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# Strengthening Community Resilience: NPA's Response to Violent Extremism in Northeast Syria

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# Reclaiming from the Shadows of Extremism

In the silence of Northeast Syria, violent extremist groups continue to switch and adapt their strategies to draw recruits and incite violence. Many families have felt the brunt of how this can tear down their social setting. It is tough especially for the women some of them trapped in a life they did not choose. Imagine a widow whose husband was killed in combat, she was left stateless, rejected, and feared by her own people. With no skills, no education, and no safe place to go, she became one of thousands of women struggling to rebuild their lives after years of radicalisation and conflict. This is the story of countless women, children, and youth in Syria who have seen their lives upended by extremism. But today, some of them are not hiding. Some are safely integrating in groups running small businesses, and most importantly, receiving training on how to believe in themselves again, and see a viable future for themselves in civilian life

This transformation is the result of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which is working in partnership with local communities, CSOs, and grassroots organisations to create pathways out of extremism. The intervention is **Funded by the European Union's Foreign Policy Instruments (EU FPI)**, supporting peacebuilding efforts and P\CVE programmes across Northeast Syria.

On International PVE Day - February 12th, as the world reflects on the fight against violent extremism, NPA shares its stories with you some of the strides in effort to halt Syria from becoming a cradle of violent extremism.

# How NPA is Turning the Tide

Early Warning, Early Response System and Integrative Complexity Thinking:  
The Fight Against Radicalisation Begins Before It Starts



*"Critical thinking has significantly enhanced my ability to analyze and solve problems. It has taught me to move beyond impulsive reactions, consider diverse perspectives, and creatively develop alternative solutions to conflicts."*

– Programme Beneficiary

Stories of youths narrowly escaping recruitment by extremist groups have become all too common in Northeast Syria. Many young people face unemployment, frustration, and desperation, making them susceptible to radicalisation. However, NPA's Early EWER equips them with skills to identify and counter extremist influences before it is too late, while IC Thinking helps youth move beyond black-and-white binary perspectives by encouraging nuanced reasoning, critical analysis, and the ability to consider multiple viewpoints.

## Key achievements include:

- Implementation of the Peace Alert online portal and mobile app, enabling real-time reporting and analysis of threats.
- Establishment of 12 early warning networks in vulnerable areas.
- Training of over 1,500 community leaders to detect and counter extremism.
- Formation of 11 Community Peace Groups, empowering local actors to monitor tensions and promote grassroots conflict resolution.
- Implementation of early response community-led initiatives to address the identified radicalisation red flags.



*A Woman reading a book titled  
The Five Languages of LOVE at the  
installed library in Al-Holl camp  
(NPA – Partner Shams) Women*

# Women in Action: From Rejection to Reintegration



*“Psychosocial support is essential for fostering mental well-being and a positive outlook. It strengthens self-confidence, equips individuals to navigate daily challenges, and plays a crucial role in social integration.”*

– Programme Beneficiary

- For many women, the challenges persist long after the conflict ends. Stigma, restricted access to education and employment, and fear of retaliation prevent them from moving forward. In response, NPA, in collaboration with local women-led organisations, has launched tailored initiatives aimed at reintegrating women who have survived extremist control. Some of the key interventions:
- Development of a context-specific de-radicalisation toolbox addressing Northern Syria’s unique socio-political and cultural dynamics.
- Provision of vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and psychosocial assistance to over 700 women.
- Introduction of “Sound of Change” model through art and music therapy to aid trauma recovery and self-confidence rebuilding.
- Regular community dialogues to reduce stigma and ease reintegration.



*Women participating in vocational training ( Sewing Sessions) in AL-Holl camp (NPA Partner Shams)*

# Youth and Economic Empowerment: The Strongest Deterrent Against Radicalisation



*"The livelihoods sector is pivotal in integrating youth into society and preventing extremism. By creating job opportunities and building self-reliance, it improves living standards and empowers individuals to launch sustainable small-scale initiatives."*

– Programme Beneficiary

The intervention towards empowering youth with skills and economic opportunities provides a sustainable alternative to extremism. For many, employment and education create pathways toward stability and hope. Some of the key achievements include;

- Training of 850+ youth in entrepreneurship and job skills.
- Launch of digitalised non-formal education programmes for at-risk individuals.
- Piloting of digital learning platforms to expand educational access.
- Provision of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), policy research, advocacy, and skills-building initiatives.



*A group of youths attending a training; meaningful youth engagement because we believe that enhancing the resilience of young people*

# Beyond Security: A Holistic Approach to PVE



*“Before the project, water scarcity often led to disputes, but our irrigation initiative has eased tensions by ensuring water availability. As members of the community committee, we understand the importance of finding sustainable solutions to reduce conflict and bring tangible benefits to everyone in the community.”*

– Community Committee Member, Jazrat Milaj, Deir ez-Zor

Security crackdowns alone cannot prevent extremism. The solution lies in giving communities hope, opportunities, and dignity. NPA believes in tackling radicalisation at its roots by;

- Expanding access to education and livelihoods to eliminate the economic drivers of extremism.
- Strengthening legal frameworks that allow individuals to reintegrate safely without fear.
- Investing in mental health and trauma recovery for those affected by violent extremism.



*Boys participating in digitalised non-formal education sessions in AL-Holl Camp – ZONE 4 (NPA – Partner SHAMS)*

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