Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Analysis Report

USAID Nafoore

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Consultant: Binta Baba Sy

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Acknowledgments

List of Acronyms

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
IGA	Income-generating activity
ILO	International Labour Office
KII	Key Informant Interviews
NST/YCA	Neighborhood Selection Tool and Youth Centered Assessment
PYD	Positive Youth Development
PCVE	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VEO	Violent Extremist Organizations
VE	Violent Extremism

Executive Summary

Nafoore is a USAID-funded project that is implemented in Nouakchott, Trarza, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh Ech Chargui in Mauritania. The Nafoore consortium is led Mercy Corps in partnership with counterpart International (CPI), and Ecodev. Nafoore aims to increase the resilience capacities of vulnerable Mauritanian youth to resist radicalization and recruitment by violent extremist organizations (VEOs). The project is grounded in positive youth development (PYD) and draws on a moral ecology approach to preventing and countering violent extremism.

Youth under 35 represent 70% of Mauritania's population and its greatest source of potential, but they face major challenges. Across the four Positive Youth Development (PYD) dimensions, youth from diverse ethnic groups lack the assets they need in the form of education attainment and income generation; the agency to improve their own lives and communities; a supportive enabling environment that fosters cooperation across identity groups to advance beyond a long history of inter-ethnic division; and opportunities to contribute to their country's economic and civic future. These challenges are coupled with emerging threats from regional conflicts involving violent extremist organizations (VEOs) capitalizing on weak governance and disenchanted populations.

This document presents the results of a gender analysis conducted in September and October 2022 in Nouakchott, Trarza, Gharbi and Hodh Ech Chargui regions. The gender equality and social analysis sought to identify the key opportunities at the intersection of gender, youth and radicalization/recruitment by VEOs, to inform the project's interventions, including the design of subsequent implementation interventions to strengthen GESI integration. The analysis involved a secondary data review and primary data interviews with male and female youth aged 18-25 years. Community elders, parents (of the youth), community members, and religious and political leaders were also interviewed to understand the root causes of gender inequalities and social exclusion, and its correlations with the root causes of radicalization and Violent Extremism (VE) in Mauritania.

These study findings reinforce the fact that advancing gender equality and social inclusion requires a holistic approach that also addresses complex gender and social norms that perpetuate inequality, marginalization, and oppression. The findings revealed attitudes, behaviors and norms that not only maintain gender and social inequities, but also contribute to limited livelihood opportunities, constrained agency, and barriers to participating in safe and supportive youth networks. The study also revealed that young men and women in all the communities of Polaar, Soninke, Beidan and Hartani across all geographies reported feeling frustrated and constrained by gendered social norms. Young women said they feel they cannot do anything outside the home and young men feel heavily pressured to contribute to family finances. These barriers are possible root contributors to young men and women being exposed to recruitment to violent extremist organizations.

Among the recommendations to the program for addressing these barriers, a key element would be the incorporation of a social behavior change strategy to promote male engagement in supporting young women to participate in economic opportunities and decision making.

1. Background and Introduction

Nafoore is a USAID-funded project that is implemented in Nouakchott, Trarza, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh Ech Chargui in Mauritania. The Nafoore consortium is led Mercy Corps in partnership with counterpart International (CPI), and Ecodev. Nafoore aims to increase the resilience capacities of vulnerable Mauritanian youth to resist radicalization and recruitment by violent extremist organizations (VEOs). The project is grounded in positive youth development (PYD) and draws on a moral ecology approach to preventing and countering violent extremism. Local youth-serving organizations (YSOs) will both prevent at-risk youth and groups from accepting extremist violence as morally legitimate and disrupt the structural, economic, and social mechanisms that facilitate or encourage participation in violent activity.

Mauritania is ranked 141 out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2020. As in any society, gender and age in Mauritania are deeply intertwined. The process of transitioning from youth to adulthood is highly gendered and includes specific markers or rites of passage that must be met. Mauritanian culture is conservative and highly influenced by Islamic values as well as Arab and Afro-cultural traditions. Additionally, youth live in a geographically dispersed, stratified society on the fringes of exposure to VE, where sociocultural norms have limited youth participation in local and regional decision-making processes.

To better understand the levels of vulnerability and the specific needs and opportunities for the young women and men in Mauritania, in September-October 2022 the Nafoore program conducted a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) analysis with a specific focus on the intersection between gender, youth, and radicalization. The research questions were anchored in USAID's gender analysis framework.

2. Study Rationale and Objectives

Gender and social exclusion can undermine young people's potential to resist radicalization and recruitment to VEOs. In Mauritania, young men and women have complex identities that shape their roles, responsibilities, power dynamics, decision-making, and relationships. This has had the effect of increasing levels of vulnerability for various subsets of Mauritanian youth, leading them to begin sympathizing with and engaging with extremist content. This calls for action as a panacea for the difficult situation in which many of them find themselves. Although direct risk-factors for VE are typically more closely associated with young men, recent studies from within the Sahel region illustrate those drivers of young men's engagement in conflict can often be linked to concepts of "protecting the honor" of one's community, and that female community members can sometimes be the most vociferous supporters of young men joining up to fight perceived injustices against their community.[1] This study focused on specific thematic areas believed to be key leverage points to increase resilience capacities of vulnerable Mauritanian youth to resist radicalization and recruitment by VEOs.

The goal of the Nafoore GESI Analysis was to identify the key evidence gaps in analysis of the intersection between gender, youth and radicalization/recruitment to VE in Nouakchott, Trarza, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh Ech Chargui regions. This, in turn, would serve to inform the project's interventions, including the design of subsequent implementation interventions to strengthen gender integration across Nafoore, informed by the project's theory of change.

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[1] USAID Nafoore Activity in Mauritania technical application

2.1 Objectives

The specific objectives of the NAFORE gender analysis were:

1. To better understand the root causes of gender inequalities and correlations with the root causes of radicalization and recruitment by Violent Extremism Organizations (VEOs) in Mauritania.
2. To support community and participant selection that is sensitive and responsive to the needs and unique risk factors of diverse youth identifying as Haratine, Beidan, Afro-Mauritanians, and other groups.
3. To support refinement of Nafoore interventions based on gender analysis findings and inform the design and implementation of gender transformative interventions.
4. To support the design and development of a gender action plan.
5. To facilitate effective gender and youth integration into Nafoore Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning frameworks, project planning and key program interventions.

Research was driven by key questions rooted in USAID's gender analysis domains[2] and grouped into five thematic areas:

1. Socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices that would contribute to radicalization and recruitment
2. Young women's and men's roles (productive, reproductive and community) responsibilities, time use and workloads
3. Young men's and women's access to and control over critical resources, assets, income, social networks, public and private services, market skills, technology, and information
4. Patterns of power and decision-making
5. How laws, policies, regulations and institutional (formal, informal, and traditional) practices influence gender and social dynamics.

3. Methodology

Nafoore's GESI analysis was carried out in two phases. The first focused on literature review, identifying and analyzing published and grey literature on the intersection of gender, youth and radicalization and violent extremism behaviors in the project areas or similar contexts to identify what is already known about the correlation between radicalization and recruitment by VEOs and gender in Mauritania. This desk study also included the review of other evaluations carried out for Nafoore, including the Neighborhood Selection Tool and Youth Centered Assessment (NST/YCA) and analysis of conflicts between young people.

Based on the information from the desk review, the second phase of primary data collection aimed at filling information gaps, providing additional information, and exploring critical issues arising from the secondary review. Data collection during this phase was specifically targeted in the regions of Nouakchott and Hodh El Chargui, through focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII) as main approaches to data collection.

The two phases of research were guided by five research questions:

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[2] https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/205.pdf

1. How do sociocultural norms, beliefs and practices affect radicalization and recruitment by VEOs through gender and age among vulnerable social populations in Nouakchott and Hodh El Chargui regions?
2. What is the relationship between radicalization, recruitment by VEOs and the roles of young women and men, their responsibilities (productive, reproductive and community), their time use and their workload?
3. What are the barriers that prevent young men and women from accessing and controlling essential resources, assets, income, social networks, public and private services, business skills, technology and information? What is their impact on radicalization/recruitment by VEOs?
4. How do power and decision-making models across age and gender have an impact on radicalization and recruitment by VEOs among vulnerable groups at household, community and local government levels in Nouakchott and Hodh El Chargui regions?
5. How do laws, policies, regulations and institutional practices (formal, informal and traditional) influence gender and social dynamics and how do they affect radicalization and recruitment by VEOs?

The literature review focused on the drivers of radicalization among young people with specific regard to intersectional gender linkages. The main areas of analysis are summarized as follows:

- Socio-cultural norms, beliefs
- Practices, roles and responsibilities (productive, reproductive and community),
- Access to essential resources, assets, incomes, social networks,
- Models of power and decision-making,
- Policies, regulations, and institutional practices.

Limitations
Time constraints forced this study to limit the areas of focus to Nouakchott (Sebkha, Dar Naîm and Arafat) and Hodh El Chargui (Vassala and Adel-Bagrou). Efforts have been made to collect data on all five areas by ethnic group, but this has not always been possible due to the complexity of realities on the ground. However, these shortcomings are highlighted in the recommendations to allow the program to learn from them.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Context
Several studies and reports on the intersection of gender, youth and radicalization in target areas and similar contexts, focusing on the five research areas, were analyzed with an aim to better understand the levels of vulnerability and the specific needs and opportunities of young women and men. The analysis was based primarily on the program document and on the review of the two Nafoore Program Assessments (NST/YCA) carried out by Mercy Corps, as well as information and resources from other development partners and relevant national government services.

Mauritanian society is Muslim and multi-ethnic, comprised of approximately one third Beidan, one third Hartani and one third Negro-Mauritanian individuals. The Hartani are the descendants of the slaves of White Moors/ and the Beidan refers to those of Arab and Berber

descent. Theses two ethnic groups are culturally similar. The Fulani or Hal-pulaar, the Wolof and the Soninké comprise the Negro-Mauritanian population.

Mauritanian society is very complex and suffers from several problems, as old cultural practices contribute to maintain inequalities. Mauritania was the last country in the to abolish slavery in 1987. Despite this, slavery is still practiced today, and it is estimated that 10 % of the population are slaves. Black populations are also subject to discrimination; in 1989, what became known as the 'Events of '89' began with a land conflict between Fulani farmers and Beidan and led to the deportation of thousands of Negro-Mauritanians to Mali and Senegal. The impacts of this event remain a source of tension between communities, despite the return of some refugees after the military coup in 2005. Those who have returned face several barriers in access to land, education, employment, and civil status papers, among others. Some people from Beidan castes also face discrimination that increases their vulnerability, such as ironsmiths and *griots*. In addition, Negro-Mauritanian and Hartani young people face discrimination in education, vocational training, access to jobs, administrative procedures, and politics. These inequalities and social barriers create vulnerabilities that could be exploited by criminal organizations or extremist groups to recruit young men and women.

Although progress has been noted, Mauritania continues to face challenges related to gender inequality. In Mauritania, women face multiple barriers to their social and economic inclusion. Due to deeply rooted social norms, Mauritanian girls and women face great inequalities within the household, in the labor market and in institutions. These inequalities lead to, among other things, child marriage, early pregnancies, and a low level of education among girls. Inequality between genders within the household also contributes to an increase in the risk of domestic violence. It also affects women's access to financial and economic opportunities. Women are half as likely than men to be part of the labor force, and their work remains vulnerable and undervalued.[3] In particular as regards the empowerment of women and girls, women's participation in economic activities is decreasing and the participation rate of men in the workforce is significantly higher (69%) than that of women (27.47 %).[4] According to UNESCO, Mauritania is one of the ten countries with the highest percentage of girls' leaving school early; 59 % of girls drop out of primary school, 63% drop out of secondary, and only 4.5 % of girls arrive at the tertiary level. This drop-out rate is the result of several factors, including early marriages, difficulties in accessing schools, and social standards that impose domestic tasks on girls. Indeed, 87 % of girls over the age of 12 are involved in these domestic tasks.

Among school-age children, the primary reasons noted for dropping out of school include: 1) remoteness of the school, cited by about 25% of all students; 2) family problems (25.4% in rural areas and 22.1% in urban areas); 3) financial difficulties cited by 25.4% of urban girls, 24.9% of rural boys, and nearly 23.5% of urban boys and rural girls; and 4) difficulties in following classes within the school, cited by about 20%.

Among parents, the reasons for children leaving school include: 1) the cost of schooling is deemed excessive (cited by 29% of urban dwellers and 25% of rural dwellers)[5]; 2) distance to school (26.8% rural and 23% in urban areas); 3) difficulties in attending classes (20.6% of girls and 21% of boys); 4) family problems which prevent more than 16% of children from continuing their schooling (16.7% of girls and 16.4% of boys).

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[3] World Bank Report on the Economic Situation in Mauritania 2022

[4] https://www.un.org/ldc5/sites/www.un.org.ldc5/files/mauritania_rapport_final_pai_pma_vp_26_02_2020_.pdf

[5] This was cited as the reason nearly 31% of girls and 25% of boys were pulled from school.

In terms of employment, according to the ILO, the activity rate for men is 60 %, while that of women is 27 %, which is lower than in other neighboring countries such as Senegal and Burkina Faso, where the participation rate for women is 38 %.

The country has legal frameworks and mechanisms for the promotion of women's rights. There are a number of international conventions already signed by the country. These include the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDEF) in 1999, Ratification of the Additional Protocols to CEDEF (1999) and the Charter on the African Convention on Human and Peoples' Rights and on Women's Rights (1999); among others. In addition to a national legal framework and institutional mechanisms for the promotion of women's rights exist, including the constitution of July 20, 1991, that guarantees women rights and liberties on the same level as men. The Code of Personal Status Criminal law of Mauritania consecrates the principle of gender equality and provides a specific concern for the protection of women from all sorts of abuse. However, there are still challenges in terms of legislative harmonization and gender equality in the operationalization of these mechanisms.

4.2 Socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices

The prevalence of certain norms and beliefs affecting young women and men exposes them to the risk of radicalization and recruitment by VEOs. There are high expectations from family, parents and the community on young men and women to lift their families out of poverty. Despite these expectations, young people have few options to secure a meaningful job, increase their self-esteem and social status and meet the expectations and needs of their families. According to the World Bank, there are at least 350,000 young people between age 15 and 25 out of school[6] and without skills and employment.[7] According to the ILO, unemployment among young people up to the age of 35 is estimated at 31% and youth unemployment in the 15-24 age group is estimated at 47%, while underemployment is estimated at 14%. One fifth of Mauritania's population is aged between 15 and 24 and more than half (57%) of the population is under 20 years of age.

4.3 Roles and responsibilities (productive, reproductive and community), their time use and workload

Roles and responsibilities of Mauritanians differ depending on whether they are men or women. Women are responsible for household tasks, while men take care of bringing income for the household. Women's main role is to follow the husband, because "the women who listen to their husbands will go to heaven and they will have benign children." Thus, the choice of adhering to violent extremist ideology is above all predicated upon men and women simply following along, without a real ideological belief.[8]

In the labor market, there are many occupations with very few women, such as livestock farming (3.7% of jobs held by women), fishing (3%), mining activities (5%), construction (2%), transport (3%), electricity and gas (0.2%) and many others such as the judiciary or the bar association. Even in other jobs which seem to be more favorable to women, with less

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[6] https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/fr/713741511420659898/pdf/116630-v2-SCD-FRENCH-PUBLIC-22-11-2017-14-41-28-MAUSCDExSumBoardVersionFrenchFINAL.pdf

[7] https://www.un.org/ldc5/sites/www.un.org.ldc5/files/mauritania_rapport_final_pai_pma_vp_26_02_2020_.pdf

[8] Return of the results of the study by Mauritanian women in violence, whether as actors, victims or agents of social change (Nouakchott, Trarza, Hodh El Chargui, Guidimakha, TIRIS Zemmour), April 2022

stereotypical perceptions, women remain a minority; for example, public administration (14% of jobs held by women), education (44%), health (44%), or finance (31.6%).[9]

4.4 Access to resources, assets, income, social networks, public and private services, business skills, technology, and information

Mauritania's social structure is complex, based on discrimination and segregation on the basis of caste criteria that disproportionately negatively affects Hartani and Negro-Mauritanians in terms of excluding them from decision-making and economic empowerment rights such as access to and possession of land. Indeed, as one individual attested, *"I can be educated, I can even earn money and help others, but I cannot change the fact that I am a Haratin woman. How do you explain to children that such an integral part of them is not good and that they cannot do anything? This is what many people have to face."[10]*

Mauritanian women's access to the media is hampered by difficulties such as a high rate of illiteracy, a small number of community radio stations, some of which only air programs in French or Arabic, and lack of access to means of communication in rural areas. There is a low representation of women in the media. They represent only 33% of the public media workforce, and journalistic products are not at all gender-sensitive and do not often deal with subjects likely to interest.[11]

Young women find it difficult to access technical and vocational training facilities because of a lack of trained human resource personnel, spaces that are not friendly to young women (e.g. separate toilets) and high costs. The distance from technical and vocational training establishments, which are mainly located in the regional capitals, is also a real obstacle to the access of girls who do not live in these cities.[12]

4.4 Power and decision-making models

Young people have little room to contribute to decision-making at the community level due to structural societal imbalances that prevent young people from being heard.[13] For young women, participation in community decision making is almost non-existent. For young people, the causes of conflict are mainly: lack of dialogue, values and customs, ethnic affiliation, economic interests, and access to employment.[14] According to a local UNDP study on conflicts in Hodh El Chargui, the reasons for joining extremist organizations from the perspective of young people include male and female unemployment, poverty, the desire to earn money and destitution. However, these perceptions must be qualified, as other young people experiencing unemployment and poverty are not attracted by radicalization or extremism even though they are in vulnerable socio-economic conditions.[15]

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[9] Gender analysis of the Delegation of the European Union and the Member States present in Mauritania 2021-2025

[10] Nafoore program document

[11] Gender analysis of the Delegation of the European Union and the Member States present in Mauritania 2021-2025

[12] Gender analysis of the Delegation of the European Union and the Member States present in Mauritania 2021-2025

[13] Nafoore programme document

[14] Study of conflict dynamics, emerging CSOs and targeting young people most exposed to extremist ideologies in the target regions of the Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Dialogue Project

[15] Assessment NST/YCA MC Programme

4.5 Laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practices (formal, informal and traditional)

The discrimination against the Hartani and the Negro-Mauritanians, their visible absence from positions of political power, their marginalization in most aspects of social and economic life, and the normalization of discrimination and racism as essentially representing 'the way things are' across ethnic groups, weakens their feeling of belonging to a nation.[16] In Mauritania, the Beidan hold the majority of political, military, intellectual and economic powers. This system discriminates against black Mauritanians (Hartani and Negro-Mauritanians), which happen to be the poorest sections of the population. For example, they suffer administrative barriers to birth certificates that are essential for their children's school enrolment. Young people also have difficulty registering for the national exams, which is especially more important for poor black people than for their wealthy white counterparts. This discrimination is also intertwined with gender-related oppression.[17]

5. Analysis of Qualitative Data

5.1 Research Design and Methodology

The data collection methods included FGDs and individual interviews with key informants to understand the perspectives of young men and women and community leaders on the link between youth and radicalization/violent extremism. The design of the qualitative field study was informed by the findings of the literature review. Specific collection tools have been used to ensure the relevance of the data collected

5.2 Research Design

Target Population
Young men and women aged 18-25 from Hal-pulaar, Soninke, Beidan and Hartani communities were chosen as the subject of this analysis because they are considered more at risk by virtue of the obstacles they face. For the KII, the targets were men and women, community, political and religious leaders aged 30-65, and development partners with employment and inclusion programs, as well as experts on the issue of radicalization.

Sample Size
For FGDs, we employed two sampling methods: a purposive or convenience sampling by targeting youths we believed would provide the most relevant and representative information and who were readily available in our implementation location; and a stratified sampling targeting youths of both genders within the age definition bracket of the program. To answer the research questions sufficiently and in a manner that is representative of our target group, we conducted 10 FGDs per target group age bracket (18-25yrs). This proved to be the saturation point at which we were not receiving any new responses to our research questions. An average of eight participants per FGD was targeted to ensure a minimum of six participants for sufficient representation and a maximum of 10 participants for effective discussion. We considered age, sex, ethnicity and geographical area, and profile (students, married, unemployed, with a job or woman in the foyer).

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[16] Nafoore program document
[17] Women's socio-economic insertions and gender inequality – SAFIRE 2022

For the KIIs, the targets were men and women, community, political and religious leaders aged 30-65 and development partners with employment and inclusion programs, ten association leaders from the target areas, as well as experts on the phenomenon of radicalization.

Table 1: Data collection table

Zone	Common	Ethnicity	Number of focus group	Gender	Age	Number of Participants
Nktt	Arafat	Hartani	1 focus group	Female	18-25 years	9
		Pulaar	1 focus group	Male	18-25 years	9
	DAR Naim	Hartani	1 focus group	Female	18-25 years	9
		Hartani	1 focus group	Male	18-25 years	9
	Sebkha	Soninké	1 focus group	Female	18-25 years	9
		Pulaar	1 focus group	Female	18-25 years	9
CET	Fassala	Hartani	1 focus group	Female	18-25 years	9
		Beidan	1 focus group	Male	18-25 years	9
	Adel Bagrou	Hartani	1 focus group	Male	18-25 years	9
		Beidan	1 focus group	Female	18-25 years	9
Total focus group						10
Total participants						90

It is important to note that there was a change in sampling in Vassala and Adel Bagrou; initially, the plans were for four focus groups (FGDs), two for Hartani and two for Beidan, but due to the complexity and sensitivity of the subject (the difference between Beidan and Hartani), the investigators decided to mix the two communities. In addition, due to the fact that Hartani are the black descendants of the slaves of the Beidan populations, both groups have the same culture and practices. This therefore had no impact on the data collected in any way that it could interfere with the objectives of the study.

6. Findings

6.1 Domain: Socio-cultural norms, beliefs, and practices

Finding 6.1.1: Social and cultural norms limit young women's access to employment and influence perceptions regarding which jobs are suitable for them.
Although there are sociocultural norms and differences between ethnic groups, all are based on patriarchal systems where decision making power is exercised by heads of households, who are men in most cases. The authority of the household is embodied by the man as head of the family; he determines the rules of the house, he manages the household's property, and he makes decisions concerning the other family members.

Young Soninke, Hal-pulaar, Hartani and Beidan women must have the consent of one of their parents or a male guardian (husband, brother or cousin) before training, studying or looking for work. This puts them in a vulnerable position where it is difficult for them to position themselves to access socio-economic opportunities, which may encourage them to rebel and isolate themselves from their families, *"which could be exploited by extremist organizations to radicalize or recruit them into those organizations"* as said by one of the key female informants. She further said, *"Girls cannot take a decision without seeking permission. Our society is very oppressive towards women, so they often fall into the religious drift. Some women started to bring niqab overnight and they refuse to shake hands with other women because of their clothes. There is still less violence among young women despite the constraints they face."*

Young women consult their parents before making a decision, as attested to in the words of one of the respondents who said: *"this is an obligation, to take part in a training course, we need the agreement of our parents first."*

Women and girls in all six female focus groups expressed frustration with social and cultural norms that prevent them from working and limit them in terms of the jobs they are allowed to pursue. In one of the female FGDs, a 23 year old young women from DarNaim observed that: *"My parents do not accept that I dress in catering outfits or work in a restaurant."* As a result of this discrimination, young women are often discouraged and angry. Indeed, because of these norm, they cannot engage in certain opportunities or even make decisions on what they desire to do, which means their exercise of personal agency is usually seriously hampered. This leads to a feeling of injustice on their part. Another 25 year old young man said: *"Discrimination and social pressure lead people to emigrate and revolt, some of our young people find refuge in religion, and even if religion prohibits the use of force, sometimes we are tempted to go for justice."*

Another one from the young women FGD in Sebkha had this to say: "*My sister was top of her class and she was to go to Morocco for further studies, but my father didn't want to because she's a girl.*" Another key informant, a staff in an NGO said, "*the parents don't trust the girls enough so as to let them go out in the evening for training.* These norms and customs may constitute an obstacle to participation in the activities of the program.

Young women discussion group in Dar Naîm

6.2 Domain: Roles and responsibilities (productive, reproductive and community) and time

Finding 6.2.1: The domestic workload falls to women, excluding them from opportunities for training, education, employment, and participation.
Women and young women are responsible for the reproductive roles which include taking care of all the household chores without any support from other members of the family.
As one of them respondent from the female FGDs said, "*for us the Soninke, housework is reserved for girls, women do the tasks at home (cooking, household, etc.) while men provide the financial part linked to the means of subsistence.*"

One of key informant among Nafoore's partners said *"Haratin women at the urban level take care of the home, the household and education, at the rural level is added the fact of taking care of the livestock.*" This can promote self-neglect, which can impose significant mental stress, as reported by other studies.

Finding 6.2.2: Time poverty also prevents young women from fully engaging in the economy, and limits their economic productivity and growth in several ways
From the young women FGDs, the general trend of feedback was that they spend 12-15 hours in domestic tasks every day. This often leaves women with little or no discretionary time. Lack of time sharply limits women's economic opportunities, curtails their voice and leadership, and limits their opportunities to exert influence on their communities through their leadership in work and in public life. Time poverty has important repercussions for young women's economic opportunities and health. It is a manifestation of the systemic oppression of women via gender inequality and restrictive gender norms which dictate normative expectations for what it means to be male or female in each society and the roles, responsibilities, and privileges that are allocated to different members of the community

Finding 6.2.3: Financial expectations on young men and women are a source of pressure
Young men are no longer interested in studies because of the high number of unemployed graduates. This disinterest is often encouraged by parents, who tell them that studies are useless professionally. Young people are reluctant to do certain jobs, which are often considered degrading for a graduate. Some young men take on excessive family responsibilities and feel that the state is not playing its role. Some turn to religious charities. One participant from a male FGD in Dar Naim said, "*You always have to have a 'long arm'(bribe) to access a certain job, sometimes you also have to pay to get a job. Harratin and hal -pulaar young men believe that the Beidan are more likely to work than other ethnicities.*" Another key informant said the *"young men are more at risk of VE because being recruited is seen as being asked to go get money.*" Still another one had this to say: *"young women are also under pressure related to having money. They can, and usually end up as channels or intermediaries that groups can use to reach potential recruits.*"

Finding 6.2.4: Young women face restrictions in terms of mobility
In the Beidan and Hartani communities of Vassala and Adel-Bagrou, young women cannot travel alone, leave at certain hours (after 7 pm) without being accompanied, work in certain places, or do certain jobs that are for men only. Parents are more flexible towards young men. Women are very often frustrated at not being able to continue their studies because their parents do not let them travel.

Focus group of young women in Sebkha

6.3 Domain Models of power and decision-making

Finding 6.3.1: Young men have options and can decide what they can engage in
Young men are free to consult their parents or not; if they do, it is mostly to receive the parents' blessing. Parents are more permissive with young men. However, there were instances where young men lack the freedom for career choice. One of them observed that parents impose on young men certain training or jobs they do not want. One of the key informants said, "*Parents imprison children in their dreams, they prevent them from doing what they want and impose other things on them, and this creates frustration. Young men prefer to hang out at home instead of doing an education or a job they don't want, they are often discouraged and angry.*"

Finding 6.3.2: Young women live in a restrained agency environment
Further, young women are excluded without regard to their personal choices. During the FGDs, young women expressed their limited agency. To them, although marriage may free them from their father's control, it often is simply a transition into different situations of disadvantage with another male (their husband) and of decreased agency as a junior female among the women in the husband's extended family. Some of the participants also discussed how they are taken out from school and married off because parents prefer to educate their sons rather than their daughters. Further, they cannot even choose who they can marry, neither can they choose to marry a man of another ethnicity or a lower caste. One of the participants from a female FGD said "*For the Beidan, decisions are taken by the parents (the mother, the father, the brother and the husband). A girl who is not yet married must seek permission from her parents for everything, and, once married, from the husband, to whom she has to go for permission.*" As one key informant put it: "*Young women are frustrated because they cannot earn money to help their families and feel that they are being treated unfairly compared to men,*" while another said: *"there are signs of radicalization among young women, through the clothing example of the burqa by some women are influenced by social networks."* This was further corroborated by another who said: "*many girls wear burkas, especially in urban areas. It is a means of expression, and this form of radicalization is violent only for men."*

Young women consult their parents before making a decision; it is an obligation. "*To participate in training, we first need the consent of our parents."* For young women however,

there is often reluctance on the part of parents and husbands with regard to personal initiatives. This restrained agency was further confirmed by a KII who said, "*the girls must stay in her home and can only leave for her grave*." Clearly, from this discussion, young women's agency will involve constant dialogue between social norms, empowerment, capacity to aspire, and the structure of opportunities.

6.4 Domain: Access and control of resources

Finding 6.4.1: lack of motivation caused by structural racism
Many young people expressed frustration due to structural racism and believed it was hard to access employment opportunities if you do not have connections or offer a bribe. *"You always need to have a long arm (to know someone) to access a certain job, sometimes you also have to bribe for a job."* Young Hartani and Hal-pulaar men believe that Beidan are more likely to find jobs than other ethnic groups.

Finding 6.4.2: Young women have no access and control to resources
Usually in Hartani, Beidan, Hal-pulaar and Soninke communities, family expenses are borne by the father or the oldest son. One of the participants indicated that "*Men are the fathers, so they manage their income freely and the mother manages small expenses.*" It is men who make the decisions. Indeed, they have control over the finances. Another participant pointed out that "*men always take the decision, we believe that a woman does not have to make decisions, we are encouraged to stay at home all the time to do household activities.*" In Soninke families, the oldest man is responsible for spending and managing the family. Another key informant said: "*when a woman works, what she earns belongs to her, the family burden falls on the man.*" Another one from young women association pointed out that "*the woman is not obliged to contribute to the expenses of the house even if she earns more than her husband. Whether she supports or not is a question of choice.*"

7. Discussion and Recommendations

Norms, beliefs, and sociocultural practices in communities (Hal-pulaar, Hartani, Beidan, Soninke) are largely shared and based on a patriarchal system in which decision-making power is embodied by men. Young women are responsible for the domestic management of the house, taking care of the clean-up of the house and taking care of family members. These norms are a burden on young men and women and may lead them to revolt, which could be exploited by recruiters of violent extremist organizations. The roles and responsibilities of young Soninke, Hal-pulaar, Beidan and Hartani men and women are defined by social standards: women manage household tasks, while men bring the money back to support the family. This pressure of financial burden on young men and household burdens on young women can be a push factor for recruiters of terrorist organizations. Young women are often the most negatively affected, as they cannot travel to continue their studies. They are then obliged to stay at home to make a household and wait for a husband.

Young Soninke, Hal-pulaar, Hartani and Beidan women must have the consent of one of the parents or a male guardian (husband, brother or cousin) before training, studying and looking for work. This puts them in a position of vulnerability as far as access to socio-economic opportunities goes, which leads them to rebel and seek alternative ways to make themselves heard. This desire for rebellion could be used by the VEO to recruit them.

Recommendations

These recommendations aim to support gender responsive and, if possible, gender-transformative change through interventions that are rooted in a deep understanding of gender and social norms that contribute to inequality and inequity. Interventions should carefully consider gender and social norms and power dynamics at the individual, family, structural, and societal levels. Program activities should consider the varied decision-making power and access to resources that exist for women based on their age and marital status. For example, young unmarried women are seriously marginalized, with minimal access to resources or decision-making.

1. Address socio-cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that shape livelihoods

- Nafoore should consider incorporating a social behavior change strategy to promote male engagement in supporting young women to participate in economic opportunities and decision making. Young women are extremely limited by social norms and will likely not be able to participate in the youth network without specific interventions to engage their male family members for support.
- The program should further explore income generating activities, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities that are accessible to women. Several of the young women prefer having their own shops.
- Encourage critical awareness among men and women, boys and girls, on the consequences of the inequalities embedded within gender roles, norms and the resulting distribution of resources. This can happen through community dialogues where the project holds sessions to create awareness on harmful gender/social cultural norms.

2. Increase participation of young women and men in community leadership structures

- A social behavior change (SBC) strategy should promote the value of young women and men's participation in community structures and processes, particularly those with more influence across all program purposes. An SBC strategy should promote the value of youth engagement and contribution among community leaders, while fostering agency and avenues to contribute among youth.
- Train communities to use the Social Analysis and Action (SAA) tool to surface barriers and solutions to young men and women's participation.[18] The facilitated process allows individuals to explore and challenge the social norms, beliefs, and practices that shape their lives.
- Utilize the Positive Youth Development Framework to guide approaches that empower youth. Youth should be consulted and empowered to lead processes that contribute to community development objectives. Intergenerational dialogues should be facilitated, with the goal of enabling elders to mentor youth on civic engagement and participation in community governance structures.

3. Build capacities tailored to how for young women to engage in livelihood opportunities and youth networks.

- Young women's time poverty and domestic workloads are a major constraint to their ability to participate in the project activities and therefore there is a great need for the project to consider the timing and locations for project activities if young women are to participate in these activities.

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[18] https://www.care.org/news-and-stories/resources/social-analysis-and-action-global-implementation-manual/

- Consider young women's existing unpaid care duties in intervention design; any intervention that offers livelihood or skill- building opportunities will need to take into account girls' daily routines and household responsibilities. If an intervention is able to carefully design around unpaid care constraints (e.g. by providing childcare or locating activities close to girls' homes), this could help empower and widen the scope for girls and women to engage in more paid work.
- Develop young women's skills for leadership. Their contribution to their families and communities needs to be better acknowledged and their ability to contribute encouraged. This means providing safe spaces, forums and processes that involve and are led by girls and young women and are sensitive to gender inequality and power dynamics as well as building family and community support for their engagement This enhances confidence and build their agency for them to amplify their voices.
- Identify opportunities for women to use their voice to raise their needs to authorities and invest in capacity strengthening and networking to build women's agency, community leadership, social networks and alliances.
- Promote the systematic participation of young women in all decisions that affect their lives. At program level this means they must be included in the intervention design, implementation and evaluation.

This study identified additional opportunities to integrate and promote gender and social inclusion within Nafoore interventions. The table below gives an analysis of the implications of the findings on the Theory of Change (TOC).

Table 2: Data and Implications for the TOC

TOC Outcomes	GESI Analysis Findings	Implications
Objective 1: Increase income of vulnerable youth.		
R1.1: Increased technical., vocational + soft skills for youth across growth sectors	**Finding 6.1.1**: Social and cultural norms limit young women's (and men) access to employment and influence perceptions regarding which jobs are suitable for them**.** **Finding 6.2.2:** Reproductive roles and responsibilities are done by women **Finding 6.2.3**: Time poverty also prevents young women from fully engaging in the economy, and limits their economic productivity and growth in several ways **Finding 5:** Young women face restrictions in terms of mobility **Finding 6.4.1:** lack of motivation caused by structural racism **Finding 6.4.2** Young women have no access and control to resources	Consider SBC strategy that includes a social change theme on the value of young women in participation in technical and vocational trainings and youth networks. A clear youth mobilization and engagement strategy that will ensure they are enrolled in the training opportunities, and this will include specific interventions for including young women may be in supporting the formation of young women groups. Communication support campaigns like use of youth friendly posters, youth platforms like soccer tournaments should be used for mass mobilization Project to consider the timing and locations for project activities if young women are to participate in these activities.
Objective 2: Strengthen youth agency in their lives + communities		
2.1: Increased support for youth to lead conflict mitigation and local development efforts in collaboration with established power structures	**Finding 6.3.1:** Young women cannot make decisions on what income livelihood opportunities they can engage in**.** **Finding 6.3.2**: Young men have options and can decide what they can engage in.	The SBC strategy should incorporate a social change theme that builds individual optimism, builds their self-awareness and self-efficacy; at community level, the program should utilize community dialogues to tackle negative social that hinder youth participation in conflict mitigation structures. Using a positive deviance approach [19]as a platform for open dialogue between youth and adults on the challenges youth face,

	Finding 6.3.3: Young women live in a restrained agency environment	the same approach will allow for identification of youth positive deviants. Nafoore should work with these as community youth mobilisers, to mobilize their peers and provide peer to peer mentorship The SBC strategy should also include a social theme that appeals to youth, builds their individual optimism resulting in enhanced self-efficacy, self-awareness, and agency Consider Community Dialogue forums with community gatekeepers and custodians of culture with Increased intergenerational dialogues to address the young women restrained agency environment.
Objective 3: Expand safe and supportive youth social networks		
3.1: At-risk youth have expanded access to and engagement in youth-friendly spaces	**Finding 6.3.3:** Young women live in a restrained agency environment	Identify opportunities for women to use their voice to raise their needs to authorities and invest in capacity strengthening and networking to build women's agency, community leadership, social networks and alliances

Annex 1: Bibliography

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Annex 2: Focus Group Discussions Guidelines

Facilitator Guidelines duration (2hrs))
1) Introduction
2) Background and context
3) Norms, beliefs and practices
4) Roles, Responsibilities and Schedule
5) Models of power and decision-making
6) Access and control of resources
7) Institutions, laws and policies
8) Conclusion + Q&A

Presentation (5 mins) - Presentation - Make a brief introduction on Mercy Corps / NAFOORE and the purpose of the meeting - Inform participants of the use of the information they are going to provide and why they have been selected as a target group for the FGD - Describe the process for conducting the discussion of and rules - Circulate the consent form to each participant and have it signed . - Encourage everyone to participate	
History and context: *The purpose of this section is to get a general understanding/profile of the participants – what their livelihoods are, the activities they engage in, their main source of income, etc.*	
Gender norms, beliefs and practices *In this section, we would like to gain an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices that influence the risk of* radicalization and recruitment by OVC, and which may affect *the participation of young women and young men in the activities of the NAFOORE program.* the main purpose for the questions in this section is to answer this main questionHow do socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices affect radicalization and recruitment by VEOs across gender and age among vulnerable social populations in Nouakchott, Trarza, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh Ech Chargui regions? How are related norms, beliefs and practices changing affecting them	

20 minutes	- Are there any social/cultural norms, beliefs or practices that you prevent you from training, working, investing and participating in community activities? If yes, which ones? Think of these norms, beliefs or practices in terms of.
	   a. Level of education
	   b. Marital status (married, single, divorced, etc.)
	   c. Ethnicity
	   d. Sharing household responsibilities
	- Have you ever failed or chosen not to pursue work or self-employment opportunities because of these norms, practices or beliefs? If yes, please specify.
	- Do these norms, practices or beliefs affect you because you are a young woman or a young man?
	- these feelings (frustration, anger , discouragement) make you want to take what belongs to you even by force?
	
	Interviewers:(Ask separately for a,b ,c,d,and record comments for each of the above points. Be sure to clearly explain the sectors to participants before they answer.

Roles, Responsibilities and Schedule *In this section, we want to understand the relationship between radicalization, recruitment by VEOs and specific restrictions on mobility, time deprivation, variations in roles and responsibilities of young men and young women in the main activities of Nafooré (economic opportunities, capacity building, networks).* What is the relationship between radicalization, recruitment by VEOs and young women's and men's roles, (productive, reproductive and community) responsibilities, time use and workloads?	
15 minutes	- Are there specific challenges, limitations, and/or restrictions that affect your ability to effectively assume roles and responsibilities in work, training, and/or entrepreneurial opportunities? If yes, which ones? Think of it in terms of(a ,b,c ,),

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interviewers [*Ask each of them and get an answer before moving on to the next point]*

    a. Marital status
    b. Dependents
    c. Perception in the community

- Have you ever missed or chosen not to take on specific roles or responsibilities because of these challenges, limitations and/or restrictions?
- How these challenges, limits or restrictions affect you to consider using force (abc)

1. What types of activities (roles) are young men and young women responsible for at the household level? At the community level?

Do (formally and informally) assigned activities impede their access to: (1) market opportunities, employment skills development (2) participation in conflict resolution and social cohension projects (3) participation in youth social networks

2. How do you spent your time in the day ? Do you think you have any time to engage in other activities

Interviewers: repeat the questions above for <u>each activity</u> and record responses by sector

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Models of power and decision-making

This section serves to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of power and decision-making patterns *between young men and young women, their impacts on the risk of radicalization and recruitment by VBOs, and on engagement* in *NAFOORE's priority activities.* What are the barriers to young men's and women's access to and control over critical resources, assets, income, social networks, public and private services, market skills, technology, and information? How do they impact on radicalization/recruitment by VEOs?

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- Please describe your decision-making process regarding the choice of training, work or entrepreneurship in which you are currently engaged or in which you would like to engage.
        Do you consult anyone, and if so, who?
- Are there specific sectors/roles where you have more influence than others and if so, which ones?
- Is the decision-making process described above different for young women compared to men? If so in what ways? And which sectors?
- Are there specific factors/challenges/risks you consider to significantly affect your decision-making power when it comes to seeking work or self-employment opportunities, market services? And if so which ones? And are these factors, challenges or risks different for young women compared to young men
- How would you rate your satisfaction on overall influence in key decisions related to seeking or engaging in work and / or self-employment? Are there specific sectors/roles where you have more influence compared to others and if so, which ones?
- Do these create fustration in you ? if so, to the point of wanting to free yourself by all means, in particular by force or violence?
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Access and control of resources

We would now like to identify what barriers prevent young men and women from accessing essential resources, assets, income, social networks, public and private services, business skills, technology and finance. information, and to control them? their impact on radicalisation/recruitment by OVEs? *and on maximizing opportunities in NAFOORE's core businesses.*What are the barriers to young men's and women's access to and control over critical resources, assets, income, social networks, public and private services, market skills, technology, and information? How do they impact on radicalization/recruitment by VEOs?

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- How is income managed within the household? that's to say
        Who/how decides on small expenses? (Day by day)
    How much influence and control do you have over the income you personally

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	earn from your job?
	- Do these constraints make you want to revolt by force against society until you engage in OVC
	Are there any social/cultural norms, beliefs or practices that inform whether you can access resources for example employment opportunities, employment skills, markets services . If so, which ones? Think about these norms, beliefs, or practices in terms of marital status, religious affiliation
	What are the major barriers/opportunities to young men and young women obtaining knowledge and skills , employment opportunities
Institutions, laws and policies	
We would now like to identify which institutional regulations and practices (formal, informal and traditional) influence gender and social dynamics and which intersect to affect radicalization and recruitment by VBOs? which can become obstacles for the implementation of the activities of the Nafooré program	
10 minutes	- Are there policies, guidelines, formal and informal rules, regulations, standards, etc. specific that you consider an obstacle to your increased participation in (trainings , economic opportunities, networks, conflict mitigation process, social cohension activities
	- To what extent would you say the youth are involved in development of policies, rules, regulations, etc, in these sectors, or their interests are sought and included in such regulations, rules, policies, etc? Does this apply equally to men and women?
5 minutes	**Conclusion + questions for us if any**

N **B:** A The investigators will make recordings, a summary report of the key points (the 5 domains) of the FGDs and share them at the end, to facilitate your data analysis.