UNODC AND INDONESIA JOIN HANDS TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM TERRORISM
Background

Children are often among the casualties of acts of terrorism. They are victims of abduction, trafficking, and sexual and gender-based violence and are deliberately recruited and exploited by terrorist groups. This is not a new phenomenon, but technological advances, and the specific strategic objectives of terrorist groups, have made instances of recruitment increasingly difficult to detect, recruitment campaigns broader in their reach, and children associated with such groups more vulnerable to stigma and discrimination.

Indonesia has been particularly affected by this phenomenon. In May 2018, coordinated attacks in the Surabaya province in Indonesia were carried out by two families, with children used as suicide bombers. The Government has addressed efforts to strengthen systems as a means to ensuring that rehabilitation and reintegration efforts targeting children associated with terrorist groups, including those with links to the FTF phenomenon and who might return from conflict zones, are effective.

Based on its mandates in the areas of violence against children and counter-terrorism, UNODC has provided tailored technical assistance to Indonesia to address the phenomenon of child association with terrorist and violent extremist groups since 2018, including under the EU-funded STRIVE Juvenile project.

Long-term UNODC - Indonesia partnership to protect children from terrorism

Since 2015, UNODC has provided assistance to over 35 countries that face the phenomenon of child association with terrorist and violent extremist groups. Indonesia has been a key partner in this process. This cooperation informed the design and implementation of the STRIVE Juvenile project; contributed to enhancing the visibility of this issue at regional level in South-East Asia and shaped the production of UNODC technical assistance material in this area.

01 Indonesia contributed to UNODC technical manuals

In 2017, UNODC produced a handbook with a view to providing legal and policy guidance to Member States facing this complex phenomenon. In 2018 and 2019, Indonesian experts contributed to the full UNODC training package, by piloting and revising the three training manuals that complement the Handbook. These publications also provided the basis for the 'UNODC Roadmap on the Treatment of children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups' published in 2019 to disseminate UNODC’s strategic vision.

02 Indonesia spearheaded the issue of child protection from terrorism at regional level

March 2020, UNODC, Indonesia and Japan organized a regional event bringing together high-level representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives and the Philippines to discuss child recruitment and its consequences on children’s lives. Indonesia took an important step and officially launched the “Bali Call for Action”, a political declaration that endorses the Roadmap and commits States to translate it into action at the national level. Indonesia continued to lead regional initiatives in this area by co-sponsoring the “ASEAN Regional Forum statement on the treatment of children recruited by or associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups”.

03 UNODC has provided support to prioritize children in national intervention since 2019

Targeting Indonesian policy-makers and practitioners in strengthening national strategies in relation to these children, under the leadership of the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT). Participants in UNODC activities provided recommendations for inclusion into the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism that Leads to terrorism 2020-2024 (NAP on PCVE). As a result, programmes for child rehabilitation and reintegration have been prioritized on the national agenda.
In 2021, UNODC, in partnership with and under the lead of BNPT, joined hands with the European Union and started the implementation of the Project STRIVE Juvenile. STRIVE Juvenile extends to end 2023 in Indonesia and aims to address child association with terrorist and violent extremist groups and its consequences for the lives of children and society at large. The project delivers activities at the global level and in three partner countries: Indonesia, Iraq, and Nigeria, pursuing two interconnected objectives:

**1. Strengthening government strategies, policies and mechanisms related to child association with terrorist groups.**

**2. Increasing the resilience of children and their environment against violent extremist and terrorist agendas.**

Intervention under the STRIVE Juvenile project pursues an integrated approach, which recognizes that child rights and security interests are complementary objectives. This approach is built on three cornerstones:

**01 Choosing to invest in children as agents**

The project acknowledges that children can be extremely vulnerable to terrorist tactics whilst - most importantly - recognizing that they have the power to transform societal dynamics. STRIVE Juvenile strongly advocates for the primary recognition of children who become associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups as victims and provides assistance that is focused on addressing their victimization. At the same time, the project aims at to move beyond the myopic dichotomy between victim and perpetrator. STRIVE Juvenile invests in children first, advocating for their active participation in rehabilitation and reintegration processes and the building of peaceful societies.

**02 Building partnerships with national counterparts**

The three partner countries selected to take part in STRIVE Juvenile were chosen for their willingness to confront the situation of children who become associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups, as well as for their influence on regional and global agendas. The effectiveness of the project is maximized through activities that are relevant to national contexts and driven by local stakeholders. The project prioritizes national ownership throughout its planning and implementation by means of: i) the selection of a lead coordination agency or key lead partners in each country; ii) in-depth consultations with a broad range of stakeholders during the inception phase; iii) involvement of national stakeholders in the ongoing development of the project through its national project coordination committees.

**03 Fostering a participatory and whole-of-society approach**

The treatment of children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups is the shared responsibility of a broad array of actors. A multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder framework is therefore a key requirement for the success of STRIVE Juvenile. The project brings together the security, justice and child protection sectors with a view to overcoming the perceived conflict between security interests and child protection. The prevention of recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist and violent extremist groups and the rehabilitation and reintegration of children formerly associated with these groups are both crucial to the curtailment of terrorist tactics. In addition, the project aims to favour initiatives that involve both governmental and non-governmental actors, recognizing that civil society and community-based organizations (CSOs and CBOs) are key to supporting the resiliency of children and their environments.
Between January 2021 and June 2023, STRIVE Juvenile Indonesia reached multiple objectives, from collecting and analyzing new evidence; to producing specific tools; to strengthening the skills and capacities of practitioners; to empowering children reinforcing their resilience. These achievements, combined, have contributed to the creation of an integrated approach to fostering the rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups in Indonesia.

Creation of a multi-stakeholder coordination platform: in order to provide strategic guidance with regard to the implementation of the STRIVE Juvenile project, UNODC and BNPT have set up a national steering committee, named “Project Coordination Group” (PCG), to provide strategic guidance for the implementation of the STRIVE Juvenile project. Under the leadership of BNPT, the work of the PCG fosters multi-stakeholder coordination; promotes dialogue on the situation of children among national counterparts; and consistently monitors project activities, ensuring their alignment with national priorities.

Collection and analysis of new evidence on child association and exit from terrorist groups: the STRIVE Juvenile project started with the undertaking of an in-depth situation analysis, based on desk review and comprehensive consultations with all national counterparts involved in the protection of children from terrorism. The Situation Analysis served to collect all existing evidence on this phenomenon in Indonesia, identifying priorities for action and gaps in policy and practice. Then, the project launched an ambitious research programme on children’s trajectories in and out of terrorist and violent extremist groups. The final research report (forthcoming 2023) presents a detailed picture of this phenomenon in Indonesia, contributing to better understanding of the perspectives of children, their families and communities; their reintegration journeys, as well as the specific strategies mobilized by terrorist groups for their recruitment and exploitation.

Elaboration of policy-guidance and operational recommendations for implementation: in consultation with Indonesian professionals, UNODC elaborates specialized guidance tools to support the appropriate treatment of children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups. Specifically, STRIVE Juvenile produced a Guidance Note on juvenile justice in a counter-terrorism context in Indonesia and is currently developing a Guidance Note on psychosocial child assessment processes. These tools function as repositories of relevant international and national law; provide operational guidance on procedures and authorities; and include strategies for strengthening practice and coordination among different stakeholders.

Development of capacities and skills of professionals: legal and operational guidance is meaningless if policy-makers and professionals are not empowered to apply innovative strategies. Accordingly, the STRIVE Juvenile project couples the development of specialized guidance with the design and delivery of tailored capacity development activities. Over three years, the project has organized and delivered training to policy-makers and practitioners from law enforcement, correctional institutions, judiciary, security sector, child protection, social affairs, administrative authorities and civil society organizations. Training activities have focused on: child-sensitive justice responses; treatment of children deprived of their liberty in connection with terrorist offences; and rehabilitation and reintegration strategies and measures, with a focus on psychosocial assessment.

Support to the national agenda for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups: in accordance with national counterparts, STRIVE Juvenile has prioritized work to promote rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with terrorist groups, including those with links to the FTF phenomenon. Based on the evidence collected by the project, intervention in this area focuses on: mechanisms for coordination among the different stakeholders involved in the treatment of these children; strategies for the decentralization of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes; specialized assessment processes, aimed to lower stigma of these children and favour their safe return to society.

Empowerment of children and youth to fight violent extremist agendas: children and youth can play a key role in their own protection from violent extremism, when empowered to do so in a safe way. For this reason, STRIVE Juvenile has partnered with PeaceGeneration Indonesia to create specialized tools, mentoring programmes and an online campaign to strengthen the resilience of children and youth, fostering a culture of dialogue and peace.
STRIVE Juvenile Indonesia: results at a glance*

1 COORDINATION PLATFORM CREATED
Bringing together 27 national governmental and non-gov stakeholders.

1 SITUATION ANALYSIS COMPLETED
Collecting and disseminating new evidence on the phenomenon of child association with terrorist and violent extremist groups.

1 GUIDANCE NOTE ELABORATED
Providing operational guidance for Indonesian professionals, tailored to the national context.

2 TRAINING MANUALS PUBLISHED & DISSEMINATED
Promoting innovative strategies and skills for professionals.

149 PROFESSIONALS TRAINED (63m, 86w)
Enhancing the skills of national experts and fostering knowledge growth in a sustainable way.

*Based on results to 30 June 2023
Thank you for taking the time to read this factsheet. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

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