just doesn't know how to talk about this because it's a very sentimental [sensitive] issue'.[31]

- 'The only concern is now extreme violence, radicalism. That's it. They don't know. Honestly, I got to learn about violent extremism I think probably one or two years back. I myself didn't know about what the violent extremism is. We had an incident, then we got to learn what it is. Now we know what violent extremism is, we never knew what militant is, what extreme violence is. Even if I am educated, and I am educated enough, I didn't know that. I can't possibly have expectation with these children about mother I will be teaching that they will know everything about this violent and radical extremism and radicalization. They probably won't know that. … But the mothers I will be teaching, I don't think they know what the problem is. We have very conservative opinions about this militant, violent extremism. They have a perception of: "if my child becomes a militant he can't do well" or "okay I'm leaving him aside, I'm cutting of every relationship with him, he is not my children anymore"'.[32]

- 'Not enough is being done about it, this issue is growing. When we had the Eid celebration there was a risk that we could be attacked like in Sri Lanka recently. So we should do more. I believe in my mother most and I think mothers can do a lot. Mothers can do lots of thing. So if we prepare mothers, they can help youth better. That is why I am interested in mothers'.[33]

- 'Holey Artisan attack happened here in Gulshan. And I was living in nearby Gulshan so in this situation, I know about it. And one or two years ago, I have witnessed an incident here in Dhaka when I was coming to my home from the office. I was waiting for the bus. In front of me there were two bomb blasts. I got afraid. In front of me. This is cocktail bomb. But I was safe. This is first time I have seen'.[34]

- 'I am not safe also, because, you know, if a blast happens here, I also could die. I am not safe, my family is not safe, nobody is safe. And of course, you know and that's why you know—it's my free time; I could stay in my home and enjoy my holiday, but I want to do something'.[35]

- 'I know the community better; I have to go there often. Mothers are always worried about the children. They are concerned to keep children on the right track'.[36]

## FURTHER IMPACT EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'Before MotherSchools we have heard about the extremism and radicalisation on television and media but in MotherSchools we have internalised the processes of radicalisation, so now we know in our daily activity how we can handle these situations and how we can act so that we prevent our children from this extremism'.[37]

- 'I have heard about extremism issue in my community. I have not seen it, but I have learned it is in this community. We heard it from other community people and sometimes we hear

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[31] (190616 BDN MST EnM 1, Paragraph 211)

[32] (190616 BDN MST EnM 1, Paragraph 168 – 174)

[33] (190617 BDN MSN EnG 2, Paragraph 37)

[34] (190617 BDN MST EnU 1, Paragraph 222 - 232)

[35] (190616 BDN MST EnM 2, Paragraph 181 - 183)

[36] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 18 - 21)

[37] (191028 BDN MSP ExLK 1, Paragraph 95)

bombings that are part of terrorist activities. The extremists have a religious ideology. … Just last night we heard noise of bombing.'[38]

**Teacher interview extract:**

- 'One [mother] was saying she worked in household activities. One day at her job she saw that the police and local admin were involved with that family. She found out that the main person of that house were making the bombs. She was working here for three years. She never had permission to enter or clean that room. She had some curiosities about the room. When the admin opened the door, she saw. She thinks it is a terrorist activity or political groups are making bombs for political violence. Actually, she left her work after this and now when she works at another household, she is more aware now. If something is hidden from her, she shows more curiosity now. Obviously, it is a great opportunity to be involved in this class and listen to experiences'.[39]

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[38] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 5, Paragraph 67)
[39] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 75)

## 2.2 BUILDING TRUST & CONFIDENCE

- *The power of sharing is the most important lesson of the MotherSchools. First comes the power of sharing: everyone is getting a lesson from someone else's story. Second, it is the power of being united, because when we are divided our confidence decreases.[40]*
- *Now they have the confidence to talk about terrorism. They are making alliances, networking amongst each other, so if something happens, they have the strength to fight it.[41]*

*– MotherSchools Teachers, Exit Interviews*

A heightened degree of awareness around radicalisation and recruitment dynamics does not guarantee that individuals go on to address the issue. In Dhaka, violent extremism remains a taboo topic for two reasons in particular. On a public level, the country's experience with acts of terrorism has instilled fear in those willing to speak out. The slew of revenge killings of bloggers on the part of Islamists over recent years, has had a silencing effect on previously vocal individuals. International awareness around this troubling uptick in assassinations emerged even before the Holey Artisan attacks of 2016; a year prior the New York Times published a feature article entitled, 'Fear and Silence in Bangladesh as Militants Target Intellectuals', which detailed how most writers withdrew from public life or continued publishing only under a pseudonym.[42] In total, over forty murders have been carried out by extremists targeting secular bloggers, foreigners, religious minorities, and activists since 2013.[43] At the community level, missing conversations around toxic ideologies—even among those with higher degrees of awareness—have been the product of a deeply conservative cultural milieu. As the following baseline context section suggests, this is an environment within which glaring communication gaps shroud sensitive subjects in silence. These gaps are the product of factors like distrust and suspicion among community members and notions of shame and family honour. This context has a dampening effect on the voice and self-esteem of mothers in particular, who tend to be socially isolated. In giving rise to cohorts of trusted allies, the MotherSchools programme built up the necessary self-confidence and competence of Participants to challenge restrictive social constructs, openly address the topic, and move closer towards reaching their prevention potential on the individual and group levels.

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[40] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 28)
[41] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 87).
[42] Ellen Barry, 'Fear and Silence in Bangladesh as Militants Target Intellectuals', *New York Times*, 2 Nov. 2015.
[43] Counter Extremism Project, 'Bangladesh: Extremism & Counter-Extremism' (report, [date n/a; accessed 15 Sept. 2020]). See www.counterextremism.com/countries/bangladesh#radicalization_and_foreign_fighters.

## 2.2.1 Silence, Fear, and Isolation | Baseline context

**Violent extremism had not typically been discussed openly in families and communities. This missing conversation was owed chiefly to an environment where notions of shame and family honour create communication gaps that render topics like violent extremism taboo. Adding to the risk of social marginalisation, fears around personal safety had deepened the silence around issues of recruitment and radicalisation.**

Most mothers did not initially address the topic of violent extremism directly. A chief cause of concern appears to be the risk of being associated with terrorism and marginalised as a result, at times merely due to broaching the topic. In this vein, families are driven by social norms that favour reputation over communication. As one of the Teachers explained, 'Family honour is important. And values. Reputation is the most important thing. In the community, if I have the bad reputation, if something bad happens, people will ignore me; nobody will honour me'.[44] The communities of Dhaka are particularly wary of having an open dialogue around religion and its misappropriation ('Terrorism and extremism is an issue and taboo also, and in religious groups people don't want to talk about that issue').[45] Critical comments regarding religion are generally avoided since they can have grave community-wide and personal repercussions. A Notetaker recalled how a village had been burned to the ground due to 'Hindus making negative comments against Muslims'. Seeing this as proof that 'we have extremism here', she took note of how 'you can't talk about this issue' because, as the logic of extremists goes, 'if I say something wrong, you can be punished by Allah'. To further highlight the reasons for the absence of an open discourse, the Notetaker mentioned one of the many deadly attacks on bloggers who had taken the politicisation of Islam to task: 'If they discuss this issue, sometimes they get attacked at midnight. In the eastern part of Dhaka, it can happen. There was an attack on a blogger'.[46] Rational concerns over personal safety notwithstanding, pivotal discussions around sensitive issues are hampered by the culturally-imposed fears, limitations, and expectations placed on individuals. These restrictive dynamics are sustained by the relative absence of critical reflections on traditional family and community structures.

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[44] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 18 - 21)
[45] (190617 BDN MSN EnG 2, Paragraph 14)
[46] (190617 BDN MSN EnG 2, Paragraph 33 - 35)

**Conservative community and family dynamics came at the expense of the mothers' individual freedoms and identities. Participants were deeply isolated, restricted in their movements, and few received help at home. They were not only expected to shoulder all of the responsibility and blame for their children but were also afforded less authority and respect than their male counterparts.**

The baseline conversations point to how severely Bangladeshi women's freedoms of speech and movement have been restricted. Representative of the depth of their isolation, some Participants were expected to ask for permission when they leave their homes ('I never go outside but today I came outside, and if my husband will notice, he will be angry with me; I did not take permission from him').[47] Men for the most part exploited their privilege within this patriarchal system in order to restrict the movements of their wives. As such, husbands were the main barrier preventing women from pursuing their own friendships and hobbies ('My first challenge, it comes from my husband. I am never allowed to move outside home. Never allowed to enjoy').[48] Although fathers dictated how their wives had to conduct themselves and how their families had to function, they assumed little to no parenting responsibilities beyond contributing financially. Arguably, the 'absent father' is a fitting classification for the fathers of Dhaka and sums up how Participants saw their husbands in stark contrast to themselves: 'As a mother, I have a big responsibility and many things to do';[49] 'As a mother, I help to give our children good advice—what is right what is wrong. From my view, the father has nothing to do other than to earn money. As a mother, I have the responsibility to raise the children and I am responsible for their activities. The father is responsible only for earning money'.[50] The Participants thus took on the entirety of the parenting share and were automatically blamed for any problems related to their children. Revealing statements to this effect included, 'All the responsibilities of the kids are mine. If anything bad happens, then I have to be accountable';[51] 'If the child is doing something, if he or she is doing something bad, fathers are blaming the mother: "Oh, you don't take care of your child properly?" This is the pressure';[52] 'I will never allow my son or daughter to join militant groups. I would have to go,

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[47] 'I never go outside but today I came outside, and if my husband will notice, he will be angry with me; I did not take permission from him. I need to take permission from him to go anywhere. He never resists me. But there are rules that I have to take permission if I want to go somewhere. When I came here he was sleeping so I did not tell him. My husband is very concerned about me if I face some problems that is when he is concerned about me. He does not allow me to go out'. (190619 BDN MSP EnL 4, Paragraph 60 - 70).
[48] 190619 BDN MSP EnM 8, Paragraph 33)
[49] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 6, Paragraph 78 - 79)
[50] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 3, Paragraph 57 - 59)
[51] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 7, Paragraph 26- 30)
[52] (190616 BDN MSN EnL 1, Paragraph 112 - 120)

to move out of my village far away. I will try my best to prevent my son or daughter from joining these groups. I am not sure if I am able to prevent them from joining, but I will try'.[53] With their identity being so limited by and large to motherhood, Participants had not initially questioned or indeed challenged the evident imbalances in parenting roles ('Honestly, Bangladeshi mothers are introverts—they always think about their children, their husband, their families——and they never speak out about themselves as if they don't have hobbies; they don't have hopes at all. Their world is roaming around their children and husband and family').[54]

**The mothers' resulting lack of self-confidence hindered them from addressing extremism and its drivers, and from recognising their own agency, self-worth, and potential as peacemakers. They had been missing the necessary support, trusted environment, networks, and relationships to move from inhibition and self-doubt towards an open climate of dialogue and unity.**

The extent of the mothers' seclusion left many with nobody to whom they could turn. The most common responses from among those who spoke freely about their isolation included, 'I don't have a network', 'I don't have any people to talk to or to share my problems', 'I have no one to talk to about my concerns',[55] 'We don't have family time and nobody helps me. I am all alone. Even my relatives don't come to help me'.[56] In more severe cases, Participants opened up about how this solitude had led to mental health issues ('I have no one to share my problems with; I just cry and cry … Sometimes I think about suicide—to take my own life. Then I think about my younger daughter and I worry where she will go, and then I calm myself down again. I try a lot, but I fail every time').[57] The Entry Interviews lay bare the mothers' pervasive fear of talking about personal issues or concerns. To some degree, the baseline discussions also paved the way for Participants to contemplate the important function of communication. Two of the mothers suggested that prior to their respective MotherSchools Entry Interviews they had not previously had the opportunity or the impetus to share their problems.[58] Their deep and

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[53] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 2, Paragraph 28 - 29)
[54] (190616 BDN MST EnM 1, Paragraph 39)
[55] (190617 BDN MST EnL 1, Paragraph 77 - 80); (190619 BDN MSP EnG 6, Paragraph 19); (190619 BDN MSP EnG 4, Paragraph 16 - 18)
[56] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 5, Paragraph 20)
[57] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 4, Paragraph 16 - 18)
[58] 'I am not usually sharing my problems, I am sharing this for the first time, I am feeling very light now. Thank you for letting me share this with you, please do not tell anyone, I wish I could speak English then I would speak much more'. (190619 BDN MSP EnG 6, Paragraph 19)

lasting social exclusion had left mothers feeling helpless and insecure about themselves and their parenting competence ('I feel helpless, I feel helpless as mother I cannot do that much for my children, so I feel helpless').[59] That few had trustworthy allies prior to the start of the programme also had a significant bearing on their sense of self-determination and confidence levels with respect to protecting their children. The major issue appeared to be that mothers trusted neither in themselves nor in others. The following three Entry Interview examples from mothers indicate that law enforcement ranked particularly low in terms of trust and in some cases was even perceived to be a part of the problem: 'We are helpless. We inform the police and the police take them away but there is no permanent solution. After a month they release those boys and things remain the same. There is no change. This is the main problem in my community';[60] 'I believe, that the police they themselves actually create an incident inside the camp and then arrest some people. And after that they collect bribery from the accused person and then they again release them from the jail and those people come again in the camp';[61] 'When I fail to hold back my children from joining these groups, then I would have to go to the police. I don't really believe in the police, I don't really trust them but what else can I do, they will be my last chance'.[62] Ahead of attending the MotherSchools sessions, the Participants' lack of trusted points of contact and the isolated lives that they tended to lead in general weighed heavy on their self-esteem, hindered them from addressing taboo topics, and blocked them from fully appreciating their safeguarding potential.

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[59] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 1, Paragraph 144 - 147)
[60] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 3, Paragraph 21 - 22)
[61] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 9b, Paragraph 38)
[62] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 2, Paragraph 28 - 29)

**In offering a safe and judgement-free space, Participants were able to nurture trusted relationships within the group and overcome the stigma and fear of addressing personal issues. Recognising and embracing the power of sharing and uniting moved them a significant step closer to activating their prevention potential.**

By virtue of previously having had only limited social contact outside of their homes, the MotherSchools sessions enabled Participants to embark on friendships and build networks, often doing so for the first time in their lives ('Without MotherSchools they would have no opportunity to meet each other or share their stories of concern. It is a type of friendship that did not exist before').[63] The safe space made it possible to develop previously unthinkable connections, and in a number of cases mothers were able to mend broken relationships. 'Some of them', as a Teacher explained, 'were living in the same neighbourhood but didn't talk before or share anything; some of them fought'. Through the MotherSchools, they discovered the power of uniting through storytelling; how sharing stories and experiences gives rise to trusted support networks.[64] Eroding inhibitions and feelings of fear and mutual suspicion to build trust was a gradual process that took a number of sessions to complete. In one of the three groups, this process went as follows: 'They said that "if I share my story … if I have a quarrel with the person I told, maybe they will poke me with this issue [later on]". That is why they did not want to share their stories at first. It took three brave mothers who were spontaneous who were courageous to share their stories with the group and after seeing the response, the other mothers were able to see that their problems are not unique, and they then started sharing their stories as well. And now they are really supportive of each other'.[65] The realisation among mothers that they were not alone in their struggles and tended to have similar problems marked a definite turning point. The sense of isolation and fear of sharing was overcome through similar group dynamics in one of the other MotherSchools cohorts, as a Teacher observed: 'When we asked them to share what they were not used to sharing, one broke the ice. She told us how she married at 13 and her husband died and then at 21 she married again. This news is new. Her neighbour had no idea about this. This is the reason why she does not share at first. Because

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[63] 'They have comfort now to share. In fact, the mothers, 20 mothers, most of them meet at the session, but after this now they are like friends. Like they were friends for a long time. Sharing experiences made them closer. This type of friendship did not exist before. After MotherSchools session they treat each other like different. Without MS they would have no opportunity to meet each other or share their stories of concern. It is a good friendship that did not exist before'. (191029 BDN MST ExRK)
[64] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 37)
[65] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 34)

she is not sure that everyone will take it positive. This made everyone start sharing the stories. When we also shared stories from WwB manual, mothers were comfortable and opened up'.[66] In taking steps towards liberating themselves from the burden of shame, distrust, and social marginalisation through a group process, the Participants became increasingly mindful and supportive of each other, 'showing sympathy and empathy at the same time'.[67] Teachers reported how this support network now transcends the confines of the MotherSchools classroom ('They are trying to take care of each other: they call each other over the phone to check in, to see how they are feeling and how their children are, becoming close friends';[68] 'They are having meetings among themselves and they are talking if they face any problems to try to solve them. It is a good initiative. They need more people other than their family to survive. They have a good relationship now, they live the same place, so it is easy for them to come together and talk, so on Fridays they arrange meetings and not necessarily to talk about serious issues, but just to relax, which is necessary. There will not always be a problem to talk about, but it is important for them to maintain this routine, continue sharing. They are taking initiative').[69]

**MotherSchools group dynamics broke down the main barriers that had been standing in the way of the Participants' self-confidence and preparedness to address the taboo topic of violent extremism. Their heightened levels of confidence motivated them to claim the respect that they deserve, and to thus establish the necessary authority needed to spread awareness of radicalisation and recruitment in their families and surroundings. Strong support networks enable them to now employ both individual and group action when responding to issues at home or in the community.**

The group process helped mothers to identify and address the factors negatively impacting on their self-confidence levels. Most found that their husbands were chief in holding them back from developing authority and a voice ('Mothers have realised that they deserve more respect from their husbands and they really want their husbands to give some respect to them').[70] This awareness motivated many to actively work on their relationships and demand more respect from their partners. The following story exemplifies how mothers who managed to claim respect and authority at home were often also able to establish their voice within the community

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[66] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 35)
[67] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 49)
[68] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 39)
[69] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 31)
[70] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 53)

and be viewed as role models: 'The relationship with my husband got a lot better when I shared that I go to a place where I learned so many things about child upbringing and relationships. Earlier I couldn't talk to my husband properly, because he didn't seem to care about this matter or what I was saying. He was bored or he got angry. Because I forced him to listen to what I was saying, now he is convinced that what I am saying it is important to listen to. Earlier he didn't give much time to our family, now he tries to spend the maximum amount of time with us. He now convinces our son to go for school. He now is saying: "You know your mother has learned so much from going to school, your mother is also going to a school. So why you don't go to a school?" My husband was saying: "Earlier you couldn't talk properly, you couldn't explain a simple thing, now it is very surprising, that you can talk that much fluently". My husband and my community people, they respect me more now. What I say, they listen to'.[71] The trusted space acted as the point of departure and the foundation that enabled Participants to find and assert their voice (Now, I think I am more confident because it's a learning platform and also a sharing platform, so I think my knowledge has increased and I can raise my voice with strong issues. I have enjoyed a lot, and now I can talk in a big forum with twenty mothers').[72] With respect to violent extremism in particular, the training and storytelling exercises removed feelings of helplessness that had kept mothers from addressing this taboo topic and establishing their role as security stakeholders. In the words of two graduates: 'Yes we can speak about extremism or radical groups in our school, and we can share this with our close relatives. It is a positive development because my relatives and the others are sharing with other people, so together we can create change';[73] 'I talked about the extremism with my family and neighbourhood and relatives. I tried to advise them to not meet with this kind of people, avoid these people and I talked with them about addicted people. For me it is now an open discussion with family and friends'.[74] As this impact section demonstrates, the mothers have succeeded in increasing their authority and have managed to break the silence around the topic of extremism. They have also gone beyond the family realm and brought the conversation to their respective communities by embracing their own agency and trusting in likeminded allies. A graduate summed up the influence of her new network as follows, 'An individual person has less strength, but whenever twenty mothers come and make a platform, it will be more influential for other mothers. If there is a problem, we can all go together'.[75] In strikingly

[71] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 6, Paragraph 96 - 105)
[72] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 4, Paragraph 37)
[73] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 6, Paragraph 70)
[74] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 5, Paragraph 68)
[75] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 3, Paragraph 38)

similar terms, a Teacher concluded, 'Now they have the confidence to talk about terrorism. They are making alliances, networking amongst each other, so if something happens, they have the strength to fight it'.[76]

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[76] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 87).

## Confidence in Mothers' Prevention Potential | Impact Case

### Impact Summary

In offering a safe and judgement-free space, Participants were able to nurture trusted relationships within the group and overcome the stigma and fear of addressing personal issues. Recognising and embracing the power of sharing and uniting moved them a significant step closer to activating their prevention potential. MotherSchools group dynamics broke down the main barriers that had been standing in the way of the Participants' self-confidence and preparedness to address the taboo topic of violent extremism. Their heightened levels of confidence motivated them to claim the respect that they deserve, and to thus establish the necessary authority needed to spread awareness of radicalisation and recruitment in their families and surroundings. Strong support networks enable them to now employ both individual and group action when responding to issues at home or in the community.

### Baseline Example

*'As a mother, every mother, we want to protect our children, but in some point we are helpless, because when we go to work to feed our children, we are not around our children, at that time if our children mingle with bad company, they become derailed. We are helpless in that point. In our community we try, but you know so many bad surrounding are there, we sometimes we try but we failed'.*[77]

### Impact Story

*'I have the confidence if any of my kids is going to the wrong path, I can return him back. But it also depends on their mentality, their acceptance. If they consider their mother as pathfinder, then they will come back, but if not, it is completely up to them. I learned in the MotherSchools this confidence, because now I can talk with a guidance and with proper logic, but before that did not happen. There is a difference between previous thinking and after MotherSchools thinking'.*[78]

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[77] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 2, Paragraph 11)
[78] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 8, Paragraph 71)

## FURTHER BASELINE EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'My daughter is like me but my son is an angry man like his father. My husband is short tempered person. Sometimes he shouts at me. He uses very harsh words and when I started crying my children console me. We don't have family time and nobody helps me. I am all alone. Even my relatives don't come to help me'.[79]

- 'Well, all time I have the tension that, well, my first son is 21 years old and it is not a good environment in the community, so all time I feel tension about him whenever he's going with bad guys, where he's going to be involved. If the children take any wrong decisions or wrong things, all the blame goes to me so that's why I cannot be the one that is a good role model'.[80]

- 'I have not any kind of mentionable proud things in my life because my husband is not too much cooperative type person so he never receive my opinion or suggestion so I cannot do anything'.[81]

- 'There are a lot of problems. My young daughter left school because of money. She learned tailor's work for 6 months. Even she worked as a domestic worker. I feel helpless. My son is very unconscious about his study he doesn't want to go school but my daughter never did this. All the responsibilities of the kids are mine. If anything bad happens, then I have to be accountable'.[82]

- 'Never tell my story to anyone, here I am sharing. People will laugh at my story. Where I live ppl not all are good, some ppl are good some are bad. That is why I do not share. They will not give me good advice on how to solve this'.[83]

- 'I do have self-confidence, as I see my son didn't get into any trouble. You can't share everything to everyone though, I can't say everything about my daughters, I never really express myself, it can feel stuck inside. I can talk to people, but I don't like to, I don't like to get involved in family drama'.[84]

- 'We hide inside our room and lock our room because sometimes the law enforcement agency including police they also try to actually harass the children. Police sometimes. Actually the local authorities actually went to have a visit at camp and just try to watch what incidents are actually happening here. We felt fear of what's going on. That's why we try to shut our door'.[85]

- 'We have to at first keep the control over them. When he is out of control, then I give up hope and let them go, then he is not my son anymore'.[86]

**Notetaker and Teacher interview extracts:**

- 'In Bangladesh now things are changing, but most of the mothers, there is pressure on them. Maybe someone is only housewife, maybe there is some mother who is a working mother at the same time. They are working and taking care of their family, looking after their child. … It's the pressure, it's a burden for them, I think. They are not exploring, they are not getting the time to explore their hobbies or their ideas, or their liking or disliking'.[87]

- 'When they are financially contributing, the mothers have more power … but a homemaker is not that much appreciated.'[88]

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[79] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 5, Paragraph 20)
[80] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 9, Paragraph 47)
[81] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 6, Paragraph 28)
[82] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 7, Paragraph 26- 30)
[83] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 7, Paragraph 36 - 40)
[84] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 5, Paragraph 16 - 17)
[85] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 1, Paragraph 119,122, 123)
[86] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 1, Paragraph 92 - 93)
[87] (190616 BDN MSN EnL 1, Paragraph 112)
[88] (190616 BDN MST EnL 2, Paragraph 28)

- 'If there is something dangerous like—how can I word it—miscreants. If bad things happen, like sexual harassment, theft, acid throwing, crimes—they will not share. In that case they will try to mutual negotiate to solve the problem if child does something. On community level, try to resolve it. If they do not solve it, they will report to local police station. [Sexual abuse would be shameful to talk about. Is it common?] Common, yes. If a child is girl, it is difficult to handle because of culture. In that case, family and community try to negotiate the problem. But if it is boy, male child, then sometimes they do not share in the community because it is too shameful to family'.[89]

## FURTHER IMPACT EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'We are the women we cannot share our feelings and sorrows with others. MotherSchools is a sharing platform where we can talk with other mothers and we feel relieved. Before attending the school, I was not thinking that mothers can share their feelings with other mothers. Every child is different, so everyone's experiences are different, so we are sharing our stories. But if MotherSchools is not existing, then I think it would not be as easy to be concerned or protest issues.'[90]

- 'All the mothers of the group, we are living in one community, in one place, so when we sit together, we discuss about the different issues, family issues and family crisis and whatever we learned. We discuss this at home also when we are free'[91]

- 'My husband is listening to me now and I tell him what I have learned at MotherSchools and I share it with him. I can identify the things and justify the learnings and tell him that it is helpful for our family issues. This is why the relationship is changing day by day. I talked to him before, but we are not supposed to talk much in families. The husband is the decision-maker. But now when husband takes decisions, I give my advice and he is accepting this. He says it is good for the family, the MotherSchools, and he likes what I have learned and what I am sharing with him regarding taking care of kids or other family issues which can be – when we raise a problem we can solve it together and this is big learning for both of us'.[92]

- 'So now what we do is gather around and talk with each other. We talk about the problems and find out what can we do, what is a possible solution. We talk within our MotherSchools group'.[93]

- 'So MotherSchools is the enjoyment—we enjoyed it very much as mothers. And we are able to discuss our problems as free, we were frank and could freely speak. In this MotherSchools there is no restriction as to what is right and wrong and the environment of this school was very friendly, and if I share my painful experience in this class nobody would laugh, but they would empathise with me, so this is what the environment was like and this is why I loved about the MotherSchools'.[94]

**Teacher interview extracts:**

- 'The intro session we did not ask them to share too much, but during the second session the mothers were more normal with each other and as the MotherSchools progressed we found that every mother wanted to tell their story. And after the third Session most of the mothers were open about every single issue in their life and that is when we noticed that every mother had a need to share their problems about their tensions and their family. It would be about their child's education for example, or sometimes they would complain that their children do not listen to

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[89] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 26 - 29)
[90] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 6, Paragraph 18)
[91] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 3, Paragraph 39)
[92] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 2, Paragraph 54, 57)
[93] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 6, Paragraph 68 - 69)
[94] (191028 BDN MSP ExLK 6, Paragraph 20 - 23)

them. They in fact wanted to share every single issue with us. So we gave them the space and they took that space to tell their stories'.[95]

- 'Many mothers have shared that their sons, their husbands are not in good relationship with them. They are not listening to them. They are very sad and emotional about that, but they can share this with the MS and they are happy about that. I'm happy about that there is a space, where they are free from that burden'.[96]

- 'They faced a lot of problems and they have many things to tell others. Sometimes and all the time, they have to tell their story, their sad story, something they're not comfortable with. They don't share it with anyone else, they keep it inside. Things are hard for them because they couldn't share their stories, their views. And when you keep these things in, you feel gloomy. That is a normal think. MotherSchools is a place where they can share their thoughts, their views'.[97]

- 'And they started to experience themselves and they started to talk about their family issues. Because nobody wants to talk about their family issues. So building that trust was very challenging. Whenever the mothers said their children were drug addicted and one of the mothers said, the police actually caught her child and arrested by the child – this is actually not an easy topic for them to discuss with an outsider. Whenever they talked about being beaten by their husband, it was not an easy topic. Or that they do not receive any support from their husbands or in-laws financially. This was hard for them to discuss. All of the mothers were very empathic to the other mothers because everyone was empathising to each other'.[98]

- 'Some of them were living in the same neighbourhood but they didn't talk before or share anything; some of them fought. But they shared their stories. One mother was considered to be a very aggressive person, and no one knew why she so aggressive so when we had some storytelling situation, we got to learn she felt a lot of trouble in her childhood so being a mother is very tough for her. So other mothers go to learn and now they understand the problem, and they are very supportive for her. So it is very appreciating. It took time, but they understand each other, they shared their stories. So yes, MS were building relationships and building trust by sharing their stories and situations.'.[99]

- 'It was good to see, because when we started the classes, we shared the stories and we pushed the mothers to share their views and stories but they were shy, maybe there was a trust issue. It the first and second session they weren't that open, but after that, after they got to know each other, when they learned about each other's sad stories, what they have gone through, understanding their situations, they started showing sympathy and empathy at the same time'.[100]

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[95] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 32)
[96] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 24)
[97] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 24)
[98] (191028 BDN MST ExLK 7, Paragraph 46)
[99] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 37
[100] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 49)

## 2.3 ADDRESSING PUSH FACTORS BY UPGRADING PARENTING

*The main reason for children to get involved in terrorist activities is because parents don't give them proper time. When children do not get that much attention or time from their parents, they will get involved with other people who will compensate for the things they need; they will be easy to influence.*[101]

*– MotherSchools Participant, Exit Interview*

While the previous impact sections have shown how awareness, confidence, and trust are foundational pillars of a family-based security architecture, this section presents the final essential puzzle piece required to activate a mother's prevention potential: conceptual and applicable parenting knowledge as a tool to make the MotherSchools safeguarding vision in Dhaka a reality. Beyond learning about extremism and the early warning signs of radicalisation, mothers require parenting methods and theories to build a strong communication infrastructure at home. Whereas identity crises and social isolation are common drivers of youth radicalisation, the particular constellation of a family environment can be a deciding factor in either pushing children towards or pulling them out of radicalisation. Moreover, deficient family dynamics can indeed be the root cause of a child's heightened susceptibility to recruiters. As scholars have noted, individuals in Bangladesh can be pushed towards radicalisation due to factors 'caused by a broken family'.[102] Authoritarian parenting styles and communication gaps among family members tend to further isolate children and motivate them to emulate these methods, such that familial structures and dynamics favouring radicalisation are sustained across generations. The baseline context part of this section points to how the Participants' original family dynamics had been defined by counterproductive parenting styles that had left children more isolated and prone to radicalisation. The main deficits comprised communication gaps, unrealistic pressures placed on children, a lack of parenting concepts, authoritarian disciplining methods, and missing role models. As the subsequent impact findings reveal, the MotherSchools programme provided Participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to advance their parenting styles, restructure family dynamics, and build more resilient households in the process. The graduates' impact stories clearly show how mothers have been successful in harnessing closer family bonds and cooperating with their children and husbands to address acute problems, including various drivers of radicalisation.

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[101] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 4, Paragraph 139)
[102] Ali Riaz and Saimum Parvez, 'Bangladeshi Militants: What Do We Know?' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30/6 (2018): 944—961.

## 2.3.1 FAMILIAL COMMUNICATION DISCONNECTS | BASELINE CONTEXT

**Deficits in family dynamics were chief push factors heightening the youth's susceptibility to recruitment efforts. Teachers and Notetakers found that familial communication gaps and parental pressures in particular had left adolescents and young adults more isolated and prone to radicalisation. Yet mothers were largely unaware of these deficits and generally took their role for granted.**

The Entry Interviews lay bare how conventional family dynamics in Dhaka tend to play squarely into the hands of recruiters. Born out of parental neglect, children had become more isolated and thus vulnerable to radicalisation. In the words of a MotherSchools Notetaker and Teacher, respectively: 'People could brainwash the children because they know there is distance between the family and children, actually they choose [recruiters target] that type of child';[103] 'I think children feel left alone by their family and have this identity crisis, and then they isolate themselves from their family and want to live alone, and then there's this type of group who gives them opportunities, saying that "you can do this, you can do that"'.[104] Most mothers possessed an incomplete parenting understanding that failed to transcend the realm of carrying out every-day physical tasks. 'The duty of mothers', a Participant suggested, 'is to make them ready for school in the morning, feed them, pick them up from school, and wash their clothes and shoes'.[105] A limited evolution of parenting styles meant that mothers relied mostly on instinct and traditional approaches. In this view, parenting would be defined by continuity and in rigid, one-dimensional terms; as something inherited and extant that is simply passed down from one generation to the next ('In Bangladesh, we are applying the strategy we have seen in childhood, from my grandparents to my parents—how they behave, how they show attitude, how they advise, how they want to control their family. So we are passing through this circuit; we are not going out of the circuit. Sometimes we are at fault, but do not think seriously that we are at fault').[106] This unyielding style hinders critical and conceptual thinking. Approaches thus are imposed on youngsters rather than negotiated in accordance with their character. Rather than attempting to understand and address their children's needs, strengths, and weaknesses by communicating with them, parents have had unrealistic expectations of their children. The resulting pressure felt by the youth breeds isolation and can act as a pivotal push factor ('The mothers just don't understand the capacity of the child. As a

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[103] (190616 BDN MST EnL 2, Paragraph 75)
[104] (190616 BDN MSN EnL 1, Paragraph 73 - 74)
[105] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 9, Paragraph 38)
[106] (190617 BDN MST EnU 1, Paragraph 119 - 121)

teacher, I saw that many parents, many mothers, force their children to get top marks for every subject, but they don't understand that their child has no capacity to get those marks, but they get forced. And as a Teacher and as a mother, I wish that every woman could understand their children's capacity so that they can train them';[107] 'Our parents are not to trying to understand their children, because they put too much pressure on their children to do well. But they not understand that every child is not same. Their knowledge is not same').[108] In failing to connect with their children and reflect critically on their individual parenting styles, mothers had not just fallen short of fully getting to know their sons and daughters; they were also not able to create a trusted environment within which children felt comfortable to approach their mothers with personal problems ('They are not giving their children that space to share problems; they can't give them a second chance. That's why I think they are not actually confident, but they think that they are. That is the problem. Mothers think that, "I am okay, I am a good guardian, I am a good person, and I have all the skills"').[109]

**Mothers lacked essential parenting concepts and methods: far from grasping developmental child psychology, they did not possess basic principles and skills such as listening to and investing time in children.**

That mothers did not sufficiently understand or empathise with their children was owed to a grave communication disconnect within families. Two essential parenting ingredients for building up a solid communication infrastructure were absent: namely, listening to their sons and daughters on the one hand, and investing time in them on the other hand. Instead, isolating rather than engaging with their children appeared to be a common solution when problems arose, as one of the mothers indicated ('When any problem comes, we just send or put their children inside their room and lock the door';[110] 'There's nothing to do actually except put the children inside the home and just advise them not to involve them with those incidents. Nothing else').[111] Asked how parents typically reacted to children who addressed an issue, a Teacher elaborated on additional methods and shortcomings: 'Normally, they are screaming; not listening too much. They are not taking seriously the issues the children want to share. Most of the parents in our surroundings are not trying to understand the child's psychology. That is why

[107] (190616 BDN MSN EnG 1, Paragraph 127 - 130)
[108] (190616 BDN MST EnM 2, Paragraph 114 - 120)
[109] (190616 BDN MST EnM 2, Paragraph 51 - 53)
[110] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 2, Paragraph 65- 67)
[111] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 1, Paragraph 113, 115)

the children stop sharing the things that they obviously want to share. Especially the fathers do not have the time to listen; he is the boss'.[112] This statement captures the characteristically authoritarian parenting stance well, especially with respect to fathers. Even so, parents as a whole did not prioritise spending time with their children. A clear distinction between employed and 'unemployed' mothers nevertheless needs to be made, as the former often were unable to strike a balance between work and investing time, despite being eager to do so: 'My children need good clothes, good living, good food, and children need more attention and more time from me. I think children need more guidance, but I don't have time with three jobs';[113] 'The happiest thing for would be to spend time with my family, but we cannot manage time together because we have a timing issue, we work different shifts, so there is no time together';[114] 'As they are working, they can't spend time they should with their children. That's why they totally don't know what their child is doing during this time—if they are doing something good or bad; they don't know'.[115] Ultimately, awareness gaps on the part of mothers in general were largely due to a lack of time spent with and listening to their children ('If we teach them some signs that can help them to identify that their children are involved in these issues it will help to resolve issues, but obviously they have to communicate with their children. That way she can trace the children's activities easily').[116]

**In lieu of communication, authoritarian family structures took hold and parents opted for harsh disciplining methods, ranging from shouting to physical violence. Yet mothers had also been left to their own devices, with fathers tending to be absent from family life and poor role models to their children.**

The Entry Interview data reveal a rampant culture of family violence in Dhaka's households. A high number of Participants laid bare how they beat their own children as a preferred form of discipline. 'When children do not listen', a mother suggested, 'I beat them very had—not a small beating—and sometimes it is huge. I know it sometimes is not good but sometimes I have to'.[117] Another mother, delegating the task to her husband, noted: 'As I have a soft heart that is why I do not beat my son but I complain to his father and his father beats him and I

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[112] (190616 BDN MST EnR 2, Paragraph 28)
[113] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 2, Paragraph 24)
[114] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 6, Paragraph 15 - 16)
[115] (190616 BDN MST EnM 2, Paragraph 38)
[116] (190616 BDN MST EnR 2, Paragraph 30)
[117] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 7, Paragraph 9 - 10)

cry'.[118] Yet most who applied this method were not remorseful, and many also viewed harsh beatings as more effective ('When I slap without beating, it does not work—they keep quiet when I beat them').[119] Apparent contradictions notwithstanding, mothers who used force as a habitual disciplining tactic often purported to have a healthy relationship with their children: 'I have a good relationship with my children, we play board games, watch television. I never allow my children to go outside and get involved with bad incidents and bad guys but keep the children in home, but I allow them to do anything at home. I beat them when they misbehave. I find it a good method. There is no other way my children would listen'.[120] Two particular social dynamics may help to explain the parents' propensity for violence against children. First, parents use violence readily when they are concerned about negative peer interactions. Second, this form of normalised violence is a societal norm and expectation. A Participant statement captures both of these dynamics: 'The most forbidden thing is fighting with other peers, children, fighting with other friends. If they do this beat. I find this way effective. If I don't scold them or beat them or say them don't do this or don't fight with these people, then things will get complicated between other parents, they will come and talk and fight with me'.[121] Beyond being unaware that this form of violence can have an isolating effect on their children, mothers lacked alternative parenting concepts and constructive communication approaches. While unable to put her finger on it, one of the mothers alluded to this missing component in the following terms: 'It is very necessary for a mother to be strict to the children to protect them from the bad company—from that bad act—but at the same time, we need something else. If we know how to control our children from the bad company and keep them in a good way, then we also need to learn about it').[122] The interviews also made clear that mothers were unable to reach their full potential in the light of how little support they received from their husbands. If anything, fathers were a key hindrance to constructive family dynamics. First and foremost, husbands tended to be the weakest link in the communication chain. Being mostly absent from the family, mothers took on the bulk of parenting duties and burdens. Common statements to this effect included: 'I have to look after my family, my in-laws, my children. … As a father the responsibility is earning money and providing all the necessary things';[123] 'My husband allows them to do what they want to and never pressures them. He is busy and has no

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[118] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 6, Paragraph 44 - 45)
[119] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 1, Paragraph 63 - 72)
[120] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 2, Paragraph 22 - 23)
[121] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 8, Paragraph 79 - 87)
[122] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 2, Paragraph 12 - 13)
[123] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 4, Paragraph 75 - 78)

time for his family matters';[124] 'It is a father's role to earn money for the family and feed them and get them married with a good bride or groom, and it is our father's duty to keep daughters in a veil because it is necessary so they do not get derailed'.[125] Traditional power structures and societally prescribed roles helped to absolve men of most communication-oriented parenting duties. Despite their absence, many husbands appeared not to respect their wives, had a negative effect on the authority of their wives within the family, and presented poor role models as fathers. To quote a number of mothers: 'My husband is jobless and takes drugs and does not come home often, he stays out on the road. That's how my family runs';[126] 'I  never get the chance to make a decision, because when my children were young, the decision-maker was the father, and after that my sons, but not me';[127] 'I spend the little time I have with my children. My husband is not that good, he plays poker and doesn't really contribute to the family';[128] 'I have a good relationship with my husband, but he doesn't listen, but I don't like the children to know all about my husband's gambling'.[129]

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[124] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 8, Paragraph 22 - 28)
[125] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 1, Paragraph 19)
[126] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 8, Paragraph 14)
[127] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 3, Paragraph 52)
[128] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 2, Paragraph 15)
[129] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 2, Paragraph 26)

**Heightened awareness around their prevention potential and an increased parenting knowledge base has instilled confidence in mothers to position themselves as safeguarding frontrunners. In adopting more advanced parenting styles and embracing the unique access and emotional proximity that mothers have to their children, the MotherSchools graduates of Dhaka are now challenging central push factors that accentuate youth vulnerabilities to recruiters. Asserting their authority at home and implementing contextualised parenting methods has enabled mothers to plug glaring communication gaps, restructure family dynamics, and build more resilient families in the process.**

In the course of the programme, Participants learned how to identify and address counterproductive parenting approaches that can act as push factors ('I got to know what extremism is and that it is not a very good thing to push my children, because there is a chance that they might get involved in extremist groups or violent activities';[130] 'They know now the responsibility they have to never push away their children; that they have to protect their children. The ways they are applying these understandings in real life is amazing').[131] In abandoning overtly authoritarian styles, many of the graduates have succeeded in forming closer bonds with their children. Among the new parenting approaches most readily adopted by graduates are listening to and spending time with their daughters and sons ('This school's teaching has helped me to listen to my children and to think about how to talk with others and what is good for them and for me';[132] 'I have learned that I need to spend time with my children; earlier I was not aware that I can listen to my children').[133] Mothers also suggested how rapidly family dynamics improved once they factored in listening and time: 'I changed my behaviour. Previously I did not think that I should play with my children, but now I spend time with my children playing. Some neighbours might think about what I am doing, but I don't care. I spend time with them. I ask them what they want to play, and I play with them to get involved with them. No matter how childish. So this has actually changed me'. Gaining the necessary confidence and parenting understanding allowed her to challenge conventional practices and counterproductive community expectations. Her children purportedly welcomed this new communication approach, with the mother recalling their words as follows: 'Mum, you were previously rude to us, you were not listening to us. If we asked something, you just ignored

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[130] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 2, Paragraph 34)
[131] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 24)
[132] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 4, Paragraph 20)
[133] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 1, Paragraph 23 - 27)

and avoided. You loved to be alone. Now you are spending your time with us, which we love. But now you are not being rude with us, you are not shouting at us. This really makes us happy. Maybe this comes from you attending those sessions'.[134] The impact interviews provide numerous rich examples of children's positive reactions to the mothers' transformations. These statements are a clear indicator that former Participants are applying the MotherSchools learnings around developmental child psychology to their everyday lives. As such, mothers are also adapting their communication methods in accordance with the relevant stage of their child's development: 'The first thing I learned is how to treat your children, because their mentality is different from that of an adult person. Second, you have to give priority to your child's opinions'.[135] They are cognisant of the fact that improving family dynamics must be done in negotiation with their children, and that empathy and listening skills help to identify the needs of their children and allow individuals to react in a more informed manner. These measured approaches have boosted the graduates' confidence to assert their authority effectively ('Earlier, my family didn't give so much importance to what I was saying, but now I talk to them calmly: I explain things to them, I try to explain things in a positive way, so they understand me and try to consider my thoughts and opinions';[136] 'I am trying to give lessons to them positively with a good language and with a positive way, and they are accepting my words, each and every word. This positive thinking from both parties is making me confident that I am doing something for them, and this is why they are responding positively to me';[137] 'So now in such a moment when my children do not listen to me, I give myself some time to calm down and then I start to understand why my children do that stuff').[138]

**In applying new parenting practices and drawing on concepts from developmental child psychology, concerned mothers are creating an open culture of communication and consolidating their prevention role. Graduates have also begun harnessing closer family bonds to cooperate with their children and address acute problems, including various drivers of radicalisation.**

The impact interviews suggest that the mothers' influence in parenting matters has grown precisely because they are now able to actively remove communication barriers between them

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[134] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 69 - 71)
[135] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 1, Paragraph 18)
[136] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 1, Paragraph 56 - 57)
[137] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 5, Paragraph 30)
[138] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 4, Paragraph 105 - 106)

and their children. Beyond listening to their sons and daughters, the mothers are encouraging a culture of sharing that allows them to become aware of issues they were not previously aware of, and, in turn, to act as a support mechanism. As a result, they have already been able to identify and tackle serious drivers of radicalisation in their own homes, including street violence, negative peer influences, and drug abuse. 'One mother', a Teacher shared, 'was very upset about her son, because he was involved in violence. But she is getting closer with her son and he understands now what he did was wrong, and she is understanding the importance and depth of keeping a good relationship with your son'.[139] What has emerged in many of the homes is an open environment where children have begun to feel less fearful and thus more comfortable to share their problems: 'There are many things they earlier did not share with me openly. Now, when we talk, they now started sharing things openly. If any boy had disturbed them, earlier they used to hide those things from me, but now they share these things openly'.[140] The Exit Interviews all point to a similar trajectory of change whereby mothers grow their awareness of parenting deficits, understand how such shortcomings can act as push factors, bring these learnings home, and build the necessary communication infrastructure and relationship basis to talk openly about personal issues and drivers of violent extremism. This is helping to pull children—connected to the MotherSchools programme by virtue of their mothers—out of isolation and into a supportive family environment. In the following impact example, a graduate shrewdly traces her personal journey of restructuring family dynamics and exercising her safeguarding role: 'After joining MotherSchools, I changed a lot in my behaviour. Before I always got angry, but now I am more tolerant. My son would do drugs and come home late. Now I am checking the peer groups with him, being attentive of when he comes home, and now he comes home right after work. My family is now very friendly, and I can see a change in my older son. I shared that if you come home late and do drugs, it can be a way to extremism or bad groups. If I can see a change in my older son, my other sons will follow also. He saw a change in my behaviour. I can understand the needs of my children. In previous times, there was a gap between me and my children. But now we try to share all of these things. When we seated together or in the home, we share things—our demands, their needs. If I cannot fulfil them now, I try to make them understand that I will try to in the future'.[141] The graduates have come a long way from their baseline point of departure, especially with respect to their conceptual understanding and practical application of

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[139] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 30)
[140] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 2, Paragraph 95)
[141] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 1, Paragraph 48 - 49)

psychological principles, as a Teacher highlighted: 'I think first of all most of the mothers are uneducated; they did not have the proper child development themselves. They just gave birth to their children without knowing what to do next. They did not know about the child development stages. A child's development is quite complex, and I think they have quite a good understanding of it now'.[142]

**The mothers are going beyond merely abandoning authoritarian parenting styles and changing family dynamics by bringing the parenting for peace philosophy deeper into their own homes. With a view to building more resilient families, graduates are passing their knowledge on to their children and husbands.**

Among the most immediate impacts of the MotherSchools is that family violence—a pivotal push factor—has been significantly reduced and often removed altogether. The data suggests that harsh forms of discipline are being replaced when mothers recognise that alternative methods are solving rather than accentuating the issue at hand ('Now I am listening to my children and I try to address their needs within my capabilities, because if there was a misunderstanding between the parents and children, we used to beat them, but now we try to make them understand and try to address their needs and try to protect them').[143] A telling story of a mother who reflected on her violence illustrates how the road to a peaceful home requires critical thinking, engaging in constructive dialogue, and an ability to acknowledge one's mistakes: 'One of my daughters was angry with me and left my home. I rushed to her and when I reached her, I beat her. Then I thought, "If I beat her, if I scold her, then things will never change". Because now I have learned from the MotherSchools that no matter what, you have to think before you take action. I started talking with her, started to explain things, and started to understand her. That's why she understands my situation and I understand her situation also. My other daughter was seeing this and saying, "Mom, you have changed a lot, how come you can talk her after she had done such a terrible thing?" I said to my daughter then: "Because it is very important that you understand your children; you never should push them away'.[144] To some degree, authoritarian parenting tendencies on the part of mothers can be viewed as a product of receiving limited support from other family members. In transitioning from violence to dialogue, however, many mothers have witnessed their children take on more responsibilities

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[142] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 28)
[143] (191028 BDN MSP ExLK 1, Paragraph 97)
[144] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 2, Parageaph 60 - 64)

('Whenever her son did something bad, she used to beat and scold him, but now she talks calmly with him and he listens. And also one mother was sharing that her boy never helped his mother do anything, but now her boy and girl are both helping her and her son cooked for her for the first time').[145] Against this background, mothers have embraced the understanding that while they have a crucial part to play in influencing dynamics, their families should be brought into the fold, adopt more progressive values, and take on a share of domestic responsibilities ('I can say the mother has a very significant role to prevent extremism by being involved with her children, either girls or boys—by involving them with household work. Because there should not be gender discrimination; I can ask my son to get a jug of water. You have to keep quality time with your children').[146] Mothers are discovering the power of a united family working together and how an open discussion can bring about these positive changes in family dynamics.

**Wives and husbands are improving their marital relationship and increasingly working as a united front to actively uproot family violence and counterproductive parenting approaches.**

From the perspective of MotherSchools Participants, husbands who had previously contributed to a dysfunctional culture of communication at home are becoming more attuned to their responsibilities as fathers and partners. Graduates have been able to improve their marital relationships through constructive dialogue and sharing their MotherSchools experiences ('When we had dinner, we used to talk about what I learned, what the Teacher shared, and what I experienced. We started to talk, and things started changing between us. He now shares his problems, what he thinks, the problems he faces in his workplace, and I also share my problems').[147] Many fathers who had tended to be part of the problem with respect to push factors are now at the early stages of a positive transformation. Some have joined the mothers as role models in their families and are taking on critical parenting duties. In fact, the fathers originally had been a barrier to their wives' participation in the MotherSchools programme, as one Teacher recalled: 'At first, the fathers were not so interested in having the mothers join. They thought that it will be a private matter and can be a threatful issue for them. After two or three classes, they heard from their wives what they do, how husbands can be helpful, and how

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[145] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1)
[146] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 1, Paragraph 72)
[147] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 1, Paragraph 102 - 104)

they can as fathers be more loving towards their children. The fathers then made space and did some household work and helped by cooking, so that mothers could join the sessions'.[148] In recognising the positive impacts of the MotherSchools, purportedly husbands increasingly are lifting restrictions that they had put on their wives. They are thus appearing to be building a more equal and balanced relationship ('My husband remarked that I changed. He said: "You are giving me freedom now. I feel now that you are acting like a partner. I think you should continue the MotherSchools". Earlier, my husband asked, "Why were you chosen and nobody else, why not the others, what is this, who is there with you, what is the purpose?" Now he understands, because he has realised the changes. He allows me now to go and to receive the knowledge. And he even allows me to go to other meetings. Prior I didn't share the contents of any meetings with my husband, because I didn't think it was relevant, but with the MotherSchools I do, and this is the difference. He is also interested in me going there and he is positive').[149] Fathers who had been largely absent from the lives of their children are inspired by their role model wives to make more time for their children, and also to reflect on their propensity for violence and authoritarian communication styles. While keeping in mind their lower baseline point of departure, many fathers' alleged progress in following suit looks to be positive ('My husband is a hot-headed person. When I got in the MotherSchools training, I talked to him that we should always behave calmly, that we should not scold or beat our children, that we should give them all the love and attention they need. At first, he did not really care about what I was saying, but when he saw changes within me, he started to change his opinion. He used to shout and show anger to me and my children, but now he doesn't do this anymore').[150] In many respects, fathers reportedly are now following the example of their wives, and are in some case also assuming a constructive safeguarding role: 'So the mothers have told us that if they would have not gone to the MotherSchools, they could not have changed their husband. Now their husbands are changing. They give affection to the children, give more attention to whom they meet, who their friends are'.[151] In its quest to arrive at a whole-of-family security architecture, the MotherSchools were able to achieve a knowledge transfer of key communication methods that can be applied to and absorbed by all family members. The mothers, in some case, also reported that they are able to apply their new safeguarding role and skills to their husbands, some of whom appear to be involved in regular

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[148] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 46)
[149] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 1, Paragraph 63 - 71)
[150] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 4, Paragraph 116 - 121)
[151] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 29)

street fights and possibly gang violence. This is a crucial development, since the violence of parents can become a serious push factor by having a traumatic and isolating effect on children. Furthermore, sons in particular are susceptible to emulating violent fathers, which also helps to sustain a culture of violence in families and communities across generations; this is a well-known driver of radicalisation. Two impact cases brought forward by the mothers suggest that some fathers are gradually withdrawing from violent community behaviour and instead contributing to the role model parenting architecture at home: 'So now my husband is spending more time at home than previously. He was also involved in fighting with other groups. There are some groups who several times are fighting with other groups, and my husband was very engaged in that. I made him understand that fighting with others is not a good way. He should come back. Now he is trying to withdraw from this group';[152] 'My husband also made some positive comments. But it is not all only me. Some merit goes to my husband as well. I requested him not to go with this bad company, who are fighting with others. He is spending more time with us. So together with my sacrifices, the combination of the two together creates a harmony in the family, where everyone is appreciating others. It is not only about appreciating me; I also appreciate my husband. And my children are not only appreciating me but also my husband. So the appreciation is just moving like a cycle'.[153]

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[152] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 55 - 58)
[153] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 73 - 76)

# Parenting Styles and Push Factors | Impact Case

## Impact Summary

Heightened awareness around their prevention potential and an increased parenting knowledge base has instilled confidence in mothers to position themselves as safeguarding frontrunners. In adopting more advanced parenting styles and embracing the unique access and emotional proximity that mothers have to their children, the MotherSchools graduates of Dhaka are now challenging central push factors that accentuate youth vulnerabilities to recruiters. Asserting their authority at home and implementing contextualised parenting methods has enabled mothers to plug glaring communication gaps, restructure family dynamics, and build more resilient families in the process. In applying new parenting practices and drawing on concepts from developmental child psychology, concerned mothers are creating an open culture of communication and consolidating their prevention role. Graduates have also begun harnessing closer family bonds to cooperate with their children and address acute problems, including various drivers of radicalisation. The mothers are going beyond merely abandoning authoritarian parenting styles and changing family dynamics by bringing the parenting for peace philosophy deeper into their own homes. With a view to building more resilient families, graduates are passing their knowledge on to their children and husbands. Wives and husbands are improving their marital relationship and increasingly working as a united front to actively uproot family violence and counterproductive parenting approaches.

## Baseline Example

*'I don't think they know how to communicate the problem if their children are facing a problem in their adolescence or anything. Because what our mums do is if they are showing problem, they come with shoes and they throw them at us or they slap us or beat us. They never speak. They never talk with us'.[154]*

## Impact Story

*'Before coming to the MotherSchools, I did not understand the children's psychology; if there was anything wrong that they did, I beat them. But now I do not do that, I try to understand their problem. Now I am treating my children well, but before I scolded them, if there was anything wrong that happened. ... I learned good things from the MotherSchools: how to address children's needs and how to listen to them. I have adopted MotherSchools learnings in my life. Like if my children are good—if I take care of them—then someone else cannot take them and do wrong to them. So that is why I thought this learning was good to keep my children safe. I have adopted the methodology, I understand my children my daughters and handle them properly so that they can be a good human being and will not fall into the trap of others—of any bad person'.[155]*

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[154] (190616 BDN MST EnM 1, Paragraph 60)
[155] (191028 BDN MSP ExLK 2, Paragraph 40 - 46)

## FURTHER BASELINE EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'I never beat him first. I try to talk to him first, try to make him understand, his situation, but he never understands. I have to get my other daughter married as well. There are just so many things to do'.[156]

- '[How do you discipline your children?] We show them fear. My son last week talked with a boy who was abducted by the police, he is a drug user. I scolded my son: "Why are you going to that boy, because if police abducts you because of being with him they will punish you with hot water in your face and mouth. You should be very careful not to mingle. If they call you, talk with them in an open place. Do not go in a corner, because if they give you drugs, because first day you say no, second day you say no, third day they will force you. So stay in a public place and keep safe". My husband scolded him. My husband also sometimes hits the boys when they do not listen. When they are not under our control we are forced to hit'.[157]

- 'Fathers work outside and stay a little and spend a little time in the home but are busy with the work. Only mother is in house and has enough time. It is, to be frank, it should be both the parents, but it is only mother who is shouldering all the responsibilities. Sometimes I hit and beat the daughters. I beat more my sons than my husband does'.[158]

- 'There is nothing to say about my husband. He married another woman without my permission, where he had a child of two years. He does not give us money for our expenses, he runs 3 family with his poor income. I pay all the children's expenses and house rent, all bills. The dream of my young girl is she will make a good future and she does not want to stay in this environment'[159]

- 'My married life is 24 years. Last 3 years, I'm playing the role of the influential person and decision maker but before that my husband was the decision maker of the family. The last three years, I'm playing this role. Because right now my husband is low-earning and in previous time I was brutally tortured by my husband because he was involved in some bad things like gambling and other games related to money. So, last time when he earned a lot then the managing power, decision making power, was him but right now, last 3 years when I started the job and earning money then now I can take decision about my family, my children'.[160]

- 'Frankly, I don't not like my husband at all. To keep a good relationship, sometimes it is necessary to say something, lie, or hide something. For example when I bought clothes for my children, sometimes I hide it from my husband or say this is a gift from that person or something like that. Sometimes when I buy clothes I say it's less than the actual price. So many times I can manage these in my own way'.[161]

- 'Sometimes I work in other people's home, but now I am only taking care of my children. My husband was a rickshaw puller but now he is a shopkeeper and he has another family. I will not keep anything secret. There is little money for us because he have to divide this money into 2 families'.[162]

- 'Mothers are unable to make them understand, they do not want to listen. My own son does not want to listen to me. I always try to understand, do something but he does not want to. Now he forced me to send him abroad for working. He said that "if I live in Bangladesh I will get spoiled again". Many of his friends already went abroad to Saudi Arabia. [They work in a garage. Car workshop. After two years they come back and then they leave again'.[163]

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[156] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 4, Paragraph 15)
[157] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 2, Paragraph 20 - 22)
[158] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 5, Paragraph 18)
[159] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 7, Paragraph 24)
[160] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 1, Paragraph 45)
[161] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 1, Paragraph 58 - 61)
[162] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 2, Paragraph 14- 16)
[163] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 7, Paragraph 60 - 82)

**Notetaker interview extracts:**

- 'Sometimes they beat. Sometimes parents or mothers are very violent. With the stick, with something, with anything they can beat. They can lock their children inside the room, they don't give them the food. Maybe somewhere in our society there's sometimes a mother. [Do you think that these methods are effective?] Yes, of course these methods are effective'.[164]

- 'Children are punished by beating or taking mobile phones and they are concerned about early relationships; mothers are taking them away or locking them in the room. Mostly mothers do this as she is mostly working around the children, so she is taking responsibility'.[165]

## FURTHER IMPACT EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'Actually, from now I am trying to give more time to my children and I can take them to the school and coaching centre. Before, I allowed them to go alone. And before when they tried to make me understand anything about their needs and I did not listen properly I always thought this is her problem, but now I try to listen and try to understand the problem that she is talking about in school, coaching centre, and community. Also, before I did not think about their safety and security. That's why I am now taking them to school. I told my husband to learn from the MotherSchools'.[166]

- 'My son once threw a stone and broke the glass of somebody else. Afterwards I rushed to this person and tried to explain, how I had learned to in MotherSchools. If you try to act calmly anything can be solved in a positive way: "Okay, my son broke your glass and what do we do now? Will it serve you to also beak some of our glass or to beat him? No, this is not a positive solution, that is why you have to act calmly". That is what I learned in MotherSchools and that is what helped. The person understood my point and he also explained to my son why he shouldn't do such things'.[167]

- 'I learned a lot about attitude and behaviour. How to behave with my children and with my neighbours. I have three boys in different ages. And they have different types of friends. So with whom they are spending their time and how they are spending their time should be followed up by me. Which was totally unknown to me before coming to the sessions'.[168]

- 'We have children and the children go to those places where the fights happen. Earlier we just told the children not to go to these places. Now we explain the children why they should not go there: 'You can be addressed and attacked. So if you just stay at home nothing will happen, don't go there, rather stay at home'.[169]

- 'My daughter also works as a housemate. Earlier she used to go there alone and come back alone also. But now I give her company when she goes from work and I pick her up. I never leave her alone. I try to spend much more time with her so she doesn't feel lonely and she can feel secure, and also, that she cannot go with someone that would have a bad influence on her'.[170]

- 'The Teachers of the MotherSchools told us that the girls are more victimised of teasing or sexual harassment. They told us to tell our daughters to come to us first and we can deal with it. We are telling other mothers too. This is something new to us I shared with my daughters if somebody disturbs you, first come to me and I will handle the situation. I think I am empowered enough to protect the situation and I can handle the situation. At first, I would go to the guardian

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[164] (190616 BDN MSN EnL 1, Paragraph 165 - 171)
[165] (190617 BDN MSN EnG 2, Paragraph 28)
[166] (191028 BDN MSP ExLK 1, Paragraph 55 - 56)
[167] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 3, Paragraph 159 - 164)
[168] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 1, Paragraph 23 - 27)
[169] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 22 - 23)
[170] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 2, Paragraph 89)

of the boy and talk to them and try to solve the problem. I think I am empowered enough to address this'.[171]

- 'It has developed our relationship. Before I didn't have any idea if there is a way to communicate or make a sharing relation between husband and wife. Now I have that knowledge, I can talk with husband properly and I can share my feelings or problems with him as proper way. And he also accepts and listens to me and he knows I was doing the classes and whatever I am talking about and what I am making him to understand is coming from MotherSchools course. I am much accepted by my husband'.[172]

- 'Sometimes some of my sons ask for money. Previously I just ignored them and I just said I don't have that much money to provide you. So maybe my boys felt that I am not taking care of them. But in the sessions, I learned that when my children ask something from me and if I am not able to provide that at that moment I can say: "Look, I understand that you need this thing but right now I cannot provide it to you, because there are other priorities". So this is what I learned'.[173]

**Teacher interview extracts:**

- 'Sometimes they are upset about the behaviour of their children and they are frustrated they beat their children and we tell them it is not the solution. One mother after the 6. session she said she was always beating her children, but now after 5 or 6 sessions she erased it. It is not the solution and then she started to talk and understand the crisis of the children. [What made her stop beating?] Because the beating did not change her situation. Whenever she started to talk and understand the crisis of the children, then she actually understood. She understood that he was growing up. She made him understand that he has responsibility for his family too. These children don't listen all the time but these children did realise somehow that their mothers are working hard for them'.[174]

- 'In our country context, the youth needs more attention from their family. The parents do not have enough time to listen. This can drag the children in the wrong direction. I do not think he will join a gang or radical group if the parents give more attention to him. If a youth is trying to share their feelings with their mother, then he will try to share his emotions with someone else. If it is a recruiter, then it is bad. The parents are too busy and do not have enough time to listen to their children. So the youth are more easily attracted to friends and having negative knowledge'.[175]

- 'Listening can make you a good mother. We thought the mothers should understand this point of view. We shared the opinions how to be a good mother, how they can build a good relationship with their family, their children, other people. It is very important to be a good mother, be a good human too. Build a good network, so if there are problem in the future, they can prevent, they can talk, create new networks. In that slum, terrorism is not that much that they witness everyday, but they know about terrorism. The main problem they faced in that community, the main problem was drug addiction and group violence. We shared our view on that, we shared how can they prevent their children from getting involved with drug using or doing any sort of violent act. You never know, there could be a violent attack, you have to be careful, you have to be safe and secure from the first day. I am very much proud of them when we talked with them yesterday, it was a proud moment that I was with them, I have been working with them, they recognise, they understand what we have said through the 10 classes. I felt really proud them'.[176]

- 'The husbands of the mothers were misunderstanding us. What we are doing with their wives. They are worried about that. Two or three tried to attend. We had to make them understand that we are here for sharing our stories. Then they were there after 3-4 sessions. And now they are accepting us in a positive way. They tried to get more involved and had more curiosity. Why

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[171] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 5, Paragraph 24)
[172] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 6, Paragraph 53)
[173] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 1, Paragraph 28)
[174] (191028 BDN MST ExLK 7, Paragraph 44 - 45)
[175] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 77)
[176] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 24)

are their wives showing so much eagerness? After 3-4 sessions, they accepted that their wives are going. They are now making some household activities and make space for mothers to share their stories'.[177]

- 'For example at the start of the sessions the mothers were sharing that the fathers were not cooperating with them for their child's issues, but after the sessions they have shared that their husbands' perspectives have been changing, because following each session they have gone home and when ask by their husband about what they were doing at MotherSchools, they shared their learnings'.[178]

- 'Now they are talking with their children during mealtime because they are housewives and working women, so they meet at mealtime and talk because most husbands are hot-headed so they are convincing their husbands to try to understand their children, listen to their children'.[179]

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[177] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 46)
[178] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 29)
[179] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 31)

## 2.4 ADDRESSING HIDDEN DRIVERS

> *MotherSchools is the idea of removing all the family violence in a peaceful way. It can help to reduce family violence, gangs, and the recruiting of our children. They can learn it from the mothers of our groups.[180]*
>
> – MotherSchools Teacher, Exit Interview

Gender-based violence in Bangladesh is rooted in deeply engrained patriarchal and misogynist structural realities that help to normalise and even encourage cycles of violence, and it looms large as a long-overlooked driver of radicalisation. The link between violent extremism and gender-based violence in particular has become increasingly apparent. Supported by a mounting evidence base in recent years, this understanding has now also reached the highest decision-making levels. In September 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres took note of how terrorist attacks, extremism, and other violent crimes are directly linked to the 'violent misogyny' of offenders.[181] A recent policy brief identified Bangladesh as one among three Asian countries where 'individuals who support violence against women are three times more likely to support violent extremism'. Based on over three thousand surveys, the scholars found that those favouring hostile sexism and gender-based violence are most likely to support violent extremism. By contrast, factors like religion, gender, age, employment, and education were not found to be strong indicators. The paper also identified the curbing of women's rights as a common early warning sign for potential violent extremist engagement.[182] Considering the lack of gender responsive P/CVE programming in Bangladesh, WwB addressed this void through its MotherSchools project in Dhaka. Employing domestic violence as a case study example, the following baseline and impact findings demonstrate how the programme encourages a process of change by building knowledge of the potential repercussions of normalised violence. Mothers developed their conceptual understanding around hidden drivers of extremism and took action to break up such cycles of violence that lead to radicalisation.

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[180]  (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 29)

[181] António Guterres, UN General Assembly Address, in 'Warning against "Great Fracture", Secretary-General Calls on General Assembly to Reconnect with Organization's Values, Uphold Human Rights, Restore Trust' (UN Press Release, 24 September 2019). See https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sgsm19760.doc.htm.

[182] Melissa Johnston and Jacqui True, 'Misogyny & Violent Extremism: Implications for PVE' (Monash University and UN Women policy brief, October 2019).

**While conceding that violence against women is a widespread issue affecting a disproportionately high number of women in Dhaka, barely any of the Participants prior to the beginning of the MotherSchools spoke about it on a personal level.**

During the Entry Interviews, some of the mothers addressed gender-based violence, all of whom saw it as a systemic problem. Yet only a select few discussed being personally affected ('When I ask for money, always he beats me and shouts';[183] 'My husband is an angry person and he sometimes beats me. When this happens, when I fight with my husband, my children come to me and try to calm me down, and they hold me and comfort me and that calms me down'[184]. One of the Participants explained that married women 'are tortured by their husbands, and those who are not married are working outside or going to school, so they are the victims of sexual harassment'. She estimated that around 90% of women face these forms of violence in their homes and communities.[185] Reinforcing this assessment, a Participant noted: 'There's violence against women in the community, but I did not think it's a mentionable thing. It's a very common and normal thing in every family', so much so that ultimately wives do not question their relationship in the face of violence.[186] Further highlighting the severity of the problem, one Participant, who also described it as a common problem, expressed feeling 'proud' that her husband did not use physical force against her.[187] Another mother considering the issue of gender-based violence argued that her community has two problems: child marriage and the fact that most husbands beat their wives.[188]

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[183] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 7, Paragraph 44 - 50)

[184] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 3, Paragraph 16)

[185] 'So, it's a common thing in old age, the parents are facing a lot of problems from their children. Then, another thing is, violence and torture. Physical violence mostly is very common in the community and mostly all of the girls who are women are facing these problems, mostly are married women. Those who are married, they are tortured by their husbands, and those who are not married are working outside or going to school, so they are the victims of sexual harassment … Like 90% women face this problem of violence'. (190619 BDN MSP EnM 1, Paragraph 67 – 69)

[186] 'There's violence against women in the community, but I did not think it's a mentionable thing. It's a very common and normal thing in every family … they will continue their loving relationship.' (190619 BDN MSP EnM 7, Paragraph 57)

[187] 'The most proud thing is that my husband is an honest person. In my community it is common [that men use] violence and other things, but my husband never do that activity, so it is the most proud thing. I am happy in family life'. (190619 BDN MSP EnM 4, Paragraph 30)

[188] 'There are two types of problems in community. One is violence in women and most of the husbands are beating their wives for food or something these types of activities. … is a common thing. Another thing is early marriage or child marriage, but the same thing parents are not allowing, they are just make a relationship and they just got married'. (190619 BDN MSP EnM 6, Paragraph 63)

**Despite being mothers who are concerned about or affected by violent extremism, neither the Teachers nor Participants initially linked everyday forms of violence to drivers of radicalisation. MotherSchools Teachers nevertheless recognised that women needed to build up their self-confidence and knowledge base to put an end to gender-based violence.**

Although bearing no mention of its wider implications for families and communities, two MotherSchools Teachers and a project supervisor were able to offer possible explanations as to why domestic violence in particular continues to be normalised in the capital's households. One Teacher pointed to dowry disputes as a possible cause;[189] the others found that women often lack the means, education, and confidence—and thus the necessary agency—to counter this cycle of violence. Although some victims of domestic abuse contact the police, most do not appear to be aware of their legal rights, and those tasked with responding have insufficient or no training to do so appropriately. Women therefore rarely take action or report their cases.[190] Instead, most tend to opt for silence in an attempt to avoid beatings, as one of the mothers explained: 'I know my husband very well … when he becomes angry, I just make myself silent,  so there is no lingering thing like beating'.[191] The culture of violence against wives looks to be aided by religious leaders, and by societal dynamics that encourage wives to shield their aggressor husbands ('It's the wrong perception but many people in our country—most of the religious leaders—believe that our husband is our God. He can do everything; he can beat me, he can punch me, he can torture me').[192]

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[189] 'The violence comes from outsiders maybe or sometimes violence comes from dowry problems. We have in some continents we have, dowry is a big, so that can cause for domestic violence. And this is … happening in our country'. (190616 BDN MST EnU 1, Paragraph 62-63)

[190] 'Some women call the police about their domestic violence, but there's a lack of educational training or education efficiency, or something like that. They don't want to go to the police or administration about their problems'. (190616 BDN MST EnU 1, Paragraph 56 – 58)

[191] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 4, Paragraph 94)

[192] (190617 BDN MSS EnM 1, Paragraph 116)

**Participants broke their initial silence around the physical abuse that they were facing at the hands of their husbands or other members of their family. They also acquired a broader conceptual understanding of generational patterns of violence against women that sustain hidden drivers of extremism.**

During the Exit Interviews, Participants opened up about the violence and abuse that they experienced in their homes. Having previously not spoken about personal experiences of domestic violence, mothers now reflected more critically and openly on their relationships. One of the graduates is beaten by her husband on a regular basis for not fulfilling his expectations. In her words, 'I have not a good relationship with my husband … he beats me whenever I refuse to give money; he says it is my responsibility to give food and provide for the family').[193] The acknowledgment of this fraught relationship signals an important first step towards dealing with dysfunctional family dynamics, and some have already begun to actively address the issue with their husbands. Another mother who described her husband as 'a very angry person' and their relationship as 'average' always received beatings when her family came to visit ('He doesn't like my family, so when they come, he gets angry and beats me'). Yet through the programme she was able to broach the issue and prompt him to reflect on his behaviour: 'Whatever I have learned from MotherSchools, when I share with him, he listens. And now he thinks on this issue … coming to MotherSchools, it has an impact on him and his violence'.[194] The programme also built awareness around generational systems of gender-based violence that sustain more hidden drivers of violent extremism. Participants learned how sons in particular are prone to emulating the behaviour of fathers who act as toxic role models. While the following story is symptomatic of this inter-generational issue, it likewise speaks to how mothers are responding to their growing gendered awareness around family dynamics that perpetuate cycles of violence: ' We had a mother who had a boy, 13 years or so …. His father is paralysed, always in bed. But in bed he always used bad words to his daughter and mother. After a while, the son thought this is the behaviour of a son. He would hit his mother for not

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[193] 'I have not a good relationship with my husband. My husband does not beat my children, but he beats me whenever I refuse to give money. He says it is my responsibility to give food and provide for the family. [How often does he beat you?] On a regular basis'. (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 3, Paragraph 48- 53)

[194] "'The relationship is average. It is not good, not so bad, but he is a very angry person, so when he gets angry, he beats me. He doesn't like my family, so when they come, he gets angry and beats me. [How often is the beating?] Previously, a few times a month, but now it has reduced because our daughter is getting older. [Are there topics you now discuss with your husband which you didn't discuss before? Example?] Whatever I have learned from MS, when I share with him, he listens. And now he thinks on this issue … my girl is growing up, I am coming to MS, it has an impact on him and his violence'. (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 6, Paragraph 54 - 55)

making good food, clean clothes, not enough. The mother in the class showed how she had a mark on her arm from being hit with an iron rod. This is from our first or second session. But now she shares with us how she is making him calm. Now the boy is quite improving from before. Can you imagine he is 13 years only? And we Teachers have some personal communication with her beyond the classroom. We are trying to support her in a peaceful way. How to handle her boy and husband.'[195] Mothers learned that this type of abuse tends to breed violence, and that in identifying with the aggressor children may carry over such drivers into their future lives. In the short-term, such dynamics can act as a push factor that further isolates children and makes them susceptible to recruiters who act as substitute role models and offer false promises of escaping this culture of violence.

**The MotherSchools confidence training, knowledge and awareness building, and support structure enabled Participants to erode cycles of violence at home. Participants who translated empowerment into action managed to put their husbands on a journey of self-reflection. As a result, many of the men purportedly stopped resorting to violence and began to take their role model responsibility as fathers more seriously.**

'After the MotherSchools programme', one of the Participants took note, 'I have realised that I have to work for my family and children and have made my husband realise that he should not beat me up, and he also should work for the family; now we both are working'.[196] Graduates now have the self-confidence to act on their understanding of family imbalances and injustices. A number of them confronted their husbands directly. The impact story of a mother who was being beaten by her husband for the failings of her son offers a prime example of how MotherSchools offer support structures that motivate Participants to recognise and intervene in toxic family dynamics: 'One of the mother's children got imprisoned for carrying drugs. The husband used to … punish her physically. The mother all the time tried to ignore this. …. We said: "You should not be silent this time, you should protest it". When the husband started punishing her again, she shouted. This made her husband afraid. She warned him that when he would do the same with her, she will think of divorcing or going to the police. From then on, the mother felt more relaxed and the husband tried to follow her instruction'. The Teacher recalling this story fittingly defined it in terms of women empowerment through a group process: 'The empowerment of women was with her …. She learned something from others,

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[195] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 44)
[196] (191028 BDN MSP ExUK 2, Paragraph 187 - 197)

and she was surprised and proud that she could actually use the learned empowerment for herself'.[197] The Exit Interviews uncovered a plethora of empowerment stories that highlight how mothers who had been enduring domestic violence in their homes were encouraged through the programme to speak up for themselves and effect positive changes. The following story is especially telling of how courageous connected and empowered mothers are: 'So she really realised, and after seven sessions she shared that she confronted her husband: "You cannot beat me and you need to take the responsibility for me, my sons, and the family". And she became very rude with her husband and she said that: "If you cannot take the responsibility with your family then you cannot live with us you have to leave our family", and she did not allow her husband that day in the house and her husband was staying the whole night outside of the house, and after that the mother shared that after this incidence her husband never beat her up again and now he is going to his work regularly, and he is providing money for the family and he is trying to behave in a good way with the family. So she is really grateful to us, she told me four times: "If you did not tell me that, I could not have taken this step"'.[198]

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[197] (191028 BDN MST ExYR 6, Paragraph 90 - 94)
[198] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 42)

### Impact Summary

Participants broke their initial silence around the physical abuse that they were facing at the hands of their husbands or other members of their family. They also acquired a broader conceptual understanding of generational patterns of violence against women that sustain hidden drivers of extremism. The MotherSchools confidence training, knowledge and awareness building, and support structure enabled Participants to erode cycles of violence at home. Participants who translated empowerment into action managed to put their husbands on a journey of self-reflection. As a result, many of the men purportedly stopped resorting to violence and began to take their role model responsibility as fathers more seriously.

### Baseline Example

*'In our country, in our society, there is violence that we've looked at. But all are not exposed. If the husband hits me or harms me, I cannot expose him. Some of the women or mothers believe that if the husband's hitting her, he will go to heaven. It's the wrong perception but many people in our country—most of the religious leaders—believe that our husband is our God. He can do everything; he can beat me, he can punch me, he can torture me'.[199]*

### Impact Story

*'My relationship to my husband is a lot better than before. My husband was talking to the daughters: 'Your mum has been changing so much, she changed the environment in our home, and it is a good thing'. I can share a lot of things with my husband now. It is much more easy to share those things than before. Now I have learned to involve him with the children, how can we create a better future for our children and our family. I told my husband that we learned from our Teachers about the negative sides of violence, what extremism is, what extremist groups does to our children and what is the possible threat for our children from this extremist group. That is what I learned from MotherSchools. And I used to beat my children, scold my children and my husband used to beat me also. ... He used to beat me, and he used to leave me to spend time without me. And now I spoke to him and I explain, I say: 'You know, we should have talked about the problematic issues and tried to solve those things in between us'. So now he is a more understanding person and now he understands me and my situation and supports me. Now, when he stays at home and spends time with us, he asks us what we need, what he can do'.[200]*

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[199] (190617 BDN MSS EnM 1, Paragraph 116)
[200] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 2, Paragraph 113 - 130)

## FURTHER BASELINE EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'My husband do not give us money. We do not have a good relation, only we have a physical relation, not mentally. As much as I need his time, he does not give me time and attention. He also does not care about the children. Whatever it is I have to do he does not care about anything or what his children want. When I ask for money, always he beats me and shouts'.[201]

- 'I have to be with him, I have to be with my fate. He beat me many times but right now as he is sick, he is not doing anything, and he turns into a good person right now. I didn't quarrel with him [protest the beatings]. Though I have been beaten by my husband, I never been to the police for any complaint, I just try to solve it, as I think it is my domestic problem'.[202]

- 'I want to live in a good society, I want some love from my husband, because I do not get love from my husband. My mother-in-law tortures me a lot but still I am here. I tolerate everything and I can overcome.  As my marriage was a child marriage, my mother-in-law used to beat me. And my husband had an extra-marital affair. For this reason, my husband also used to beat me. As I was too young for all the household work, if I did any mistake, they beat me'.[203]

- 'I saw very hardship in my young life. Because I had no father and my mother was in a very bad situation. Now also I am not happy with my husband, with my children, I have lots of problems'.[204]

- 'So, it's a common thing in old age, the parents are facing a lot of problems from their children. Then, another thing is, violence and torture. Physical violence mostly is very common in the community and mostly all of the girls who are women are facing these problems, mostly are married women. Those who are married, they are tortured by their husbands, and those who are not married are working outside or going to school, so they are the victims of sexual harassment … Like 90% women face this problem of violence'.[205]

- 'There are two types of problems in community. One is violence in women and most of the husbands are beating their wives for food or something these types of activities. … is a common thing. Another thing is early marriage or child marriage, but the same thing parents are not allowing, they are just make a relationship and they just got married'.[206]

**Teacher interview extract:**

- 'Mothers always don't try to disclose problems. Even if mothers are tortured by family members, either husband or stepmother, she never discloses this. It is the issue. If any bad thing happens with her child other than rape, they do not want to disclose. It complicates the family life and reputation—social crisis'.[207]

## FURTHER IMPACT EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extract:**

- 'I feel hurt when I recall my past. Sometimes my husband came to my house and for his bad mood he just beat me. It was very usual, and I was always prepared that I would be beaten by my husband. It had happened very frequently but the scenery changed'.[208]

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[201] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 7, Paragraph 44 - 50)
[202] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 2, Paragraph 54)
[203] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 7, Paragraph 24 - 32)
[204] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 8, Paragraph 18)
[205] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 1, Paragraph 67 – 69)
[206] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 6, Paragraph 63)
[207] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 30)
[208] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 95 - 96)

**Teacher interview extracts:**

- 'Most of the families or mothers are sharing their family violence stories with us. Most of the time husbands are hitting them for food, for cleaning, for earning more money. They share this every day with us. Most of the mothers are sharing their son-in-law hitting tendencies. Or greediness for in-law incomes and properties. And they are showing violence against wives. In-laws. Usually these things are related to financial issues. Most mothers are saying children are being hit every day by fathers. For their bad habits, for their friends. Now the mothers are trying to handle the children in a peaceful way. They are talking to the husbands. After returning from work to their slum, they had no time to talk to their children and spend time. They before the MotherSchools had no intention to spend time with the children, but now they are at least trying'.[209]

- 'Mothers are already sharing with me that they are implementing some learnings in their family lives and their children are responding very positively with them. There was a mother who is a really poor woman. Actually when we started our sessions, she told us that her husband would beat her hard and every day, maybe actually most of the time. We have tried to make her realise that she is the controller of her life and she has to be faithful to her husband and her husband has to be faithful to her, and we have also tried to make her realise that she has to raise her voice for herself and for the family'.[210]

- 'One of the mother's children got imprisoned for carrying drugs. The husband used to do the domestic violent frequently to punish her physically. The mother all the time tried to ignore this. But if you are tortured you should not be patient on that. In the next session she shared this with us. We said: "You should not be silent this time, you should protest it". When the husband started punishing her again, she shouted. This made her husband afraid. She warned him that when he would do the same with her, she will think of divorcing or going to the police. From then on, the mother felt more relaxed and the husband tried to follow her instruction. The empowerment of women was with her, and she did not actually know that she could use it. She learned something from others, and she was surprised and proud that she could actually use the learned empowerment for herself'.[211]

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[209] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 43)
[210] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 42)
[211] (191028 BDN MST ExYR 6, Paragraph 90 - 94)

## 2.5 ADDRESSING COMMON DRIVERS & STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE

> *For my daughter, son, the neighbourhood, relatives, the young generation—for all those people—I am really worried. Drug addiction is very frequent in our society, and I think addicted people can become extremists; they can become involved in extremist acts. It is quite easy for drug addicted people to get involved in extremism.[212]*
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> *I shared the issues with other mothers in the community. MotherSchools has influenced us, and whatever we have learned we have disseminated with other mothers. When mothers gain knowledge on these issues, we share the messages with the children as well. It is a learning process. When there is individual change, it makes a collective change. If we increase the other groups, it can be a movement with all mothers.[213]*
>
> *– MotherSchools Participants, Exit Interviews*

In an effort to identify the most common drivers leading to radicalisation in Bangladesh, a 2018 research study analysed 112 suspected militants in Bangladesh. The authors found that most militants were male students from secular universities who were driven by a combination of a crisis of identity, personal loss, and pressures from peer groups and family members— and far less by financial reasons than had previously been assumed.[214] The previous section on familial push factors has illustrated how the MotherSchools programme restructured family dynamics to address identity crises, feelings of alienation, and parental pressures on the part of children. In refining their communication skills in the family, mothers were now equipped to activate their prevention potential, to thus identify and react to common drivers of radicalisation beyond the family realm. Transcending the safe space and familial context, this section turns to how mothers are responding to early warning signs and grievances that also originate from within the community or the online space, including peer groups and drugs.[215] This concluding impact section therefore demonstrates how MotherSchools graduates have been translating their confidence and competence into action to uproot context-specific drivers in their homes and communities. When viewed as a whole, the impact findings provide a strong evidence base of mothers creating networks of prevention actors, applying individual and coordinated group action to confront manifestations of common drivers that can lead to violent extremism, and strengthening community resilience in the process.

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[212] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 5, Paragraph 65)
[213] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 3, Paragraph 74)
[214] Most suspects were part of either Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) or Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), local militant organisations with alleged ties to ISIS and Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), respectively. See: Ali Riaz and Saimum Parvez, 'Bangladeshi Militants: What Do We Know?' Terrorism and Political Violence 30/6 (2018): 944—961.
[215] On online recruitment: www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/cyber-radicalisation-bangladesh

## 2.5.1. COMMUNITY DRIVERS FROM PEERS TO DRUGS | BASELINE CONTEXT

**The mothers of Dhaka found their communities to be rife with violence and social problems. Many portrayed neighbourhoods as perilous and unsuitable environments for raising children. Those who opened up about community threats listed issues that are factors that render youths susceptible to radicalisation, including peer groups, gangs, and drug-related problems.**

An analysis of the baseline context interviews finds violence and criminal activities to be a permanent fixture in MotherSchools Participants' communities. All mothers were concerned about outside threats, and the idea of their children being outside unsupervised made many anxious ('There are some threats in the community like drug addiction, molestation, hijacking, and so on. As a mother, I feel alarmed for the safety of my own child and the children in this society';[216] 'Most of the time, Dhaka is very insecure for the children. If they go outside, they may be kidnapped, they may be raped, they may be harassed').[217] This anxiety had been enhanced by the fact that 'most of the time the family members do not know what their children do outside', in the words of a prospective MotherSchools Teacher, who subsequently added that children between the ages of 12 and 28 were commonly being recruited as drug mules—without the knowledge of their parents—by traffickers who sought to evade police detection in this way.[218] In the estimation of a MotherSchools group supervisor, a majority of children were being preyed on by drug lords, with most adolescents being only nine or ten years of age at the time. To the supervisor's mind, these widespread drug trafficking networks were connected to and thus a possible pathway to radicalisation. 'Because we are thinking of radicalisation and extremism,' she explained, 'we have chosen this area, where most people are involved in trafficking'. She also sheds light on how the children, like their parents, are unaware of the situation ('They bring things from one place to another but did not know what was in his bag; they just carry').[219] Two of the prospective Teachers believed that the programme would be especially effective in addressing this rampant culture of crime and dangerous community influences ('With groups there is the possibility that they get derailed. High time to do this programme';[220] 'Recently when I heard about the MotherSchools project plan, I was really fond of it because our community, our society, is day by day going through some problems like

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[216] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 3, Paragraph 33)
[217] (190617 BDN MST EnL 1, Paragraph 14)
[218] (190616 BDN MST EnR 2, Paragraph 30)
[219] (190617 BDN MSS EnM 1, Paragraph 97 - 98)
[220] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 8 - 9)

criminal activities or social degradation').[221] Many of the mothers who spoke about their community environments confirmed how drug-related activities were the gravest concern that parents were facing, with some mentioning that politicians were also recruiting children into gangs. To draw on three representative examples: 'Where I live there are too many drugs available like ya ba and heroin. Many young people are already deeply involved, and I am very scared of my surrounding and that my son can get involved with it. I always see the drug dealer beside my house. This is the most challenging issue for me';[222] 'There's a group that consists of mainly political people. They are not elite types of people like that. They are politically involved people and they have our politics and money. Then make a group and starts working to involve other youths with them so there's a gang';[223] 'People roam in the streets, and come from outside, bad groups: drugs, fighting, using abusive language. Mothers do have rules, they can do something for the family and society, but we don't talk about it, it's taboo'.[224]

**Adolescents and young adults were coming of age in an environment that offered limited social cohesion and perspectives. Isolated children appear to have been more prone to dealing with this human disconnect by spending their time connected to social media platforms, which thus exposed and made them more susceptible to content that Teachers identified as conducive to radicalisation.**

Prospective MotherSchools Participants noted that their neighbourhoods tended not to be supportive or united in the face of personal struggles. The mothers also pointed to how hostilities between families fed this disconnect and hampered the development of a stronger sense of community. In the words of three mothers commenting on their neighbours: 'They are not friendly, and nobody is helpful in this slum, and nobody asks for help';[225] 'Everybody is busy with their own life; there is no time, but we should make some time. We should become friendly';[226] 'There is not this type of community or type of unity. So, this is an independent life; the family is doing things independently'.[227] In contemplating the absence of a supportive community environment, some Participants also identified poor educational perspectives as a source of the problem. This had led to a so-called 'brain drain' by which gifted and perhaps

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[221] (190616 BDN MST EnU 1, Paragraph 8)
[222] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 1, Paragraph 84 - 85)
[223] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 1, Paragraph 77 - 81)
[224] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 7, Paragraph 30 - 31)
[225] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 2, Paragraph 30)
[226] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 2, Paragraph 35 - 36)
[227] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 2, Paragraph 63)

more privileged youths have sought out opportunities elsewhere ('The good people, good youth, who are respected, are appreciated by everybody, some of them are missing and they leave forever. And they believe that the camp is just not good for living').[228] The Entry Interviews analysis produces a clear thematic cluster of missing opportunities. The supporting statements from mothers and Teachers reveals how children are growing up in a context that prohibits them from recognising and tapping into their full potential. With the possible pitfalls in mind, a Teacher saw in these deficits a possible driver of extremism: 'These kinds of children, since they do not have the proper guidance and education, they can do anything and are autonomous. They can go into radicalisation'.[229] This considerable degree of disorientation among the new generation, as it emerged, could be corroborated by a number of mothers in relation to their own children. Drawing on two notable examples, in both cases the prospective Participants put their respective sons' supposed social deviance down to not having finished their studies. While one saw her son get mixed up 'with the wrong crowd' after dropping out, another 'got into bad company and started taking drugs' thereafter.[230] Aside from drugs and peers, the online space was also cited as a source of concern and possible driver of violent extremism. The internet appears to have been successful in filling the aforementioned social cohesion void. Teachers and Notetakers contended that social media in particular has drawn in children in large numbers, often to the detriment of the youth's personal development. When viewed together, their statements suggest that the internet became a driver of youth radicalisation due to a combination of: increased social isolation stemming from a communication disconnect in families and communities that attract children to the online space; widespread victimhood narratives on the internet that evoke a sense of injustice and feed the propensity for violent revenge; the spread of misinformation among susceptible adolescents who have yet to form their own opinions and develop stronger identities ('I strongly believe Facebook and social media have a vital role in creating violent extremism. Everyone puts their opinion in Facebook. Since we talk less face-to-face day-by-day, we are becoming really introvert, and that's why we are putting our thoughts on Facebook. It's very common. Say I have a judgmental opinion about my religion or about my country's prime minister, about our political parties, I will put my opinion on the social platform, and in an instant minute that will spread out. These things are really what spread that violent actions or violent thought';[231] 'I

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[228] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 7, Paragraph 75)
[229] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 15)
[230] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 4, Paragraph 4); (190619 BDN MSP EnG 1, Paragraph 21 - 22)
[231] (190616 BDN MST EnM 1, Paragraph 187, 189)

think this is very easy nowadays with the internet and Facebook that we all get to look all over the world what is happening in Afghanistan, what is happening in Syria. We can understand, okay they are Muslims; they are victims. But now the other religious people are beating or killing the non-Muslims who live in Bangladesh';[232] 'The children's thoughts are not mature enough to make visions of their own. They are seeing everything in social media, and they are thinking that maybe this is right. Seeing extremism activities, they are liking it and they are finding interest in dark internet. These kinds of things are very bad and these are attracting more young people'.[233]

**A vast majority of mothers were anxious about their children's exposure to drug-related activities and negative peer group influences. Sons appeared to be the main source of concern, with some mothers citing examples related to their own child's problematic friendship milieu and descent into substance abuse. Most make the community environment responsible for their diminished parenting authority on the one hand, and for their sons' actual or potential future issues on the other hand.**

The biggest cluster of the mothers' concerns to emerge from the baseline context interviews revolved around the issues of drugs and peer groups. A sizeable cohort of prospective Participants related how they feared losing control over their children in the light of negative community impacts ('This is my biggest concern: if my child is engaged in any bad company, because many children are getting drug addicted in our neighbourhood and I am very worried about my son; I'm worried that if he goes into drugs, I do not understand how I'll handle him').[234] In this respect, the mothers' sons were either at risk of straying afield or already impacted by external influences. Characteristic of the more extreme cases among the cohort of prospective MotherSchools attendees, one mother talked about how she had virtually lost all parental authority over her son: 'He doesn't listen to me, he is roaming around with gangs, he takes drugs, he never contributes to the family, and I have to manage on my own'. Her methods, ranging from taking her son to the 'village doctors' to beating him severely, appeared to have made matters worse. Not only did the Participant recognise that her son became angrier and at one point violent against his mother as a result, she also reflected on how her parenting approach might have driven her son away: 'I couldn't feed him well, I couldn't give him attention, I could not talk to him much—that is why he went outside; if I could have given him

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[232] (190616 BDN MSN EnL 1, Paragraph 93)
[233] (190616 BDN MST EnM 1, Paragraph 193 - 195)
[234] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 7, Paragraph 36)

more attention, he could have stayed at home'.[235] Yet the other mothers appear not to have considered push factors such as parenting deficits to be the root cause for their son's perilous situation. To their mind, the 'environment' and 'bad company' were mostly to blame. The examples, while too numerous to cite in full here, are included in the appended 'further baseline examples' section. In summary, most of the mothers who opened up about their sons' engagement with negative peer groups and drugs held the community context accountable for losing authority as a mother, and some also mentioned the poor work ethic of their sons as an additional factor: 'I am very afraid that my son gets spoiled by bad company; he is addicted to not doing any work';[236] 'If I say "go and study", he says "no", and he always hangs out with his friends … They are addicted—my son's friends; that is why I am afraid for my son … Because of my environment, my son is learning his bad behaviour from another person. What he is doing, it is the impact of society. That is why I want to move away from here';[237] 'The place I am living is not good: there are drugs, there are murders. I have no idea why he takes them. My son got involved with bad teenage boys. They called him, and he went to them, and they pressured him to sell drugs to others, and from there he started to take the drugs'.[238]

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[235] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 4, Paragraph 11 - 14)
[236] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 1, Paragraph 22 - 23)
[237] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 6, Paragraph 39 - 43; 48 - 49)
[238] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 4, Paragraph 13)

## 2.5.2 Prevention Networks & Resilient Communities | MotherSchools Impact

**Graduates have been applying their MotherSchools confidence and competence training by uprooting context-specific drivers of radicalisation in their homes and communities. At the individual level, they are shifting their focus away from fatalistic attitudes about the community environment and towards unlocking their changemaker and role model potential through parenting. On a practical level, they are now able to both differentiate between and pursue effective prevention and intervention methods alike.**

The Exit Interviews uncover a significant cluster of statements that speak to how mothers are removing drivers that have put their children at heightened risk of radicalisation. When viewed in relation to their baseline point of departure, they have undergone a considerable change in attitudes: the cohort of graduates has by and large transitioned from overwhelmingly blaming the community context for their children's issues to homing in on their individual agency and potential to bring their children—and their sons in particular—back from the margins of society. This personal transformation has made it possible to address issues ranging from drug addiction and involvement in gangs to other negative peer influences and recruitment threats, doing so even before the completion of their parenting for peace education. 'The MotherSchools impacted my life very positively', a mother stated, and explained: 'Before coming to the MotherSchools, I was unable to manage my sons. By getting this training, I obtained knowledge and developed skills to deal with my sons and daughter, which helped me a lot to motivate my son to leave the bad company'. Whereas many of the mothers previously had found that their sons did not go to work or study, this graduate was among a number of mothers who reported that their son had also secured a job as a result of her efforts.[239] With drugs having been the chief concern of many Participants, mothers with addicted sons were especially responsive to strengthening the familial communication system and improving on their parenting approaches ('Before the enrolment in the schools, my son was a drug addict and he moving around the city; he was not a regular in my home. Sometimes he left and stayed on the street, but now I have developed a good relationship with my children, and I advise them, and the boys are coming home early and inform me about issues they have').[240] In non-affected cases, mothers are harnessing prevention methods such as dialogue and offering support. By having conversations with their children about how to navigate toxic community influences,

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[239] (191028 BDN MSP ExES 3, Paragraph 13)
[240] (191028 BDN MSP ExES 1, Paragraph 19)

they have been strategically positioning themselves as the first point of contact when issues arise, and as respected advisors to their children ('I talked about drugs with my two boys and told both of them: "Whenever you need money for anything, please let me know, and when you need something to eat, please ask me; don't ask others for these things". So still my sons are on the right track. I am trying to keep them on the right track';[241] 'I have learned one very important thing: how to control our children in the right way; how to motivate them to keep them from bad friends. I am so happy because I have learned many things that I have also shared with children. Now I counsel my children').[242] In cases where the situation has progressed beyond the stage at which prevention through effective communication and parenting approaches alone is sufficient to steer children towards the right track, mothers have been taking direct action. As a Notetaker recounted, a few mothers have managed to intervene in the recruitment of their sons into political groupings. These groups allegedly had been using youths as money and drug runners, and they had motivated them to incite violence. Yet, as the Notetaker suggested, 'one of the mothers went to the political groups and managed to drag them away'.[243] The mothers are also now cognisant of the important role that they can play in the rehabilitation of their sons, especially with respect to ensuring that they provide the necessary support to give their children a chance at reintegrating into society ('She realised that she should be a good mother, and she tries to go and visit her son in jail and tries to give some advice to her son. And she has told her son that after he comes back from jail, she will try to be there for him. She said that if the MotherSchools would have not given her the lessons, she might have given up on him').[244]

**Graduates are strengthening the social fabric of their neighbourhoods by creating new prevention and intervention networks. Having recognised their ability to effect community-wide change, they are transcending the safe space of their groups and family environments, asserting their role in security at all levels of society, and disseminating the parenting for peace philosophy within their broader everyday environment.**

This final part of the MotherSchools impact findings suggest the graduates are now able to implement their learnings within and outside of nuclear family settings. Their ability to take on a role in security at the community level is rooted in a combination of heightened confidence

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[241] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 4, Paragraph 59 - 61)
[242] (191028 BDN MSP ExRK 2, Paragraph 18)
[243] (191029 BDN MST ExRK 1, Paragraph 88)
[244] (191029 BDN MST ExLK 1, Paragraph 43)

and conceptual awareness, an improved knowledge base, and trusted and strategic networks of prevention actors. Graduates have started to build informal networks of mothers who are uniting and working towards addressing community grievances and uprooting toxic influences. For one, a wider knowledge transfer beyond the initial MotherSchools groups has been made possible due to the growing curiosity and apparent receptiveness to the learnings of other individuals in their immediate surroundings ('In the community, other mothers are asking what we are learning, so then we share the lessons').[245] In the case of one group, the Participants were motivated by this apparent interest of other mothers and started to include them directly. As a mother revealed, the impact factor of the MotherSchools grew rapidly: 'After the sessions, we discussed the learnings with neighbours and other mothers. The other mothers didn't believe us first: "This is impossible, you cannot learn it from anyone". Then we recommended them to visit the session venue, and to get to know what we are learning. The following week, these mothers came to the session venue. Although they don't have access, they stood by the windows to listen. They then went back to their houses and tried what they learned in a positive manner. All the mothers participating brought between three and five mothers who listened through the windows'.[246] A Teacher corroborated that the mothers have begun to grow their networks, and how they are now meeting 'not only with their MotherSchools group, but also making other groups in the community, also with their relatives'.[247] The receptiveness of other mothers from the community points to the graduates' increased social standing, authority, and respect in matters concerning parenting and safeguarding. A common sentiment is that this new position is emboldening the mothers to more readily embrace and further advance their role in security. This also shows how the programme encourages life-long learning. Like any educational training, the parenting for peace education is a point of departure for graduates, who, now equipped with the necessary concepts and skills, continue to grow their expertise and consolidate their role ('When community people see that I attend MotherSchools, they see that I will learn and they respect me. So, for this reason I am listening to others and giving suggestions, and I therefore become more knowledgeable and more self-confident').[248]

**The mothers of Dhaka have translated their learnings into action, activated their networks, and are now directly applying individual and coordinated group action to confront manifestations of common drivers that can lead to violent extremism. In so**

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[245] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 5, Paragraph 41)
[246] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 29 - 35)
[247] (191029 BDN MST ExMO 1, Paragraph 31)
[248] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 1, Paragraph 37)

**doing, the graduates are confronting cycles of violence, undermining drivers of radicalisation, and strengthening community resilience in the process.**

The impact-related data show that the 'mothers are', in the words of a Teacher, 'building community security networks' and 'creating some resilience in the community with a united process'.[249] In the Exit Interviews, Participants, Notetakers, and Teachers cited multiple examples of the mothers activating their prevention role through both group and individual efforts. Their confidence and knowledge boosts helped to propel some into positions of authority, first at the family level and subsequently within the community. One mother, describing her path towards becoming an 'influencer', suggested that she was motivated to establish her authority beyond the family sphere after witnessing the positive results of her new parenting approaches at home. At first, she had been dissuaded by the feeling that her messages were not resonating with community members, because there had been other mothers who 'ignored or doubted' what her group was learning. Yet she persisted and found herself emboldened by the support of her MotherSchools peers and her personal successes in improving family dynamics: 'So through my experience and the other mothers' positivity and acceptance of my thoughts, I felt that I want to work for this and that actually I have been able to give something good to my community. In the family I have proved that these things work, and, if I share this experience, I feel I can influence the community'.[250] Their sharing and knowledge transfer of MotherSchools learnings and experiences marks a vital step towards breaking up deeply engrained dynamics that keep the community from addressing taboo topics and challenging drivers of violent extremism. Through discourse and deed, the graduates are ensuring that the 'parenting for peace' approach takes root in neighbourhoods, and that it is in due time applied by divergent community members in situations that demand immediate prevention and intervention attention. As influencers and role models beyond their family sphere, the mothers are now also identifying early warning signs that some of the children in their immediate surroundings have been exhibiting, and they are taking direct action by engaging with these affected families directly. 'I had a neighbour whose children were somehow related to a violent groups', a mother recounted. 'When I learned about what extremist group do to our children, I rushed to my neighbour and told her about what I have learned in MotherSchools', she continued, recalling her neighbour's positive reaction and receptiveness to her support: 'I told her that she could prevent them from getting into violent

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[249] (191028 BDN MST ExYR 6, Paragraph 110 - 115)
[250] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 51 - 53)

groups, and she told me, "What you have said was very good and I appreciate it—I will talk to my children, and I have already talked to my child and I think your opinion and your advice will help"'.[251] Considering the many grievances and drivers present in the community, graduates are identifying and addressing a wider spectrum of issues. Yet issues relating to drugs and peers have taken centre stage. A notable example includes a graduate who, following her MotherSchools education, recognised and apparently addressed issues with her neighbours' sons directly. 'There is a boy in our neighbourhood who used to do drugs', the mother explained, and went on to talk about how she invited him to her house to enter into a discussion with him. Following her efforts, she suggests, 'Now the boy listens to me, and now he is working in a local car company; now he does not take any drugs'. The mother has stayed the course, thus reaching more children even before her official graduation from the programme: 'After finishing MotherSchools, after the last class, I have spoken with three children, three teenagers, and explained to them how they had done bad things. And every child I have talked to is now in a good situation; they don't do any drugs or bad things'.[252] While such statements should be viewed with caution, they do appear to reflect a discernible change in behavioural attitudes. Another similar example included a mother who worked with and mentored a family in her neighbourhood where the 'child was not in a good situation' and did not listen to his parents: 'So I went to my neighbours, told them what I had learnt in a school, and that I know how to handle the situation. I made him understand the value of his parents. The boy listened to me; now he is listening to his parents also. And now he is also going to school again'.[253] Graduates during the Exit Interviews offered a plethora of stories that indicate how their new standing, confidence, and skills enable them to put in motion a community-wide effort of rebuilding familial communication structures, and to intervene when and where necessary. In the words of an empowered mother, 'The mothers stand against any violence, because the those who attended the MotherSchools know the preventing mechanism. They know how to build an organisation to protect any incident'.[254] Mirroring this, another summarised this new movement of mothers working towards a more resilient community in the following terms: 'We have learned to maintain a good neighbourhood around us. So if somebody in our neighbourhood would start a fight, we would rush there and we would explain to them that they have to react calmly. Sometimes I would rush there alone, if there is something happening

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[251] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 2, Paragraph 163 - 165)
[252] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 6, Paragraph 58 - 66)
[253] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 4, Paragraph 28 - 31)
[254] (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 107 - 109)

in front of my eyes, or I would go with my neighbours. There was a fight at one of my neighbour's. We rushed to their place to take them to the hospital'.[255] In effect, the mothers are proving how their efforts are paying off. The qualitative analysis of the interviews speak to their newfound role as security stakeholders who are transferring knowledge to other families within the community, building new community prevention networks, intervening in and challenging issues that are common drivers of extremism, and ultimately reclaiming the recruiters' space by putting in motion a long-term and sustainable process of change that progressively spreads community resilience over time and space.

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[255] (191028 BDN MSP ExJK 3, Paragraph 78 - 81)

## Common Drivers & Community Resilience | Impact Case

### Impact Summary

Graduates have been applying their MotherSchools confidence and competence training by uprooting context-specific drivers of radicalisation in their homes and communities. At the individual level, they are shifting their focus away from fatalistic attitudes about the community environment and towards unlocking their changemaker and role model potential through parenting. On a practical level, they are now able to both differentiate between and pursue effective prevention and intervention methods alike. Graduates are strengthening the social fabric of their neighbourhoods by creating new prevention and intervention networks. Having recognised their ability to effect community-wide change, they are transcending the safe space of their groups and family environments, asserting their role in security at all levels of society, and disseminating the parenting for peace philosophy within their broader everyday environment. The mothers of Dhaka have translated their learnings into action, activated their networks, and are now directly applying individual and coordinated group action to confront manifestations of common drivers that can lead to violent extremism. In so doing, the graduates are confronting cycles of violence, undermining drivers of radicalisation, and strengthening community resilience in the process.

### Baseline Example

*'Violence-related crimes or activities are present in the community. The age range is 16 to 22. This age group makes a gang or something like that and most of them are addicted to drugs. Sometimes they are involved with the criminal activities like kidnapping or asking money by showing guns and knives. Those types of guys are very common in this community and they try to pull other guys in—those who have no work or those who are not continuing their study—so they are involved with these activities. Sometimes parents are concerned but sometimes they cannot say anything because they need money. They cannot find out where the money came from. The problem is getting bigger and bigger'.*[256]

### Impact Story

*'My 12-year-old son was invited to a drug family who do a drug business. And those people insisted on my son to have drugs. Somehow, I received that information and after I received that information, I contacted some other mothers inside my community and as a team we are going to that place where this drug dealing is happening. And we stand together, and we also informed some other people that my son was taken towards drugs. So that confidence I gained in the MotherSchools. The other mothers who I invited to go with me were not in the MotherSchools sessions, but they received some basic knowledge. So the drug-business team actually fled from us. We went there as an informal network and stood up against the group. The ten or so drug businessmen left the community'.*[257]

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[256] (190619 BDN MSP EnM 4, Paragraph 56)
[257] . (191028 BDN MSP ExYR 2, Paragraph 111 - 122)

## FURTHER BASELINE EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'My bigger son is a bus helper. He did not finish studies. He studied until grade 1, then mixed with the wrong crowd. He only works once a month. He doesn't want to work, and he just want to mingle with crowds and wants to hang out with friends. He is not taking drugs but he is not in a good crowd'.[258]

- 'My son used to study in a madrassa, he came home, he didn't finish his studies. When he came back, he got into bad company and started taking drugs. We sent him to rehab and he broke out, and we sent him back and he came back again. We are trying our best to save him but so far with no success. He is taking ganja not heroin'.[259]

- 'They help me when I fall sick. I don't scold them when I can't fulfil their wish. You know, today's generation is addicted to technology. They want mobile phones at early age, or they want to eat well but we can't afford good food all the time. That's why I am concerned all the time that if my children go to the wrong path, or if there is anyone who can mislead them. I take care of my children but it's difficult taking care of 6 children all the time'.[260]

- 'I am living with one daughter and husband who is sick, he is paralysed, my older daughters are married. I am working as a housemaid, the two daughters used to help me, but they have gone now. I have a problem with son, because he never listens to me and is taking drugs, gaba and ya ba [local drugs], and I am very concerned. I am facing many, many problems with my son. He doesn't listen to me, he is roaming around with gangs, he takes drugs, he never contributes to the family, and I have to manage on my own. I took him to village doctors, but also there was not cure for him. He never listens to me and doesn't come home. I really beat him and then I beat him harder and then he never listens. He becomes an angry person when he comes home. Once, I wanted to beat him, but he grabbed the stick and pushed it back at me and it hit my own head. … There is nothing to feel good about in the house, I live in a very small space, I couldn't feed him well, I couldn't give him attention, I could not talk to him much—that is why he went outside; if I could have given him more attention, he could have stayed at home'.[261]

- 'He always leaves to be with his friends. Now I am forcing my son to do at least anything, at least be busy. I am very afraid that my son gets spoiled by bad company; he is addicted to not doing any work'.[262]

- 'I have a son who is 13 years old who does not listen to me, he does not study or try to understand me or listen to us. He did not work also. I want to make him listen. I want to bring him on the right path. If I say "go and study", he says 'no', and he always hangs out with his friends and I think they are bad company. That is why I want to move away from my place, I want to move to another area where these friends and kind of people are not. I want to go far from here. They are addicted—my son's friends; that is why I am afraid for my son. … Because of my environment, my son is learning his bad behaviour from another person. What he is doing, it is the impact of society. That is why I want to move away from here. But I cannot because of his father's income which is very low. I am really scared about, because one of my sons is spoiled and I am scared about the other three siblings. I am bringing them up with much struggle and if they do something bad, I will not live'.[263]

- 'Bad things are happening around him, and this worries me—that he can join a bad crowd. Though I don't think he would'.[264]

- 'I am worried about my children all the time because there are many bad people in our society like a friend can kill his own friend or a friend can harm also. So there is a tension all the time. Yesterday there was an incident when a man came to my neighbour's house and he mixed

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[258] (190619 BDN MSP EnR 4, Paragraph 4)
[259] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 1, Paragraph 21 - 22)
[260] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 2, Paragraph 24)
[261] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 4, Paragraph 11 - 14)
[262] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 1, Paragraph 22 - 23)
[263] (190619 BDN MSP EnL 6, Paragraph 39 – 43; 48 - 49)
[264] (190619 BDN MSP EnG 6, Paragraph 20 – 22)

something in the juice and after drinking it my neighbour's children became senseless. As I said, I have a daughter so I am also worried about her safety'.[265]

- 'The eldest son actually did not recognise his father, who passed away, as a good man. It's not my husband's fault; it's the fault of my own son, as he already got addicted. And all he earns he spends on drugs and sometimes even, not sometimes, most of the time, he engages with some fighting and some other things with the group. I'm also feeling pain of thinking about my son, that he is mixing with some bad companies. And lastly, it's not my son who actually willingly does drugs—it's the company actually with whom actually he mixes'.[266]

- 'It is a very threatening matter that children are changing drastically. It is very easy to mislead them. My own brother's son is mixing with some bad company. We are tense about him and are trying to make him understand what is good or bad'.[267]

**Teacher interview extract:**

- 'The main issue they are facing is proper education, because they do not have the access to send children to better schools. They also do not have the financial sustainability. After 10—15 years, they send the child to earn money. Depending on family needs. Jobs like workers on roadside shops, in a hotel garage. These kinds of children, since they do not have the proper guidance and education, they can do anything and are autonomous. They can go into radicalisation'.[268]

## FURTHER IMPACT EXAMPLES

**Participant interview extracts:**

- 'The MotherSchools impacted my life very positively. Especially my son who had some bad company in the community. And joined from the community, bad companion, the boy. And now the boy is going to be joined in an embroidery factory as a worker and he will join soon. Before coming to the MotherSchools, I was unable to manage my sons. By getting this training, I obtained knowledge and developed skills to deal with my sons and daughter, which helped me a lot to motivate my son to leave the bad company'.[269]

- 'I think when the kids need money, they are making new friends, they cannot think about the negative signs of the person with whom they are making friendship. After making the relationship, day by day, the crisis is growing. Within this period, they have already gotten involved with drugs. This is our main problem, growing also day by day. I talked about drugs with my two boys and told both of them: "Whenever you need money for anything, please let me know, and when you need something to eat, please ask me; don't ask others for these things". So still my sons are on the right track. I am trying to keep them on the right track'.[270]

- 'In my area where I am living, there are five women trained from here, from the MotherSchools, so we have a very good communication. And we have very good communication in our houses and sometimes we are moving in our community together and discuss with the community people'.[271]

- 'Whatever I have learned from here, I share with my daughter and husband and also my community, and especially my In-laws are very much eager to know what I have learned, especially my sister-in-law'.[272]

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[265] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 5, Paragraph 22)
[266] (190619 BDN MSP EnU 3, Paragraph 59- 65)
[267] (190619 BDN MSP EnMJF 4, Paragraph 21, 25)
[268] (190616 BDN MST EnR 1, Paragraph 15)
[269] (191028 BDN MSP ExES 3, Paragraph 13)
[270] (191028 BDN MSP ExEK 4, Paragraph 59 - 61)
[271] (191028 BDN MSP ExES 2, Paragraph 92 - 93)
[272] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 6, Paragraph 48)

- 'When my daughter and husband and community asked me what I learned from the MotherSchools, I shared: to respect other people and respect other people's views also. Especially the issue of your children, try to keep the good relationship with your children and have no communication gap with your children. If we can keep continuing this, children will not go down wrong path. Another thing is if someone goes down the wrong path and you see it, you can change him or her though your behaviour and convincing power. Don't behave rudely and take it easily and gently'.[273]

**Teacher interview extract:**

- 'When one of the mothers learned that someone is disturbing her daughter, she discussed it with the other mothers. So all the mothers united and said: "You should go to the boy's parents to raise this issue". So when they actually went, they came to his house. The boy was very powerful They decided to speak to the boys' parents. And his parents said: "It is your daughter, who is actually disturbing our son!" They were actually threatening them. But the mothers were confident. They did not stop the mothers, the mothers didn't back out and they decided what to do together. So they went together and with some other stakeholders. They formed a team; the stakeholders went with them. And they went again–this time the parents said it was ok and they would stop their son distracting the daughter'.[274]

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[273] (191028 BDN MSP ExMO 6, Paragraph 48)
[274] (191028 BDN MST ExYR 6, Paragraph 110 - 115)

# 3. CONCLUSION

In the wake of Dhaka's Holey Artisan Bakery terrorist attack in 2016, the deadliest in the city's history, Bangladesh and the global community were alerted to the country's growing issue with violent extremist influences. While the government and its law enforcement agencies have since introduced effective counter-terrorism programmes, the threat has endured, with youth recruitment constituting a particular concern. What had been largely overlooked was a consideration of the root causes; the everyday context within which youths are coming of age. Prevention successes of violent extremism at the earliest stages—before law enforcement approaches become necessary—require community-based efforts that build family and community resilience. In this view, communication disconnects, counterproductive parenting styles, and a limited conceptual understanding of early warning signs leading to radicalisation are among the most prevalent barriers to protecting at-risk youths. Instead of offering layers of protection, these factors put adolescents and young adults at greater risk of falling prey to recruiters.

Against the background of heightened concerns over radicalisation across Dhaka, WwB brought its global 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model to Dhaka between 2018 and 2019. In cooperating with its local implementing partner organisation Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), the programme convened three groups comprising a total of sixty concerned and affected mothers from vulnerable communities across Dhaka. Over the course of ten session, the Teachers delivered the MotherSchools Curriculum, which employed developmental psychology, self-confidence training, and theoretical sessions. Tracing the journey of MotherSchools graduates in Bangladesh captures how the programme successfully positioned Participants as a first line of defence against violent extremism in their everyday environments. As the following three sub-sections show, mothers developed their competence and confidence at the individual, family, and community levels to unlock their prevention potential and translate their skills into action.

**Discovering the Self: Empowered and Confident Mothers**

At the individual level, mothers gained a network of trusted allies, broke down restrictive barriers to initiate dialogue, advanced their self-confidence and competence levels, and embarked on a process of critical self-reflection. The safe and judgement-free space of the MotherSchools nurtured trusted relationships that removed inhibitions and feelings of mutual suspicion. By virtue of previously having had only limited social contact outside of their homes, Participants could develop genuine friendships and networks, often doing so for the first time in their lives.

Dynamics through the group process evolved to break down the main obstacles that had been standing in the way of the Participants' self-confidence and preparedness to address the taboo topic of violent extremism. In progressively liberating themselves from societal burdens like silence, shame, distrust, and marginalisation, the Participants became increasingly empowered, mindful, and supportive of each other. Their growing realisation that they were not alone in their concerns marked a definite turning point.

The trusted environment acted as the point of departure and foundation for Participants to find and assert their voice. This stimulated self-reflection and motivated them to identify and address the factors negatively impacting on their self-confidence levels. Most found that their husbands were chief in holding them back from developing their authority and voice. This awareness motivated mothers to actively work on their relationships and demand more respect from their partners. Those who successfully claimed this authority at home were often also able to establish their new role model status within the community. This individual and group transformation removed feelings of helplessness that had kept mothers from understanding their potential as security stakeholders in the first place, and from establishing the necessary influence needed to spread awareness of radicalisation and recruitment in their families and surroundings.

Their self-empowerment process also entailed liberating themselves from psychological, structural, and physical violence at the hands of their husbands. Having previously not spoken about personal experiences of domestic violence, mothers now reflect more critically and openly on their relationships. On the one hand, the Exit Interviews uncovered a plethora of stories that highlight how mothers who had been enduring domestic violence in their homes were encouraged to speak up for themselves and effect positive changes. On the other hand, mothers recognised that such dynamics can act as a push factor by

further isolating children and making them susceptible to recruiters who act as substitute role models and offer false promises of escaping this culture of violence.

The self-empowerment element of the programme thus shows how the MotherSchools journey is context-specific, and that in the case of Dhaka it also responded to generational systems of gender-based violence that sustain more hidden drivers of violent extremism.

Initially, mothers had been missing the necessary support, trusted environment, networks, and relationships to move from inhibition, isolation, and self-doubt towards an open climate of dialogue and unity. In giving rise to cohorts of trusted allies, the programme saw Participants take significant strides towards developing self-esteem and group cohesion, which led them to challenge restrictive social constructs, openly address the taboo topic of extremism, and motivated them to acknowledge and contemplate their potential role in security at the individual and group levels.

**Making Families Functional**

At the familial level, the MotherSchools impact stories all point to a similar trajectory of change: mothers grew their awareness of parenting deficits; understood how such shortcomings can act as push factors; brought these learnings home; and built the necessary communication infrastructure and relationship basis to openly talk about and address personal issues and drivers of violent extremism.

In abandoning overtly authoritarian styles, graduates have succeeded in forming closer bonds with their children. They are now cognisant of the fact that improving family dynamics must be done in negotiation with their children, and that empathy and listening skills help to identify the needs of their children and allow them to react in a more informed manner. As such, they are adapting their communication methods in accordance with the relevant stage of their child's development. The mothers cited their children's positive reactions to changing family dynamics, which speaks to how their learnings around developmental child psychology are proving effective in their everyday lives. This is helping to pull children—connected to the MotherSchools programme by virtue of their mothers—out of isolation and into a supportive family environment.

When viewed in relation to their baseline point of departure, they have undergone a considerable change in attitudes: the cohort of graduates has by and large transitioned from overwhelmingly blaming the community context for their children's issues to homing in on

their individual agency and potential to bring their children—and their sons in particular—back from the margins of society. This personal transformation has made it possible to address common issues that are also well-known drivers of radicalisation, ranging from drug addiction and involvement in gangs to other negative peer influences and recruitment threats, doing so even before the completion of their parenting for peace education. With drugs having been the chief concern of many Participants, mothers with addicted sons were especially responsive to strengthening the familial communication system and improving on their parenting approaches.

In non-affected cases, mothers are harnessing prevention methods such as dialogue and offering support. By having conversations with their children about how to navigate toxic community influences, they have been strategically positioning themselves as the first point of contact when issues arise, and as respected advisors to their children. In cases where the situation has progressed beyond the stage at which prevention through effective communication and parenting approaches alone is sufficient to steer children towards the right track, mothers have been taking direct action. The mothers are also now cognisant of the important role that they can play in the rehabilitation of their children, especially with respect to ensuring that they provide the required support to give them a chance at reintegrating into society.

Among the most immediate impacts reported by the mothers of is that family violence, a pivotal push factor, has been reduced substantially and often removed altogether. The data suggest that harsh forms of discipline are being replaced when mothers recognise that alternative methods are solving rather than accentuating the issue. To some degree, authoritarian parenting tendencies on the part of mothers can be viewed as a product of receiving limited support from other family members, which in turn normalises and sustains cycles of familial violence over generations. In transitioning from violence to dialogue, however, many mothers have witnessed their children take on more responsibilities. Against this background, mothers have embraced the understanding that while they have a crucial part to play in influencing dynamics, their families should be brought into the fold, adopt more progressive values, and take on a share of domestic responsibilities.

Husbands who had previously contributed to a dysfunctional culture of communication at home are becoming more attuned to their responsibilities as fathers and partners. According to the mothers, fathers who had been largely absent from the lives of their children are inspired by their role model wives to make more time for their children, and also to reflect on their propensity for violence and authoritarian communication styles. Graduates reportedly have

been able to improve their marital relationships through constructive dialogue and sharing their MotherSchools experiences. In recognising the positive impacts of the MotherSchools, husbands reportedly are increasingly lifting restrictions that they had put on their wives. While the authenticity of statements to this effect are not possible to verify, it is nevertheless possible that at least some fathers who had originally been a barrier to their wives' participation in the MotherSchools programme on the one hand, and who had tended to be part of the problem with respect to push factors on the other hand, are now at the early stages of a positive transformation. Some have joined the mothers as role models in their families and are taking on critical parenting duties. In many respects, fathers are now following the example of their wives, and are in some cases reportedly also assuming a constructive safeguarding role.

In its quest to arrive at a whole-of-family security architecture, the MotherSchools were able to achieve a knowledge transfer of key communication methods that can be applied to and absorbed by all family members.

Mothers also reported that they are able to apply their new safeguarding role and skills to their husbands, some of whom appear to be involved in regular street fights and possibly gang violence. This is a crucial development, since the violence of parents can become a serious push factor by having a traumatic and isolating effect on children. Furthermore, sons in particular are susceptible to emulating violent fathers, which also helps to sustain a culture of violence in families and communities across generations; this is a well-known driver of radicalisation. Some fathers, however, are now purportedly withdrawing from violent community behaviour and instead contributing to the role model parenting architecture at home.

**Networks of Mothers Creating Resilient Communities**

At the community level, mothers have created networks of prevention actors, applied individual and coordinated group action to confront manifestations of common drivers that can lead to violent extremism, and strengthened community resilience in the process. Graduates are now able to implement their learnings beyond the nuclear family setting. Their ability to take on a role in security at all levels of society is rooted in a combination of heightened confidence and conceptual awareness, an improved knowledge base, and trusted allies. Their informal networks of mothers are united, working towards addressing community grievances, and uprooting toxic influences.

A wider knowledge transfer beyond the initial MotherSchools groups has also been made possible due to the growing curiosity and apparent receptiveness to the learnings of other individuals in their immediate surroundings. The responsiveness of other mothers from the community points to the graduates' increased social standing, authority, and respect in matters concerning parenting and safeguarding. A common sentiment is that this new position is emboldening the mothers to more readily embrace and further advance their role in security. This also shows how the programme encourages life-long learning. Like any educational training, the parenting for peace education is a point of departure for graduates, who, now equipped with the necessary concepts and skills, continue to grow their networks, expertise, and consolidate their position as role models.

Their sharing and knowledge transfer of MotherSchools learnings and experiences marks a vital step towards breaking up deeply engrained dynamics that keep the community from addressing taboo topics and challenging drivers of violent extremism. Through discourse and deed, the graduates are ensuring that the parenting for peace approach takes root in neighbourhoods, and that it is in due time applied by divergent community members in situations that demand immediate prevention and intervention attention.

As influencers and role models beyond their family sphere, the mothers are now also identifying early warning signs that some of the children in their immediate surroundings have been exhibiting, and they are taking direct action by engaging with these affected families directly. Graduates during the Exit Interviews offered a plethora of stories that indicate how their new standing, confidence, and skills enable them to put in motion a community-wide effort of rebuilding familial communication structures, and to intervene when and where necessary.

In practice, the mothers have proved the effectiveness of their newfound role as security stakeholders at all levels. They are now transferring their knowledge and skills to other families and members within the community, building new prevention networks, intervening in and challenging issues that are common drivers of extremism, and ultimately reclaiming the recruiters' space by putting in motion a long-term and sustainable process of change that progressively spreads community resilience over time and space.

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# ABOUT MOTHERSCHOOLS

Mothers have long presented a missing link in preventing the spread of violent extremism. Their unparalleled physical and emotional proximity make them witnesses of every stage in their child's development. While mothers have the potential to intervene in the initial stages of the radicalisation process, often they lack the essential knowledge and self-confidence to recognise and address the warning signs in their sons and daughters. Women without Borders (WwB) began introducing the notion of Mothers Preventing Violent Extremism (MPVE) in the context of its SAVE (Sisters Against Violent Extremism) network of projects and initiatives from 2008. Responding to its research study findings from surveys and interviews with 1023 mothers across five countries, WwB developed and designed the pioneering 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model. When put into practice, this bottom-up prevention approach positions concerned and affected mothers as the first line of defence in at-risk communities. The curriculum strengthens the participant's individual capacity, capability, and emotional literacy, and heightens her awareness of radical influences. WwB has been advancing local and regional security through contextualised iterations of the programme, and to date has engaged over two thousand mothers in sixteen countries across Western and Eastern Europe; Central, South, and Southeast Asia; the Middle East; and Sub-capacity by providing civil society stakeholders in at-risk regions with the essential structures, tools, and skills to address and counteract extremist ideologies. Owing to its proven track record, WwB's MotherSchools Model has emerged as a recognised good practice and contributed to rethinking and reshaping countering and preventing violent extremism (P/CVE) policy worldwide.

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