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Violent extremism in Kenya

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Irene Ndung'u, Uyo Salifu and Romi Sigsworth

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Executive summary

There is growing global recognition that women play multiple roles both within violent extremist organisations and in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). However, very little is known about women and violent extremism in the context of Kenya.

Through focus group discussions with women in affected communities and individual interviews with three al-Shabaab returnees and other stakeholders – including government officials, donors and civil society – this study aimed to gain insights into the roles that women play in relation to violent extremism in Kenya, the gendered impacts of radicalisation and violent extremism, and the efficacy of current responses to violent extremism in relation to women.

Very little is known about women's involvement in violent extremism in Kenya

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In order for P/CVE policies and programmes to respond to the specific needs of women, it is necessary for them to be anchored on evidence-based, nuanced and context-specific information. The purpose of this empirical study was to begin bridging the gap between policy and practice through documenting women's particular experiences in the Kenyan context.

This study shows that there is a complex set of dynamics – including drivers, impacts and responses – influencing how and when women become involved in violent extremism in Kenya or work towards countering violent extremism in their communities.

These dynamics operate at different levels (societal, community, family and personal), are specific to the particular contexts in which they develop, and are fluid across time and space.

While there is little evidence of women from Kenya perpetrating acts of violent extremism, women are actively involved in non-combative roles such as recruiting, gathering intelligence, facilitating funding, radicalising their children, and providing the invisible support structure for violent extremists, such as supplying food, shelter and medical care for fighters.

In the communities studied, a range of dynamics drives women's involvement in violent extremism, including: poverty, the loss of the family's breadwinner and the absence of employment opportunities; socio-political marginalisation, the denial of citizenship rights and a lack of formal education; the teaching, by some, of distorted and extremist ideologies alongside perceptions of oppression among the Muslim community; the involvement of their partners or husbands in violent extremist organisations; and as revenge for the treatment of loved ones by security agencies.

The findings demonstrate that violent extremism has multiple, and often mutually reinforcing, effects on the lives of women, their families and communities in Kenya. All the returnees interviewed for this research had experienced sexual violence in al-Shabaab camps; there were also some incidents of sexual violence reported during counter-terrorism (CT) raids. Women have suffered physical, psychological and emotional harm as a result of violent extremism, with consequent physical health problems. Many women live in perpetual fear of terrorist attacks, their children's safety and the hard security approach of some CT interventions, with some respondents feeling stigmatised, harassed and profiled by security agents because of their Muslim attire or because they looked Somali.

> Violent extremism has multiple, and often mutually reinforcing, effects on the lives of women, their families and communities in Kenya

Women also endure economic deprivation after losing income as a direct result of violent extremism, and because of the general economic slump experienced by many of the affected communities. Terror attacks, alleged profiling by security agents and misinformation circulated by the media have created suspicion and mistrust between Muslim and non-Muslim community members, putting a strain on social cohesion within those communities.

Government respondents described a range of official responses to violent extremism, categorised as security responses, policy and programmatic responses, and community outreach programmes.

Donors agreed that the Kenyan government had focused its efforts on countering terrorism rather than preventing violent extremism, but recognised that the government had articulated and demonstrated a willingness to engage with civil society in their P/CVE efforts.

Women in the affected communities described various ways in which they mobilised to counter violent extremism, including peacebuilding forums, savings groups, and forming groups to advocate for women's particular concerns and needs.

However, a number of challenges with the current responses to violent extremism in the affected communities were identified. There is a lack of consistency in different stakeholders' approaches to violent extremism, compounded by a lack of coordination among the actors involved in P/CVE.

The hard security response taken by the Kenyan government has resulted in significant levels of mistrust between the government and the communities affected by violent extremism, hindering P/CVE efforts. There is also a disconnect between the drivers of women's involvement in violent extremism and the nature of the response to violent extremism, showing the importance of contextual knowledge in developing responses.

Most importantly for this study, the findings show that limited attention has been given to women's roles, issues and needs in relation to radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya.

Current responses are therefore neither sufficiently gender-specific nor gender-sensitive, despite good practices such as the use of female police officers to deal with female suspects.

Two key issues emerge from the findings in this study in relation to positioning women in P/CVE responses going forward.

Firstly, there is a need to pursue a gendered development approach to P/CVE in order to unravel the complex web that binds the drivers, impacts and responses to violent extremism in affected communities in Kenya. This would include initiatives such as the creation of education and employment opportunities for women, access to capital, combating historic marginalisation, poor governance and corruption, and programmes to address the causes of the sustained feminisation of poverty.

Secondly, more attention needs to be given to women's involvement in P/CVE at the grassroots level. Tapping into the roles women can play to counter violent extremism within their own communities is especially important to build sustainable peace at the local level.

Failure to widen the lens through which women's connection(s) with violent extremism is/are perceived will hamper efforts to comprehensively address the changing nature of violent extremism, as well as the multifaceted impact of violent extremism, in Kenya – and will miss the opportunity to fully engage women in effective efforts to counter violent extremism in society.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATPU	Anti-Terror Police Unit
CSOs	civil society organisations
CT	counter-terrorism
CVE	countering violent extremism
EU	European Union
FGD	focus group discussion
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IS	Islamic State
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
KCPCVE	Kwale County Plan for Countering Violent Extremism
KDF	Kenya Defence Forces
KNAP	Kenya National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
Ksh	Kenyan shilling
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NGO	non-governmental organisation
P/CVE	preventing and/or countering violent extremism
SAVE	Sisters Against Violent Extremism
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
STRIVE	Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USIP	US Institute of Peace
WPS	women, peace and security

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been growing global interest in the roles women play in violent extremism and terrorism, as well as in P/CVE. This interest has been driven by increasing publicity and awareness of and concern over what tended to be, until recently, an invisible aspect of violent extremism.

Questions continue to be raised about the various roles women may play within violent extremist organisations. These could range from active roles in perpetrating violent acts and in recruitment, to more supportive roles (that is, facilitating acts of terrorism), or sympathising with and enabling violent extremists.

> Questions continue to be raised about the various roles women may play within violent extremist organisations

There has also been a growing understanding of the spectrum of roles women play in P/CVE, especially as interest has shifted away from a securitised response to violent extremism towards more preventive efforts.[1]

Since 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has passed a series of resolutions relating to women, peace and security (WPS), recognising the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and emphasising the need for women to play a role 'in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and in peace-building ... and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution'.[2]

Recently, more attention has been focused on the need to understand the impact of violent extremism on women and the roles women play in relation to violent extremism.

The eighth in the WPS series of UNSC resolutions, Resolution 2242 (2015) recognises 'the differential impact on the human rights of women and girls of terrorism and violent extremism, including in the context of their health, education, and participation in public life'.[3] It urges member states 'to ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's organisations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism' through the empowerment of women.[4]

The Global Study on the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 (2015) (hereafter referred to as the 'Global Study') is clear on the issue:

> Extremism in all its forms has had serious impacts on the rights of women and girls. From forced marriage, to restrictions on education and participation in public life, to systematic sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), this escalation in violence and insecurity demands the attention of the women, peace and security agenda.[5]

Former UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism reinforces Resolution 2242 by not only recognising the differential impact of violent extremism on women and girls, but also specifically speaking to the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in P/CVE efforts and the creation of sustainable peace.[6]

Extremism in all its forms has had serious impacts on the rights of women and girls

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Over the past five years, there have been calls for a more nuanced and contextual understanding of the intersection between women and violent extremism. For example, the Global Study called for an investment in 'research and data collection on women's roles in terrorism including identifying the drivers that lead to their radicalization and involvement with terrorist groups; and the impacts of counterterrorism strategies on their lives' – this with a view to helping develop suitable and effective intervention strategies at the national and local levels.[7]

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) notes that more research is needed 'on better protection strategies and on how women can systematically provide early warning, help de-radicalize former extremists and join in hindering recruitment'.[8] The UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action and Resolution 2242 urge member states and the UN 'to conduct gender-sensitive research and collect data on the drivers of radicalization for women and the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women's human rights and women's organizations in order to develop targeted and evidence-based policy and programming responses'.[9]

The gap between policy and practice in responding to women's involvement in violent extremism is becoming increasingly manifest and there is a realisation that this gap can only be filled by identifying the overarching dynamics behind, and specific drivers of, radicalisation in the contexts in which they occur.

This will help provide a better fit between P/CVE strategies and the communities where they will be implemented and where their effects will be felt. This means moving beyond simplistic understandings and narratives of women's roles in both policy development and in P/CVE strategy implementation.

Violent extremism in the context of Kenya

Violent extremism is not limited to one religion, ideology or to specific geographical regions in the world, and Africa has not been immune to the impact of violent extremism and terrorism. Groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram have terrorised West Africa, while the Lord's Resistance Army and al-Shabaab have committed atrocities across Central and East Africa, and the Horn.

Al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda affiliate, is seeking to create an Islamic state in Somalia.[10] The Rift Valley Institute reports that as early as 2010, al-Shabaab's leaders 'harboured aspirations to establish a regional presence and recruit fighters from across countries in eastern Africa who had an understanding of their respective countries' vulnerabilities. Al-Shabaab also inspired the creation of several affiliated jihadist groups and autonomous networks, which have also organized attacks'.[11]

Kenya experienced at least 200 terrorist attacks from al-Shabaab between 2008 and 2014, resulting in the deaths of over 500 people and injuring over 1 000.[12] The number of attacks stepped up after 2011 in retaliation for Operation Linda Nchi, a Kenyan military operation that deployed Kenyan troops over the border in Somali conflict zones to engage al-Shabaab.[13] Kenyan troops were later assimilated into the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to help the Somali government suppress the al-Shabaab insurgency and bring stability back to the region. In September 2013, the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi was attacked by al-Shabaab; 72 people were killed and 201 were injured.[14]

In June 2014, 48 people were killed and three injured in an attack in Mpeketoni, in Lamu County on the Kenyan coast.[15] In the same month, at least 15 were killed during an overnight attack at Majembeni and Poromoko villages, near Mpeketoni, for which al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.[16] In April 2015 an attack by gunmen at the Garissa University College in north-east Kenya killed 147 and injured 79 staff and students.[17]

In addition to the direct attacks, there are increasing numbers of radicalised Kenyan nationals leaving the country to join al-Shabaab as well as associating with and supporting al-Shabaab in Kenya. A UN investigation in 2014 found that al-Shabaab had 'created extensive funding, recruiting and training networks in Kenya', and it has been estimated that 10% of al-Shabaab's militants are Kenyan nationals.[18]

The development context within which violent extremism is playing out in Kenya is crucial to this discussion. The interplay of development deficits and insecurity compounds and heightens the dynamics of violent extremism and its impact. The combined challenges of youth unemployment, poverty, inequality and poor governance (among other things) continue to interact in complex ways with the insecurity that results from violent extremism.[19]

With an estimated population of 46.1 million and a poverty rate of 45.5%, Kenya is ranked by the World Bank as a middle- to low-income country.[20] It has a Human Development Index of 0.55, which puts Kenya 146th out of 188 countries.[21]

Only 27.8% of adult women have secondary education, compared with 34.1% of their male counterparts.[22] Female participation in the labour market is estimated at 62.1%, compared with 72.1% for men.[23]

Violent crime is also a serious problem in Nairobi and other urban areas, where violent robberies, home invasions and burglaries pose a significant security threat.[24] Although Kenya's exposure to other forms of conflict is limited, violence relating to ethnicity has at times flared up – for example, following the 2007 elections. Subsequent elections in 2013 were peaceful.

The new Constitution of 2010 ushered in an era of administrative change by devolving a number of government functions to the counties, in an effort to decentralise governance and thereby address years of inequality and regional marginalisation.[25] The country is divided into 47 administrative counties, each managed by a governor.[26] Kenya's long-term development strategy is anchored on Vision 2030, a policy plan that is aimed at accelerating sustainable growth, reducing inequality and addressing resource scarcity.[27]

Against this challenging security and development backdrop, the Kenyan government's responses to the actions and ongoing threat from al-Shabaab have also been an issue of concern. The US Department of State maintained in 2015 that 'reports of violations of human rights by Kenya's police and military forces during counterterrorism operations continued, including allegations of extra-judicial killings, disappearances, and torture'.[28]

It is believed that the heavy-handed tactics employed by some agents within the Kenyan security apparatus are in fact resulting in increased radicalisation among Muslim communities in Kenya. According to USIP, the Kenyan security services are 'engaged in a dangerous cycle of violence [with] blunt and hardened security responses generat[ing] more recruits and further polar[ising] the Kenyan and ethnic Somali communities in the country'.[29]

Within this context, increased attention has been paid to the involvement of Kenyan women with al-Shabaab, spurred by several highly publicised incidents. In April 2015, three girls were arrested, reportedly en route to Somalia to join al-Shabaab. Reports differ as to their motivations: some allege they intended to become suicide bombers and jihadists; others say the girls 'were lured by recruiters to be concubines or what is commonly known as Jihadi Brides'.[30]

In July 2015, a woman was arrested in Mombasa and charged with attempting to recruit five youths for al-Shabaab.[31] In August 2015, the Kenyan government identified Rukia Faraj Kufungwa as an al-Shabaab female recruiter, as well as being responsible for grenade attacks and assassinations in Mombasa. A reward of 2 million Kenyan shillings (approximately US$19 000) was offered for information leading to her successful arrest.[32] In May 2016, two Kenyan women who were enrolled at Kampala International University, Uganda, as medical students were arrested and held on suspicion of forming a terror cell of students.[33]

Most recently, a woman named Hania Said Sagar – the widow of slain Muslim cleric Sheikh Aboud Rogo – was linked to a terrorist network in Kenya and beyond.[34] She is accused of channelling information, facilitating financing transactions, and conspiring to commit acts of terror in Kenya.[35]

There is anecdotal evidence suggesting that women in Kenya are also mobilising in various ways to mitigate the impact of terror attacks in their communities, and are taking action to address radicalisation and prevent violent extremism.

The interplay of development deficits and insecurity compounds and heightens the dynamics of violent extremism and its impact

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Although there is now a growing body of work on women's roles in violent extremism and P/CVE in a number of contexts worldwide, very little of it has focused on Africa, and even less so on Kenya. Nor is there any strong empirical evidence to inform an understanding of the roles women play in violent extremism in Kenya – whether it be sympathising with it, enabling it, or taking violent actions within extremist groups – or, for that matter, of the roles they play in addressing violent extremism. And there has been little empirical work to determine the impact of radicalisation, violent extremism and acts of terrorism on women in Kenya and the communities in which they live.

Prevention efforts, especially at the grassroots level, are largely undocumented and their impact is unknown. At the policy level, Kenya has developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 (KNAP), which 'acknowledges that women can play specific roles [with regard to countering violent extremism]; particularly given their unique access and influence in the household and community'.[36] This plan, however, is silent on the role of women within and relating to violent extremist organisations.

This knowledge gap is not unique to Kenya. For example, the Global Counterterrorism Forum notes that the 'inclusion of women and girls and gender mainstreaming are often overlooked in efforts to counter violent extremism, despite the participation of women and girls in violent extremism and terrorism, as well as their roles in prevention'.[37] It is nevertheless crucial for sustainable peace in the region that efforts are made to fill this gap and the evidence is used to develop effective and contextually driven interventions.

Framing thesis of the study

As the Kenyan government, as well as academics, practitioners and other stakeholders grapple with questions surrounding the spectrum of women's involvement in violent extremism, or in preventing and countering it, this study

aimed to gain insights into the context-specific gendered impacts of radicalisation and P/CVE on women's lives and the varied roles that women play in violent extremism in Kenya. This is to enable those working in the field of CT and P/CVE in Kenya to better understand how to design evidence-based approaches to prevention and response efforts.

This study shows that there is a complex set of dynamics that influences how and when women become involved in violent extremism in the Kenyan context. Responses to violent extremism, its impact and the drivers of violent extremism interact in various ways to create the dynamics that influence women to join, support or sympathise with extremist groups, or to work towards countering violent extremism in their communities.

A complex set of dynamics influences how and when women become involved in violent extremism in Kenya

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These dynamics work at different levels (e.g. at the social, community, family and personal planes); they are specific to the particular contexts in which they develop; and they are fluid across time and space.

The findings and analysis of this study (set out in Chapter 4) point to the need for a much more comprehensive and, at the same time, more nuanced and context-specific approach to both CT and P/CVE in Kenya. Focusing on women in the affected communities cannot be done at the expense of the broader development drivers that contribute to an involvement in violent extremism. In other words, local contexts need to be considered within the framework of national development and security challenges, and both need to be taken into consideration when developing policies and interventions.

At the same time, it is clear that gender has not been an influential factor in the development of national counter-terrorism policies or the implementation of P/CVE strategies, and that a gender-neutral approach to P/CVE neglects certain dynamics that are crucial when dealing with this challenge in Kenya.

This research report begins with a review of the literature on women's involvement in violent extremism from the global and East African perspectives. The objectives of the study and research methodology are then outlined, followed by the presentation of the findings, together with accompanying analysis. The report concludes with recommendations tailored to various stakeholders and audiences.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Concepts and definitions

The concepts of radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism are closely connected, but they are also highly complex, with contested definitions, and should not be analysed 'solely in terms of a simple linear process, but rather as a relational dynamic'.[38]

As a result of disagreements within the international community, the UN has failed to establish an agreed-upon definition for terrorism. Glazzard and Zeuthen caution that the 'vast size of the literature on radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism does not mean that these phenomena are well understood'.[39]

Whereas radicalisation might be understood as the process by which individuals leave mainstream society and join groups that are extreme in either ideology or behaviour,[40] violent extremism is understood as 'advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives'.[41]

Finally, terrorism is seen as 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine state agents'.[42]

There is also a growing body of knowledge on 'lone wolf' terrorism, a phenomenon whereby an individual – unaffiliated to any particular extremist group or organisation and outside of the command structure of such groups, although sometimes influenced or motivated by the ideologies of external groups – commits an act of terror without being directed to do so by a known extremist organisation.[43]

However, all these definitions are contested, as they have been developed in a context that is changing rapidly, with questions around terminology reflecting lived realities and current political debates.

There is also recognition that the definitions and terms used to describe and analyse radicalisation and violent extremism do not sufficiently accommodate or address the possibility that, in some cases, those who engage in violent extremism may not necessarily be doing so because they have bought into the ideology of extremism. There may be other factors that motivate them, such as fear, intimidation or coercion.[44]

In short, the space that radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism occupy – including lived reality, academic analysis, legislation, policy and programming – is highly complex, contested and even fraught. Borum summates that:

> ... radicalisation may have many causes or factors, not one; there may be many different pathways to violence, and (conversely) different people on a shared trajectory may have many different destinations; some join extremist groups because of ideology but others may come to accept an ideology because they have joined an extremist group; it is possible to be 'radical' and non-violent; and that radicalisation is a dynamic, psycho-social process.[45]

Until recently, this space was perceived to be dominated by men, in terms of the actors involved in terrorist organisations, those who studied them and those who sought a militaristic and securitised approach to curtailing them.

However, there has been increasing acknowledgement over the past decade of the multiple roles that women play across the spectrum of this space – as actors in the radicalisation process, as support personnel for terrorist organisations, as suicide bombers, as direct or indirect victims of violence perpetrated by terrorist organisations or as agents of change within formal programmes and informal initiatives aimed at P/CVE. This has led to the emergence of a critical debate – primarily in security studies and feminist scholarship – around women's involvement in radicalisation, violent extremism, terrorism and CT.

One of the most important lessons emerging from these debates is that women's involvement in the realm of terrorism cannot be viewed in monolithic terms: women are not exclusively victims or preventers or agents, and any global, national or community programming that involves women or targets women needs to reflect this reality.

The global context

The first important step to understanding women's involvement in the terrorism spectrum is to recognise their agency as well as their victimhood. For a long time, women were perceived only as the victims – direct or indirect – of male-dominated terrorist organisations and individual male terrorists.

However, this narrow lens has given way over time to an acknowledgement among experts that women's involvement in terrorism is 'a complex phenomenon with no one pathway into involvement and no one catalyst that can explain all women in all movements'.[46]

Women's roles in violent extremism

Women have always provided auxiliary assistance to terrorist organisations as sympathisers, supporters and mobilisers. Bloom maintains that mothers have often supported revolution by constructing the identities and ideologies of their children,[47] while Fink, Barakat and Shetret point out that:

> … the traditional roles ascribed to women in many societies – wife, mother and nurturer – empower them in some instances to become custodians of cultural, social and religious values. Uniquely positioned to transmit these ideals to the next generation, women can glorify and encourage family members and children to aspire to martyrdom and keep terrorist organisations viable through their propaganda, recruitment, fundraising, and other support activities.[48]

The Global Study notes that mothers can be a source of radicalisation, as in the case of an al-Qaeda leader who eulogised his mother with the words, 'She never asked for my return, rather she prepared and urged me to Jihad.'[49] But women have played and continue to play many roles in violent extremism other than just giving birth to male children who become extremists.

Women also convey messages and packages, undertake analytical intelligence work, spy, keep the books and ensure financial organisation, manage logistics for large and small terrorist units,[50] provide healthcare, food and safe houses for violent extremists and terrorists,[51] traffic arms and ammunition to men at the front line,[52] and infiltrate communities during recruitment drives through their greater access to families.[53] These are considered the kind of non-lethal duties that can 'define the success or failure of long-term underground organizational life'.[54]

More recently, women are also being used as the perpetrators of violence by terrorist organisations. The Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism shows that 212 attacks between 1982 and 2015 have been carried out by women, resulting in 2 218 deaths and almost 5 000 injuries.[55] Figure 1 shows that attacks by women have been on the increase since 2012.

Figure 1: Terrorist attacks carried out by women, by year
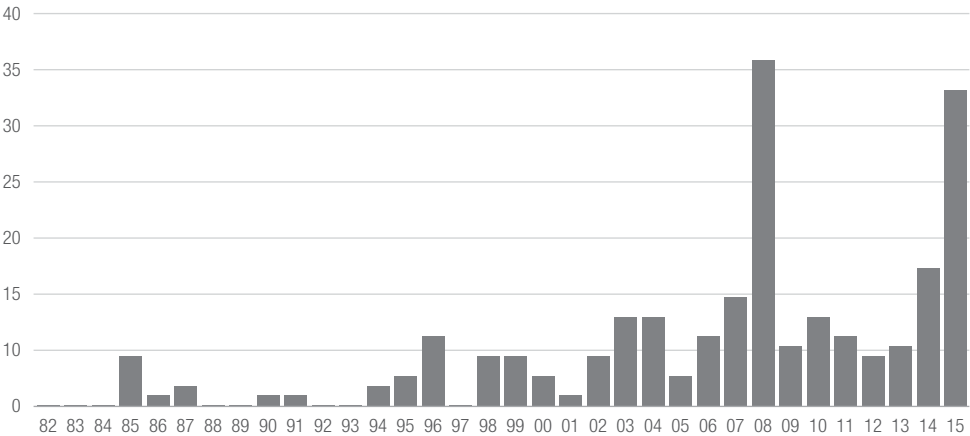
Source: Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism

There are various reasons why the number of women being used in terrorist attacks is on the increase. For Bloom, women provide excellent cover for terrorist

organisations – not only do security personnel (like many others) make assumptions about the inherent peacefulness of women, but the cultural norms surrounding women in many terrorist hotspots also mean that invasive searches by security personnel are seen as abhorrent, with officials in certain conservative societies loath to be seen touching women.[56]

Raghavan sees women suicide bombers as 'de facto "Brand Ambassadors" for their associated group', attracting widespread media attention, instilling fear in local communities and providing an incentive for recruitment, in part by shaming young men into joining the organisation.[57]

These opinions are supported by Jackson et al, who report that terrorist organisations use women for the extra media attention attracted by female bombers, the 'invisibility' of women, presumptions about women's inherent non-violence and, in some societies, a reluctance to subject women to intimate searches.[58]

Globally, female converts to Islam who have married Muslim extremists are identified as a particularly dangerous group, as they evade most security-agency profiling, carry Western passports and attract extensive media coverage.[59] Bloom asks, 'When the terrorists want to kill civilians, what better choice than someone who resembles the target?'[60]

Pawns, victims or agents?

Various research studies have identified a core set of factors believed to drive women into violent extremism and terrorism. The Global Study attributes the rise of women's recruitment into terrorist groups to structural factors, noting that 'weak governance institutions, ongoing conflicts, cross-border ethnic and cultural ties, globalized financial and commercial networks, and an impressive command of new communications and information technology platforms have helped violent extremists increase their influence'.[61]

Experts also agree that, on a personal level, women are politicised and mobilised in similar ways to men, and that many of the same factors that drive men to become terrorists also drive women.[62] Fink et al summarise these factors as '… grievance about socio-political conditions; grief about the death of a loved one; real or perceived humiliation on a physical, psychological, or political level; a fanatical commitment to religious or ideological beliefs; an intention to derive economic benefits; or a desire to effect radical societal change'.[63] Bloom, meanwhile, sees women as motivated by the four Rs: revenge, redemption, relationship and respect.[64]

A 2015 study in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region found common motivating factors for male and female members of violent-extremist organisations:

> Push factors common to both genders include dissatisfaction with the status quo; political and economic conditions; a desire to escape the social or economic pressures experienced within a community; personal experience of abuse or humiliation by state security forces or foreign

forces; or the death or abuse of family members at the hands of these forces … pull factors [include] religious ideology, nationalist goals and aspirations, and selective incentives provided by the violent extremist groups such as stability or financial rewards.[65]

Family and kinship can be powerful motivating factors for joining or staying in extremist groups. As outlined above, mothers can influence their children's ideologies and identities, and aspire to have their sons sacrificed as martyrs. The 'glamorisation of martyrdom appears to be perpetuated by … families, spouses, and partners'.[66]

Globally, female converts to Islam who have married Muslim extremists are identified as a particularly dangerous group

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Extended family groups help create the strong ties that are essential for constructing cohesive, loyal terrorist networks – and women, as 'wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters of terrorists[,] may end up advocating for their male family members when the men are arrested or jailed'.[67]

Bloom draws an important distinction between women who are married into extremist groups against their will and 'women who are part of deliberate and strategic marriages to guarantee the cohesiveness of the organization'.[68] Jacques and Taylor's study of 222 female terrorists found that almost a third of the female terrorists in the sample had 'family connections to terrorism, suggesting that activism among kin may play a role in the involvement of some females'.[69]

One argument for why women and girls join extremist organisations is that they are generally less educated than their male counterparts in conservative societies and therefore more susceptible to recruitment by 'charismatic religious leaders who manipulate the [Islamic] text and the message',[70] or they are seduced by 'powerful internet advertisement imagery to join extremist groups as "liberation" fighters'.[71]

However, others argue that this perspective – namely, attributing women's participation in extremist groups to others – denies women their voice and agency.[72] Harmon and Holmes-Eber, for example, maintain that terrorism allows women who are oppressed within conservative and patriarchal societies the chance to exercise their agency, offering them 'opportunities to break out of the limitations of their gender roles in society'.[73]

Supporting this agency argument is one that asserts the pull of fame and notoriety of terrorism for women and young girls. The MENA study referred to above finds that women in the region are drawn to violent extremist organisations by the lure of adventure and 'a perceived romanticism'.[74] Bloom recognises that 'the desire

to do something great with your life – especially if the life you lead is average or, worse, a source of pain and constant fear – is a powerful incentive to join a terrorist movement and become a suicide bomber'.[75]

Experts also agree that the shame of experiencing violence and the concomitant need for redemption are powerful motivating factors for joining an extremist organisation. Harmon and Holmes-Eber argue that 'the quest for redemption and honor following a disgrace or marginalization motivates some women to conduct terrorist acts'.[76] Adding to the narrative, Bloom finds that when women in conservative societies have been raped (either by foreign personnel or by the terrorists themselves), 'only an act of martyrdom [can] eradicate their shame'.[77]

The Global Study takes a more nuanced view, however, finding that the agency conferred upon women and young girls in the above arguments is in fact 'ambivalent', allowing the women and girls 'a certain freedom from family and social restraints though they have to function within a strict hierarchy dominated by men'.[78] And, of course, the antithesis to the agency argument is that some women and young girls are violently coerced into joining terrorist organisations.

> The shame of experiencing violence and the need for redemption are powerful motivating factors for joining an extremist organisation

Fink et al state that in many instances women and young girls are 'more vulnerable than men to being drugged, raped, physically coerced, and emotionally and socially blackmailed, especially in traditional patriarchal societies where they have little recourse to alternative mechanisms of empowerment or independence'.[79]

Jackson et al have found that experts come to different conclusions about whether women who are involved in extremist organisations and/or who have committed acts of terrorism are 'pawns, victims or agents'.[80] Fink et al argue that 'women's support for terrorist causes or groups may be a deliberate result of their personal convictions and experiences',[81] whereas Afiya Zia warns against trying to 'rescue the subaltern Islamist woman' by overemphasising their agency.[82] The reality is, of course, nuanced and encompasses all of these different angles.

The complexity of women's involvement in terrorism – which therefore impinges upon one's ability to counter women's involvement in terrorism – is that each case is likely to be different, depending on the individual's context, background, community and personality. As the Global Study points out:

> Any attempt to constantly portray women in non-western societies within an extremist frame, as one monolithic group of helpless victims or resistance fighters in states of terror is also incorrect and misses

an important dynamic. While there is a conservative backlash in many Asian and African societies, it is also because women are moving ahead, becoming empowered and there is fear that this advance may threaten the social fabric.[83]

The impact on women

Extremist groups, or those in areas that are governed by extremist groups, often curtail women's civil liberties and violate their human right to freedom. Research by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in Syria has revealed that 'extremist armed groups have placed discriminatory restrictions on women and girls [including] strict dress codes, limitations on women's engagement in public life and ability to move freely, and constraints on their access to education and employment'.[84] In areas controlled by Islamic State (IS), women are allowed to leave the house only dressed in full face veil and accompanied by a close male relative.

Women's access to healthcare and education is restricted. Punishment for disobeying this imposed code of conduct includes beatings and fines imposed on male relatives: 'ISIS fighters and female ISIS "morality police" hit, bit, or poked women with metal prongs to keep them in line.'[85]

In Somalia, al-Shabaab imposes a strict and harsh interpretation of Sharia law in the areas controlled by the organisation, prohibiting 'the exercise of several forms of human rights, such as freedom of speech, expression, movement, assembly, and religion. Many rules affect women in particular'.[86]

Carter notes that there has been 'limited systematic research exploring the relationship between violent extremism and violence against women and girls',[87] although the literature does speak to the fact that there is increased vulnerability of women to violence in conflict settings: women are specifically targeted by violent extremists, sexual violence and rape are a form of terrorism, some counter-terrorism measures perpetuate violence against women, and some women who have experienced violence are motivated to join extremist groups.

The Global Study reports on the phenomenon of extremist groups kidnapping young girls. It records how Boko Haram kidnapped an estimated 2 000 women and young girls over an 18-month period from the beginning of 2014.[88] This is a deliberate tactic of Boko Haram, who use the abduction of young girls to 'lure security forces into an ambush, force payment of a ransom, or for a prisoner exchange'.[89]

Similarly, young girls are abducted in Somalia by al-Shabaab 'from school … in public places, and from their homes, often through threats and violence against them and their family members'.[90]

Once within the extremist group – whether voluntarily, through abduction or another form of forced recruitment, or by marrying an extremist – women are often subjected to SGBV. The Global Study reports that women held in captivity

by Boko Haram have experienced several forms of violations 'including physical and psychological abuse, forced labor, forced participation in military operations, forced marriage to their captors, and sexual abuse, including rape'; SGBV, including sexual slavery, rape, forced marriage and child marriage, is a specific tactic of IS.[91]

HRW reports that the latter 'has issued statements acknowledging that ISIS captured Yezidi women and girls as "spoils of war," and sought to justify the sexual violence'.[92] In Somalia there have been reports of women and girls facing threats of SGBV from al-Shabaab. In al-Shabaab controlled areas,

> militants have been responsible for numerous acts of violence against girls and women, including rape, forced marriage, corporal punishment, and killing ... Al-Shabaab has further inflicted violence against Somali women and girls by way of hudood, or physical punishment of those they deem to have violated Sharia, or Islamic law.[93]

Amnesty International reports that on 27 September 2014, 'a woman was allegedly stoned to death in Barawe, a town in Lower Shabelle region, on suspicion of marrying more than one husband. It is reported she was buried up to her neck then stoned to death by hooded men in front of a crowd'.[94]

Extremist groups usually operate in contexts besieged by conflict, which means that women who have been victims of SGBV are unable to access the health or psychosocial services they need and have almost no hope of accessing any form of justice.

Countering violent extremism

Women also play important roles on the front lines of countering violent extremism and working against radicalisation at various levels.

At the most basic level, women play an important role as agents of positive change within the family. Dufour-Genneson and Alam report that although the importance of the family unit in countering violent extremism is understudied, much of the research on women's roles in the family hinge on their relations 'to others (especially men) and … their ability to influence [their children, siblings, husbands, etc.] … through dialogue, through the respect they garner as matrons, and through education as the "first teachers"'.[95]

O'Reilly quotes from research conducted in 30 countries across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia that suggests that 'women are often the first to stand up against terrorism, since they are among the first targets of fundamentalism, which restricts their rights and frequently leads to increases in domestic violence before it translates into open armed conflict'.[96]

O'Reilly adds that because of their position within families and communities, 'women are well placed to detect early warning signals of oncoming violence or radicalization that men may miss'.[97]

However, the role of women as positive agents of change in the family is, again, context-specific and not necessarily a given – as evidenced above in cases of mothers who encourage radicalisation. Female counter-terrorism platform Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) warns:

> … the capacity of women to spot and react to extremism in their families ranges greatly based on levels of education, local awareness, and geographic remoteness. Mothers, especially those with less formal education, struggle to recognize the warning signs. In general, they perceive their children as merely becoming more religious and often consider the change to be positive. Mothers with less formal education often realize too late when their family-members are involved with extremist thought and/or action.[98]

In fact, De Jonge Oudraat argues that the belief that women are powerful forces in the domestic sphere in Islamic cultures is a fallacy. She cites research studies conducted by Women without Borders/SAVE and USIP's Center for Gender and Peacebuilding, which concluded that in countries and communities prone to violent extremism, 'children and husbands often show real disrespect for their mothers and wives – women are invisible. This is not to say that they are ignorant, rather that they are powerless'.[99] De Jonge Oudraat adds:

> Interviews with over a dozen African and Asian women leaders engaged in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism further underscored that a major obstacle for them is the fact that, they – women and mothers – have no voice … Indeed, gender inequality is the greatest obstacle to women playing a role in preventing or countering violent extremism.[100]

The Global Study concurs:

> Across religions and regions, a common thread shared by extremist groups is that in each and every instance, their advance has been coupled with attacks on the rights of women and girls – rights to education, to public life, and to decision-making over their own bodies … there are concerns that extremist groups favoring more rigid cultural and religious practices may roll back gains made by women.[101]

At the community level, women's organisations and informal networks often play a crucial role in countering radicalisation and violent extremism, albeit not under an official banner. One view is that 'Women's organizations rarely count VERLT [violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism] among their priority concerns. They are rather concerned with intolerance, racism, discrimination, street crime and organized crime, and lack of access to social services – some of which may constitute drivers of radicalization.'[102]

Another view, expounded by Karimi, is that 'the failure to link formal processes in peace and security with indigenous peacebuilding efforts results in the relegation of local approaches to the background',[103] with the result that most women's

organisations at the community level – even if they are primarily concerned with P/CVE – are overlooked as contributing positively to P/CVE efforts.

Grassroots women's groups often enjoy privileged access in their communities and are therefore able 'to provide essential information to those working to counter extremism',[104] and mediate local conflicts, disseminate narratives that counter violent extremism and reach out to vulnerable people. In some areas, female imams have begun preaching religious tolerance in their communities in an effort to counter violent extremism.[105]

The Global Study is explicit, however, that opportunities 'to engage [in counterterrorism], particularly at senior levels, have been limited'.[106] Counter-terrorism efforts at the national and international levels have tended towards a military approach, and 'insufficient attention [has been] paid to the specific context – the social, political, and regional dynamics – in which they evolve'.[107]

More importantly, women's organisations have sometimes been co-opted to carry out this securitised agenda without an understanding of the impact it may have on women's credibility or safety within their communities.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum explains that in certain environments, 'women and girls risk being instrumentalised and their rights compromised for counterterrorism and CVE objectives. The use, real or perceived, of government relationships with women and girls for security purposes (e.g. for gathering intelligence) can generate distrust and become counterproductive to CVE'. [108] It can also expose women and girls to harm from terrorists.

The Center for Human Rights and Global Justice explains how the US government has essentialised women as 'more peaceful and moderate influences' in their communities, and has included women in their national security efforts only on this basis.[109] The Global Study noted that in their work on the conflation of women's-rights organisations with national counter-terrorism efforts:

> Consultations in Africa and Asia made it clear that women's organizations in those continents, where these strategies actually play out, were deeply skeptical of including such programmes [of empowering women with the end goal of countering terrorism] within the rubric of counter-terrorism, especially if such strategies implied a top-down nation building approach emanating from a global strategy which essentially supplements a military process.[110]

Women on the ground in Africa and Asia suggested the alternative of a separate civilian process, which 'may require the military to provide security but which is fully detached from the military, that places emphasis on respecting the autonomy of local women peacebuilders and civil society organizations'.[111] The emphasis is that P/CVE programming must be designed in conjunction with local women's organisations, and that this must happen 'outside the framework of counter-terrorism or any military process'.[112]

Unfortunately the debate around securitising women's rights in relation to counter-terrorism efforts has led to 'a real divide between the WPS community (the majority of whom are women activists) and the intelligence and security community (the majority of whom are men). These two communities do not mix and often show disdain and distrust towards each other'.[113]

In some areas, female imams have begun preaching religious tolerance in their communities

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De Jonge Oudraat adds that the WPS community has become wary of being too close to countering violent extremism because this may be associated with a military approach, to the extent that they 'fear the potential for greater insecurity for personnel in the field, greater scrutiny by extremist groups, and more generally the instrumentalization (exploitation) of the WPS agenda for security objectives without sustained support for women's rights'.[114]

Global policy responses

The first significant recognition of the role women play in global P/CVE efforts was made with the passing of UNSC Resolution 2178 in September 2014. This resolution encourages member states:

> … to engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative that can incite terrorist acts, address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, including by empowering youth, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned groups of civil society and adopt tailored approaches to countering recruitment to this kind of violent extremism and promoting social inclusion and cohesion.[115]

Resolution 2242 notes the 'changing global context of peace and security, in particular relating to rising violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism'.[116] The Resolution urges that gender is integrated as a crosscutting issue in the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force; and that women participate in and lead on developing counter-terrorism strategies and interventions.[117]

Radicalisation, violent extremism and P/CVE in East Africa

East Africa is a region comprising several countries, and multiple cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious identities. Over the past two decades, most countries in East Africa have experienced some form of violence, in the form of civil wars, episodes of mass violence, cross-border conflicts, social strife, political instability, transnational organised crime and, more recently, the threat of violent extremism. The Global

Center on Cooperative Security apportions some of the security challenges faced in East Africa to 'persistent threats posed by transnational terrorists and other violent groups'. These are, in turn,

> … exacerbated by an array of chronic problems, ranging from underdevelopment and weak governance to high unemployment, particularly among youth, potentially making them more vulnerable to empty promises of a better life and financial incentives offered by terrorist organizations … Disproportionate military and other repressive reactions to security threats such as terrorism often end up delegitimizing local authorities and undermining efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism through community engagement. Moreover, the underdevelopment and fragility that characterizes the sub-region has given rise to a range of grievances that foster an enabling environment for terrorist groups to spread their message and recruit support.[118]

Al-Shabaab

The greatest terror threat in East Africa comes from al-Shabaab. The militant group originated as an armed faction of the Islamic Courts Union – a strict Sharia administration set up as an alternative to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which was established in Somalia in 2004 as part of the terms to end the lengthy civil war.

The greatest terror threat in East Africa comes from al-Shabaab

The Islamic Courts Union was defeated by government forces in 2006 but al-Shabaab remained. The group was not so much a 'monolithic entity but rather an alliance of factions that initially rallied under its banner with the aim of forcing the Ethiopian troops to leave Somalia. These groups retain a limited common agenda of defeating AMISOM and the TFG and extending an extreme interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law) across Somalia'.[119]

The TFG, with support from AMISOM, managed to expel al-Shabaab from Mogadishu in 2011; however, the group continues to attack the capital and wages open warfare against the Federal Government of Somalia and AMISOM in southern Somalia. Al-Shabaab has also repeatedly targeted its attacks against Kenya, in retribution for the Kenyan authorities' contributing troops to AMISOM and for carrying out military operations against the terrorist organisation in southern Somalia.

Luengo-Cabrera and Pauwels note that the overwhelmingly militaristic response to al-Shabaab has 'recurrently triggered terrorist backlashes – such as the July 2010 suicide bombings in Kampala or the 2013 attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi'.[120]

Figure 2: Number of terrorism fatalities by country and terrorist group – 2011 to 2016
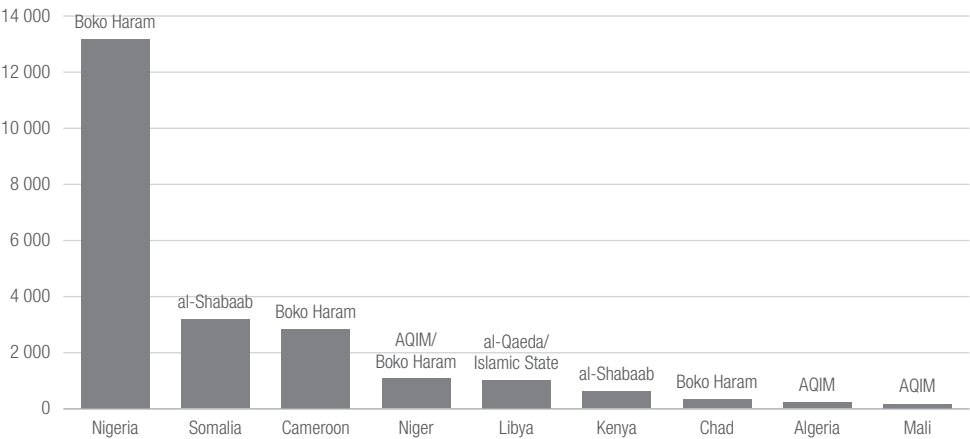
Figure 3: Number of terrorism incidents in Kenya, per county – 2011 to 2016
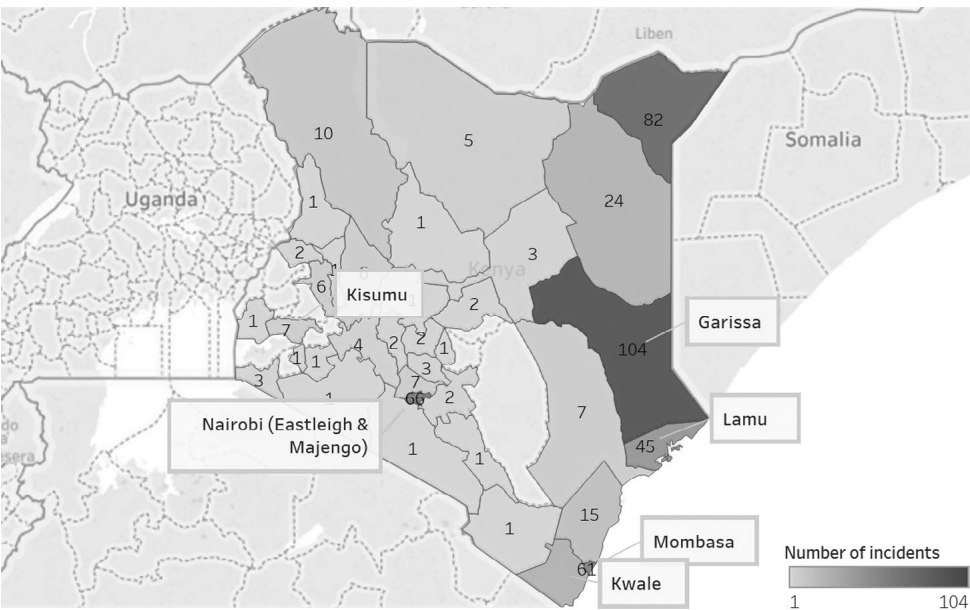
The authors attribute the attack on Garissa University directly to a Kenyan military raid on the Suq Mugdi Market in Garissa and Operation Usalama Watch in the Nairobi neighbourhood of Eastleigh and in Mombasa in April 2014, during which the army 'indiscriminately targeted entire communities (mostly composed of ethnic Somalis) rather than focusing on suspected individuals'.[121]

Women and al-Shabaab

Very little is known about women's involvement in al-Shabaab across the region and beyond. What little information there is, however, suggests that despite al-Shabaab's strict adherence to Sharia law (which sees women as subordinate to men and denies women basic human rights), women are actively recruited for and involved in the organisation.

Cachalia, Salifu and Ndung'u report that al-Shabaab recruit through social media and mosque outreach.[122] They explain that Somali women are particularly vulnerable to recruitment because of high levels of illiteracy, 'combined with the lack of real alternatives to make a livelihood, particularly in areas controlled by al-Shabaab'.[123] Female recruits' roles in al-Shabaab include fundraising, cooking, and working as intelligence officers and suicide bombers.[124]

Women have been deployed as suicide bombers in al-Shabaab attacks on at least three occasions – in August 2010, when 33 people were killed; in April 2012, when six people were killed; and in 2015, when 28 people were killed.[125]

Al-Shabaab use female suicide bombers because it is unlikely that they will be detected at security checkpoints and because 'they are perceived as being more likely to attract media attention to the movement if they are caught or carry out suicide attacks'.[126]

> Al-Shabaab uses female suicide bombers because it is unlikely that they will be detected at security checkpoints

An attack by female insurgents in Mombasa in September 2016 illustrates how women use conservative dress to avoid detection: CNN reported an incident in which some women, 'their faces covered with buibui, a black shawl worn by many Muslim women in east Africa, [had] entered [a] police station complaining their phones had been stolen'.[127] The women, one of whom was reportedly wearing a suicide vest that did not detonate, threw a petrol bomb and stabbed two police officers before being killed.[128]

A report from a female returnee, who had voluntarily joined al-Shabaab, describes how she cooked for the militants, washed their clothes, married a fellow insurgent, trained with her husband and followed him wherever the group sent him.[129] She decided to escape from al-Shabaab because of the 'harsh living conditions, having to be "on the run" all the time, and never-ending fights and attacks'.[130] In her rehabilitation centre, she was among a group of 19 female returnees and their 25 dependants.[131]

An HRW report on how children become involved in al-Shabaab details recruitment methods used to conscript females aged between 11 and their early 20s. These include abduction (from schools, playgrounds, markets and homes), the use of

propaganda and religious indoctrination in schools (known as jihadi classes), the offer of cash or other material incentives, as well as a combination of force and persuasion.[132] The report outlines how girls in al-Shabaab work as cooks, cleaners and in other support roles, but also in combat positions and to provide direct support to militants on the front line.[133] Girls are raped and forced to marry militants.[134] The report found that:

> Al-Shabaab has imposed forced and early marriage as part of the group's effort to impose its harsh version of Sharia on every aspect of the personal lives of women and girls. The practices described to Human Rights Watch were not simply the actions of individual fighters taking advantage of impunity to impose marriage on individual girls. Rather, both girls who were targeted and other eyewitnesses consistently described a more organized practice in which al-Shabaab preached marriage with fighters to girls still in school, and abducted and detained girls under the group's auspices for this purpose.[135]

Women are also involved worldwide in raising funds for al-Shabaab. In 2014, for example, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested three women (two in the US and one in the Netherlands) for 'conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and 20 counts of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization'.[136]

Two other women, one a fugitive in Kenya and one in Somalia, had warrants of arrest pending for the same charges. Two of the women arrested were considered to be 'the leaders of an al-Shabaab fundraising conspiracy operating in the US, Kenya, the Netherlands, Somalia and elsewhere'.[137]

Regional P/CVE efforts

At the same time, there is also increased recognition of the role women play in P/CVE initiatives in the region.

AMISOM, which held a conference on the role of women in P/CVE in December 2015, has been involved in efforts aimed at 'strengthening the role of Somali women in countering violent extremism in Somalia, [and] providing support to the government in developing the appropriate policy framework to support protection of their rights'.[138]

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development – which comprises Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda – and UN Women signed a memorandum of understanding in June 2016 that prioritises women and countering violent extremism.[139]

Meanwhile, the European Union's (EU) Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism (STRIVE) project has been engaging with women's organisations 'to contribute to building greater resilience in communities vulnerable to radicalisation'. Part of this initiative has been to conduct training workshops that 'provide guidance to women's organisations on how to increase engagement with security providers

at both the state and clan level, in order to establish or improve de-radicalisation initiatives'.[140]

In May 2016 several major donors, UN agencies and women's organisations met in Nairobi 'to discuss ways in which women can be pushed to the front of the security agenda' in P/CVE.[141] The intention is that the inputs to the discussion will be used to draft a joint programme aimed at strengthening women's abilities to counter violent extremism, including 'training for mothers on how to respond and react to children when they express radical thoughts and opinions',[142] as well as a call for more research into women's roles in extremist organisations.

IGAD and UN Women signed a memorandum of understanding in June 2016 on women, peace and security

The Life & Peace Institute, however, warns that the 'challenge of these initiatives is that they lack coordination and they provide the support based on their own specific policies on [countering violent extremism] rather than developing an agreed regional policy and strategy that is contextualized to fit the specific situations and threats of [violent extremism] in the sub-region and its member states'. Nevertheless, initiatives implemented in Somaliland, Puntland and Kenya have been instrumental in bringing state and non-state actors together in building the resilience of the community against violent extremism.[143]

Although much of the current literature points to the need for women's inputs and involvement in P/CVE initiatives and programmes at all levels – international, national and community – there is very little detail outlining actual initiatives or programmes.

This suggests that although recognition of the importance of including women in P/CVE in the East African context is growing, not much has been drafted, implemented or progressed far enough to evaluate.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Research questions

The key objective of this study was to gain an understanding of the various roles that women play in violent extremism, as well as in its prevention and mitigation, in Kenya. This was done by gathering empirical evidence from women directly impacted by violent extremism in the most affected areas, and from other respondents, such as government officials, civil society organisations and donors.

The study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are the varied roles that women play in radicalisation and violent extremism?

2. What are the life events and processes that lead women to become engaged in violent extremism?

3. What is the impact of radicalisation and violent extremism on women?

4. How do current responses to violent extremism (both policies and interventions) address or hinder the possible roles that women play in relation to violent extremism?[144]

Methodology

The literature review outlined existing knowledge, as well as gaps in knowledge, at the global and East African levels by examining published data including academic literature, research conducted by international organisations and policy documents.

A qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study as the most appropriate means to capture the complexities of the respondents' own experiences of violent extremism in Kenya, and their impressions of violent extremism from working with those affected by it.

Respondents were identified and then carefully selected through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews. Eleven FGDs were conducted with local women and one with civil society organisations (CSOs).

Twenty-three individual interviews were conducted with government officials, six with donors, three with key informants from civil society, and three with women identified as returnees.

Table 1: Summary of field research

Category of respondent	Focus group discussions		Individual interviews		Total no. of respondents
	Female	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	
Local women	67	–	–	–	67
Returnees	–	–	3	–	3
CSOs	3	3	2	1	9
Donors	–	–	3	3	6
Government officials	–	–	3	20	23
Total	**70**	**3**	**11**	**24**	**108**

Focus group discussions

FGDs were conducted with women in geographic areas known to be affected by al-Shabaab activity (discussed in a later section). The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) used its relationship with local leaders and the communities to inform potential respondents about the purpose of the research and to elicit their participation in the FGDs.

Given the highly sensitive nature of the questions in this study and the expectation that women were likely to be very cautious about participating, the study relied on women self-selecting into the study based on information provided to them during the selection process about the objectives of the study, confidentiality, etc. Respondents selected for the FGDs had to be at least 18 years old to participate, and in the end were aged between 22 and 53 years.

The FGDs were based on semi-structured questionnaires but were carefully facilitated to allow for the free flow of information without losing the central focus of the discussion. The FGDs sought to gain detailed information from respondents about their direct experience of radicalisation, violent extremist and terrorism, the contextual dynamics in their communities and other related matters.

FGDs were also conducted with selected representatives of NGOs and CSOs currently involved in implementing P/CVE activities. A different semi-structured questionnaire was used for these discussions. These organisations were identified through ISS contacts and networks, and are involved in advocacy, research, policy analysis and project implementation.

Individual interviews

Semi-structured questionnaires were used to conduct individual interviews with various stakeholders:

- Government officials: Individual interviews were conducted with women and men responsible for response and prevention policies and activities relating to terrorism. The selected government officials were identified through ISS contacts and networks. The interviews were intended to ascertain how policymakers and those at an operational level view the role of women in violent extremism and P/CVE, and how women's varying roles should be addressed.

- Donors: Interviews were conducted with donors currently funding initiatives aimed at P/CVE in Kenya. The interviews were intended to gather their views on all existing prevention and response measures, as well as future actions needed to counter violent extremism.

- CSOs: Interviews with key representatives from civil society organisations were conducted in Mombasa and Kisumu.

- Returnees: Interviews were conducted with three women identified as returnees.[145] Respondents were accessed through ISS networks. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to document the returnees' life history – in other words, to piece together a 'story' of the respondents' lives, the factors influencing their choices, their current circumstances and their future plans. This research method was used to collect nuanced and detailed case studies on women directly involved in radicalisation and violent extremism. Although the study initially sought to interview up to 15 returnees, this proved not to be possible primarily because returnees feared that they would be the victims of retaliation if they participated in the study.

Ethical considerations and procedural safeguards

Ethical considerations were planned at length by the research team, resulting in the development of procedural safeguards for the protection of both respondents and researchers, as well as to ensure the credibility of the data collected.

All the women participating in FGDs and life-history interviews were considered vulnerable respondents. Procedural safeguards were therefore put in place for these interactions, including procedures for effective informed consent; holding the FGDs outside of the affected communities if women indicated concern for their safety; the protection of identities through various measures; providing referrals to counselling where necessary; and relevant data-protection measures. Procedures were based on established policy and practice at the ISS, which were expanded and adapted specifically for this study.

The interviews were conducted in confidence and under the condition of anonymity. In very few cases, respondents indicated that their names could be used; but in order to remain consistent no real names appear in this report.

Girls under the age of 18 were deliberately excluded as direct respondents in this study, given the special ethical safeguards that would have been necessary had the

study included children. This would not have been possible given the cost and time constraints of the study. The study therefore focuses on women aged 18 and over, but matters relating to girls were explored as and when the issue arose during the course of discussions.

Geographical focus

Initial desktop research was used to identify the geographical areas of focus for this study. The areas were selected on the basis that they have been disproportionately affected by violent extremism in the form of terrorist attacks and reports of radicalisation.[146] The areas included in the study are:

- The Coast Region: Kwale (Tiwi and Diani), Lamu (Lamu Island and Mpeketoni) and Mombasa

- Eastern Region: Garissa

- Nairobi Region: Eastleigh and Majengo

- Western Region: Kisumu and Busia

Other regions that have also been affected by violent extremism – such as Mandera and emerging flashpoints like Isiolo – were considered for inclusion in the study but security concerns, as well as time and resource constraints, precluded them.

Figure 4: Counties in Kenya where the research was undertaken

The main body of this report represents the findings of the study thematically. Annexure 1 presents the same findings through a geographical lens, as a further aid to policymakers and practitioners.

Limitations of the study

The limited time frame for the fieldwork and reliance on community mobilisers and leaders to obtain access to returnees, as well as their own fear of participating, restricted the number of returnees whom the researchers could interview for the study. The researchers also had to rely on community mobilisers and leaders to gain access to respondents for the FGDs, as these women were concerned about their own safety and security. This limited the sample of women who participated in the FGDs.

Conceptualising key terms to fit the local context also presented some difficulties (discussed in the next section). There were also language barriers, as the majority of the returnees and the FGD participants spoke only Swahili and/or Somali. This challenge was overcome by using Swahili speakers to conduct the FGDs and individual interviews.

The study recognises that violent extremism and responses to it are emotive and contested matters for all involved. All efforts have been made to ensure that the views, opinions and experiences of the respondents have been faithfully represented.

Key terms

Defining key terms – such as 'radicalisation', 'violent extremism' and 'terrorism' – is a challenge for all stakeholders in this field, as the terms are complex, contested and constantly shifting. As noted in the literature review, even international and regional organisations, such as the UN, the EU and the AU, do not have clear and official definitions of these concepts.

Language variations also played a role in defining the key terms for this study. The concept of 'violent extremism' does not exist in the Swahili lexicon, making any translation of the phrase imprecise. Instead, violent extremism is understood or described as 'terrorism', or *ugaidi* in Swahili.

Kenya's National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism does not explicitly define violent extremism – it describes the actors involved in extremist violence as 'radicalized individuals who are prepared to engage in, or actively support, acts of violence in furtherance of radically illiberal, undemocratic political systems or ideologies'.[147]

For the purposes of this study, the research team made specific choices in selecting definitions. These are as follows:

- Violent extremism is understood to mean 'advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives'.[148]

- Terrorism is defined as 'the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological'.[149]

- Radicalisation refers to 'the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups'.[150]

- Counter-terrorism refers to military or police activities and operations that are undertaken 'to neutralize terrorists [and extremists], their organizations, and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instil fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals'.[151]

- Preventing or countering violent extremism is 'the use of non-coercive means to dissuade [or prevent] individuals or groups from mobilizing toward violence and to mitigate recruitment, support, facilitation, and engagement in ideologically motivated terrorism by non-state actors in furtherance of political objectives … [Countering violent extremism] recognizes a wide range of motives – such as political or economic grievances, feelings of marginalization, money, kinship, coercion, and radicalization'.[152]

- Returnees are defined as women who once served al-Shabaab in some capacity but have now returned to their communities in Kenya.

Chapter 4: Research findings and analysis

The findings of this study are presented together with analysis in answer to the original four key research questions:

1. What are the varied roles that women play in radicalisation and violent extremism?

2. What are the life events and processes that lead women to become engaged in violent extremism?

3. What is the impact of radicalisation and violent extremism on women?

4. How do current responses to violent extremism (both policies and interventions) address or hinder the possible roles that women play in relation to violent extremism?

What roles do women play?

The literature review found that there is a growing body of evidence on the varied roles that women play in violent extremist organisations around the world. The findings of this study augment this evidence in the context of Kenya, where women are found to primarily play enabling, supportive and facilitative roles in relation to violent extremist organisations.

Women as violent actors

There was limited evidence of women as direct perpetrators of violent acts in the context of violent extremism in Kenya.

No respondents indicated direct knowledge of women who had perpetrated acts of violent extremism, citing instead media reports of the above-mentioned incident in Mombasa where three women attacked a police station. In fact, many respondents denied that women were increasingly involved as perpetrators of violence, preferring to label violent extremism as *mambo ya vijana*, meaning 'issues of male youth' in Swahili.[153]

A government official from Garissa noted that, in his experience, perpetrators were males between the ages of 16 and 25,[154] while another claimed that no women had been convicted on terror-related charges.[155]

There were some dissenting views, however. A government official in Nairobi maintained that many girls had gone to Somalia, where some had been trained as suicide bombers;[156] an official in Mombasa reported that one woman had been arrested on terror-related charges; and investigators working on terror-related cases in Mombasa confirmed the involvement of women in terrorist attacks, although they declined to comment on the exact terror charges, citing ongoing investigations.

There are various ways to make sense of the limited data on women as perpetrators of violent extremism. In 2015, of 636 terror attacks reviewed worldwide, just over 30 (4.7%) were reported to have been perpetrated by women.[157] Although this number is on the increase, it is still very small, and Kenya is therefore not an exception in this regard.

There are various socio-cultural and religious norms in Kenya that may limit the roles women play in extremist organisations – Kenya and Somalia are both male-dominated societies where a woman's role may be essentialised as that of nurturer and peacemaker, preferably within a domestic context.

Some officials interviewed for this study said they were surprised that women could take up violent roles, and even the female respondents themselves expressed dismay that other women could serve as the perpetrators of violence. This understanding of femininity as peaceful and generative could therefore deny women agency and limit the spaces they can occupy within extremist organisations.

Cultural or religious norms may also curb women's willingness to discuss such matters, or they may be too fearful to speak out. Previous research has indicated that women in Muslim communities in Kenya are either not permitted to speak publicly or may prefer their male counterparts to speak for them.[158] This might explain the lack of information about women's active roles in extremism.

It is also likely that women who are involved as perpetrators of violent extremism are too afraid of victimisation by security agents (particularly the police), the revenge of al-Shabaab militants or other returnees to speak out, or of the stigma they would have to endure in their communities if they were to openly confess to their involvement.

Innovative extremist groups, however, have learnt how to 'exploit gender stereotypes and cultural clichés to their advantage'[159] by deliberately involving women and children, who might not come under the scrutiny of security agencies, as attackers.[160] It may well be that al-Shabaab is doing this but that CT and CVE responses in Kenya, as elsewhere in the world,[161] have not yet adapted to this strategy and are therefore failing to notice it because women's involvement as violent actors is deliberately kept hidden.

Women as supporters and facilitators

The findings are clear that women are far more actively involved in violent extremism in non-combative or indirect roles, and that they provide the 'invisible infrastructure'

for al-Shabaab by enabling, supporting and facilitating violent extremism through a number of roles and activities.[162]

Examples of the various roles women play in recruiting for al-Shabaab were noted in the study. Participants in the FGDs cited women who use their positions as wives, sisters and mothers to recruit.[163] In Majengo, it was reported that a female recruiter is well known for luring the youth – young men in particular – to join al-Shabaab with the promise of jobs.[164]

A security official in Garissa noted that some women had been arrested on charges related to recruiting for al-Shabaab, and that there was intelligence of women in the refugee camps actively recruiting as well as participating in the logistics of recruitment.[165]

Respondents viewed women who played a role as recruiters through the lens of two age-old female stereotypes: mother and temptress. Those who used their influence in the home – as the familial 'custodians of cultural, social and religious values'[166] – were seen in their domestic roles as mothers and wives; those who recruited in a context external to the home, such as in the refugee camps, were seen as temptresses 'luring' young men with false promises.

Many government respondents reported that women played operational roles as intelligence gatherers and spies for al-Shabaab.[167] They said women were 'used to collect information [and] surveillance because they are viewed with less suspicion' and 'pass this information on to others'.[168] One official claimed that 'women are part of Amniyat, the intelligence wing of al-Shabaab'.[169] Women were also seen as playing other supporting roles for violent extremist organisations or for the men who fight for these organisations.[170]

The kinds of support include providing shelter for or hiding terrorists;[171] taking food to their family members who have been arrested on terror-related charges or preparing food for violent extremists;[172] financing terrorism by arranging financial transactions;[173] and providing medical care in the refugee camp in Dadaab for extremists who have been injured in Somalia.[174]

Returnees, who revealed that women played supportive roles – such as cooks and cleaners – in training camps, corroborated these observations. Women were also reported to play a role in radicalising their own children,[175] as well as concealing from the authorities the whereabouts and actions of family members involved with extremist organisations.[176] However, it was not clear to what extent these activities were taking place.

Government officials noted how women may keep terrorists 'company' or 'comfort' them.[177] In less euphemistic terms, this usually means marriage, which often happens among the extremists' networks of relatives and friends, as reported by security agents from the Coast Region, Garissa and Nairobi. This reflects Sageman's contention that members of extremist groups tend to solidify their participation by marrying the sisters of other members.[178]

The involvement of women as enablers and sympathisers of violent extremism is a complex issue, and aptly summarised by an Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU) officer in Nairobi:

> Some women are caught between a rock and a hard place. They are the caregivers to the terrorist and play a supportive role; they are facilitators because they are least suspected. Mothers quietly try to prevail on their sons and husbands to prevent their involvement, but it is difficult for women to persuade the men to stop. The wave of the ideology is very appealing [and] some people end up believing 100%. When al-Shabaab warns them, they fear the group and cannot talk. No one will protect the women if the information is leaked. Fear [of the police] prevents the disclosure of information especially when police are corrupt and take money from people.[179]

Why do women become involved?

Globally, the main drivers behind women's involvement in violent extremism and terrorism are grievances with their economic and socio-political circumstances, the strong ties of relationships – family, kinship and romantic – and a commitment to and/or the oppression of religious or ideological beliefs. The interplay between these drivers and factors, which create the dynamics for women's involvement in violent extremism, is also reflected in the findings from this study.

Economic issues

One woman explained that 'there are two types of al-Shabaab: those who recruit for ideological reasons and those who recruit for economic reasons'.[180] In the communities in which this research was undertaken, economic reasons were cited much more frequently than ideological reasons as the motivation for women to become involved with al-Shabaab.

Women from Majengo and Mombasa blame the poverty and unemployment in their communities for the radicalisation of their children and the inducement to join al-Shabaab.[181] They noted that al-Shabaab was taking advantage of this poverty by promising young people jobs, money and 'free stuff'.[182]

Criminal groups are also taking advantage of the poor economic situation to exploit young women in these communities: one woman's 24-year-old daughter was promised a job in Oman by a fake employment agency. She is now being held in Oman and the fake agents are demanding Ksh40 000 (US$380) from her family in order to release her.[183]

Al-Shabaab has also capitalised on high levels of unemployment in the Coast Region by luring people with promises of jobs,[184] money[185] and other livelihood opportunities.[186] One woman explained that poverty was 'pushing people to al-Shabaab; if one is earning Ksh3 000 [US$28] but is promised Ksh26 000 [US$250], that is a lot of money and the person will choose to join al-Shabaab'.[187]

Although they constitute but a small sample, two of the three woman returnees interviewed for this study left for Somalia to find work at a young age. As illustrated in Khadija's story below, her need to find work led to her involvement with al-Shabaab.

Case study 1: Life story of Khadija (not her real name)

I am 24 years old and I was born in Garissa. I became involved with al-Shabaab when I was 20 years old. I went to college and high school. I became involved because I was jobless and needed a job. A friend took me to Mombasa where we stayed for some days before we got on a bus and were given a drink, after which I found myself in Barawa. We were about 40 girls in a camp and all of us were Kenyan. Our living conditions were very poor and life was desperate. I received religious and weapons training. I was involved in combat training, including suicide bombing. I was a virgin when I arrived and after receiving basic training, I declined sexual advances by a fighter, fought him and stabbed him and he died. Because of this incident I was made a commander because they saw I could fight. I was put in charge of the women.

We experienced sexual, verbal and physical abuse. Some girls were forcefully married. Almost 75% of the girls were infected with HIV. The fighters would not use protection and would forcefully have sex with the girls when they were menstruating. I did not get married and did not have children when I was at the camp. Other girls had babies; there were many children in this camp and no one was really taking care of them. We were forced to take drugs mixed with water.

I escaped after I was sent to the market to buy food. My journey back home was through El Doble. I sold my gun and used the money to return to Kenya. I returned to Garissa because of the amnesty programme but did not enrol in it due to fear of how the government would treat me and what they would do to me. The reaction from my family was not good and I am currently living with friends but it has been difficult. I am jobless. I am not doing well mentally and would like counselling but I am afraid of seeking these services. Current initiatives in our community that work to counter violent extremism need to be strengthened, including providing leadership programmes. I would like to be involved in educational activities as a peer counsellor.

The interview with Khadija was conducted through an intermediary over the telephone. She is in hiding fearing for her physical safety and security by the police and other returnees.

These findings support the views that 'idleness and under-employment may make youth far more receptive to the salaries and other material benefits which violent extremist organisations often provide',[188] and that poverty can be a powerful motivator for radicalisation into violent extremism, especially in countries where

'poverty-stricken young [people] have few livelihood options other than that of joining a militant group'.[189]

Husbands and sons who have left their homes to join al-Shabaab often leave their homes and/or families without breadwinners. Women are forced to take over as the heads of these households, but the burden of providing for their immediate (and often extended) families is often exacerbated by the lack of a regular income and many find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty.[190]

In many cases, women's lack of formal education may limit the choice of employment or livelihood available to them and with which they have to provide this financial and material support. In addition, men who have joined al-Shabaab in Somalia often stop providing for their families once they leave Kenya.[191] As a result, the loss of a breadwinner may also result in forced displacement and the loss or destruction of family assets, such as a house. Some women therefore choose to join their husbands in Somalia rather than succumb to poverty.[192]

Women are also drawn into violent extremism's sphere of influence through al-Shabaab's recruitment of husbands and sons who wish to escape poor areas, like Majengo, Garissa and Kwale. This means that whether they choose to or not, wives and mothers are almost inevitably caught up in playing roles that support violent extremists or their organisations (such as those described above).

Although some experts have contested the causal link between poverty and violent extremism,[193] economic distress does appear to be a major motivating factor for women and their families to become involved with violent extremist organisations in Kenya. There is a complex and cyclical relationship between violent extremism and economic hardship in the affected communities.

Poverty and lack of economic opportunity are the driving factors for involvement in violent extremism, and simultaneously the result of it. As indicated above, Kenya has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the region,[194] and anecdotal evidence from the FGDs indicates that many of the youth in the study areas have no jobs and no prospects of finding employment. Many of the women from Majengo lamented the lack of livelihood options for their husbands and children, especially their sons.

The women involved seem to be caught in the centre of this web: not only are they vulnerable to the economic lure of joining an extremist group, but they are also doubly affected by the impact of violent extremism. This is because women experience the economic downturn of the communities affected by terrorist attacks as well as often losing their families' breadwinners to violent extremism, through death or recruitment.

Poverty is not only a driver of violent extremism, but is exacerbated and made more complicated because of violent extremism.

The direct economic and social effects of violent extremism on individual households can include the death or loss of the household breadwinner, forced displacement and the loss or destruction of family assets, such as a house.

The indirect effects can include 'changes in a household's surrounding institutional environment, such as changes in social networks or the destruction of exchange and employment markets, and effects on political institutions'.[195] Research has shown that female-headed households in Africa often remain trapped in poverty.[196]

All of these dynamics are at play in areas affected by violent extremism in Kenya, meaning that women may find it impossible to escape from the cycles of poverty that feed into, are impacted by and create the drivers for violent extremism.

Governance

Studies have suggested that 'poorly governed or ungoverned areas may … create passive or active support for [extremist] groups by communities who feel marginalized or neglected by a lack of government reach'.[197] In Kenya, it is unclear whether the investment in security responses by the central government has been equally matched with and balanced by a similar investment in development by the relevant county authorities in the areas affected by violent extremism.

> Women may find it impossible to escape from the cycles of poverty that feed into, are impacted by and create the drivers for violent extremism

Women interviewed in the FGDs reported that their communities were both economically marginalised and socio-politically neglected by the government. Turner et al note that in places where 'armed violence is linked to social exclusion, diminishing investments in social services [are] likely to exacerbate tensions'.[198] And evidence from elsewhere in Africa suggests that these disadvantages make such communities particularly vulnerable to violent extremism, which promises income as well as a form of retaliation against a government that neglects their needs.[199]

The denial of their rights as citizens was also cited as a driving factor in radicalisation. Two women in Lamu reported that their sons had been denied identity documents because they looked Somali.[200] Not being permitted a national identity document has major implications for travel and access to higher education.[201]

Ironically, the economic distress and unemployment in some of the areas covered in this study are as much a result of terrorist activities in the area as they are of perceived or real government neglect or marginalisation.

Violent extremism is proven to stunt economic growth and affect development, especially where the country or community in question is itself considered poor.[202] For example, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics reports that tourist numbers in Kenya dropped 12.6% between 2014 and 2015 alone, although these numbers had been steadily declining since 2011 when the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) sent troops into Somalia.[203]

The terrorists who create the conditions that contribute towards underdevelopment and poverty then use them as leverage to recruit the locals, leading women in Majengo and at the coast to observe that 'terrorism [has become] a business'.[204]

Although it is certainly not always the case, as evidenced by the highly educated mastermind behind the Garissa attacks, lack of education emerged as a major factor in the areas covered by this study. Education is a key development indicator and is crucial in developing critical thinking skills needed to recognise, counter and reject distorted and dangerous ideologies and narratives employed by extremist recruiters.

The terrorists who create the conditions that contribute towards underdevelopment and poverty use them as leverage to recruit the locals

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Primary education is free in Kenya and the costs of secondary education are subsidised by government. Nevertheless, women in the FGDs indicated difficulties in affording even the small amounts required for their children's secondary education. Two of the returnees described growing up in households too poor to afford a secondary school education for their children.

In addition, young people lack access to vocational skills training, which may have helped them overcome the gap created by lack of tertiary or secondary school education.[205] The women in the FGDs were concerned about how their daughters and other young women in the communities were vulnerable to extremist recruitment because they had only primary school education, which severely limited the choices and opportunities available to them.

Ideology and religion

Women in the FGDs suggested that youth radicalisation was taking place in contexts where extremist ideologies were taught in mosques and madrassas.[206] This is especially the case in the Coast Region and Majengo where, because of low levels of education, young people may rely solely on religious instructors to interpret religious texts, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation.

There were reports that clerics from a mosque in Majengo suspected to be sympathetic to al-Shabaab were paying the school fees of children whose fathers had joined al-Shabaab or had been killed while fighting for the group. This has the potential to cause the mothers of these children to become economically dependent on such clerics.

The women in the study areas also stated that unscrupulous religious teachers used distorted narratives and extremist ideology to mislead children, teach only selected aspects of Islam, and misinterpret the Koran to radicalise the youth.[207]

A woman in Majengo described how her son had been radicalised at the age of 16. She described how she had noticed behavioural changes in him, noting that he had become very rude and critical of her, and seemed to be withdrawn, especially after coming home from madrassa.[208]

Another woman described how her nephew, whom she had raised since he was very young, had left for Somalia when he was a teenager. She explained that his behaviour and attitude began to change after he had attended a madrassa for a few months, that he had become insulting towards her and criticised the way she dressed, saying she should be covering up.[209]

In Kwale, young people reportedly take oaths not to reveal what they are taught in madrassas and mosques, which, as the women respondents noted, makes it impossible for parents to keep abreast of and assess what they learn.[210]

Mothers in the FGDs expressed a need to be made aware of the madrassa curriculum, so that they were able to provide guidance to their children, who may become exposed to controversial teachings.

Some experts contend that due to the influence they wield in their positions in families and communities, mothers can provide effective and powerful counter-narratives to dangerous ideologies that may lead to the radicalisation of their children. Others, however, have described this analysis as oversimplified.

De Jonge Oudraat and SAVE argue that in contexts where women have less formal education or are subject to more rigid cultural and religious norms, mothers may be rendered powerless to influence their children against extremist doctrines, even realising 'too late when their family-members are involved with extremist thought and/or action'.[211] It was noted that the majority of the women who participated in the FGDs for this study had only primary school education and they were therefore at risk of falling into at least one of the categories outlined by De Jonge Oudraat and SAVE, if not both.

Woman participants in the FGDs also explained that perceived injustices against Muslims, as well as media profiling, had created a feeling of oppression among Muslims, especially among their husbands and sons.[212] This feeling of persecution has resulted in Muslim women and men from these communities becoming defensive of their faith, and of themselves, given their sense of being under attack.

One of the government officials was of the view that Muslim women were being radicalised because they were brought up with extremist teachings and were taught to accept everything that their husbands, fathers or brothers said.[213] However, none of the returnees in this study referred to being influenced or motivated by religious or ideological reasons to join al-Shabaab. As one Muslim woman noted: 'Islam is not terrorism; Islam is a religion but it has been misused to carry out terror attacks.'[214]

Relationships

Studies have shown that relationships may be a key predictor of women's involvement in an extremist group. These studies indicate that if a woman has a male relative who is already involved in an extremist group, then it 'exponentially increases the likelihood that she will be welcomed in that group'.[215]

The returnees interviewed for this study did not appear to be inspired by ideological or religious factors in joining al-Shabaab. The primary motive for them, besides finding work, was to follow their partners and husbands to Somalia. This was echoed in the FGDs.[216] One woman reported that her brother's widow had gone to Somalia with their daughter to visit his grave; they have not returned. The family fears that the child will not be educated and they have tried in vain to persuade the woman to return.[217]

Some of the women in the FGDs revealed that their partners and sons were part of al-Shabaab in Somalia, and explained that young girls were at risk of radicalisation by their partners or husbands.[218] In Majengo the girls who have left to join loved ones are reported to be as young as 16 or 19 years old.[219]

In Kwale, young people reportedly take oaths not to reveal what they are taught in madrassas and mosques

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The findings also showed that some women were coerced into joining their husbands. One returnee indicated that she was forced to join her husband in Somalia by his friends – her husband had left for Somalia after they had been married for six months.[222] Respondents also noted that young girls were influenced by their peers and friends,[220] and there were reports of women being blackmailed, intimidated and kidnapped by people they knew so that they would join al-Shabaab.[221]

The story of Fatuma illustrates the influence that personal relationships can exert on some women who become involved in violent extremism.

A senior CT official in Nairobi noted that most girls who were recruited to join al-Shabaab through personal relationships had no more than a primary school education.[223] However, other reports and data presented here indicate that educated young women are also being recruited.[224]

For other women, joining their loved ones in Somalia was a choice that was actively made. A woman from Kwale explained that her 34-year-old cousin was radicalised by her husband and followed him to Somalia, where she has also joined al-Shabaab.[225]

Case study 2: Life story of Fatuma (not her real name)

I am 22 years old and was born in Likoni. I was brought up by both parents who are still alive. I liked to play football for fun at school, listen to music and socialise with friends and neighbours. I wanted to become a nurse but had to drop out of high school in Form 2 due to lack of school fees. My family was not very well off and sometimes struggled to provide food. I was punished, mostly by my father, and there was domestic violence in my home while I was growing up. Like other children, the teachers punished me if I was naughty, like for being late or not doing homework. I come from a Muslim family but my family was not very religious when we were growing up; I have friends from other religions and never felt discriminated against because of my religion. My mother is Kamba and father is Digo but I never felt discriminated against for belonging to these particular tribes. While growing up, my family did not discuss politics except when the topic came up.

I was married to my first husband for six months before he left for Somalia and I still do not know if he is alive or dead. I was 18 years old when I went to Somalia. I remember finding myself in a forest after getting into a car with my husband's friends, who harassed, intimidated and forced me to go and join him, although I never found my husband at the camp. The living conditions at the camp were terrible; we were treated like slaves and ate only once a day. We had no sanitary ware. We were forced to use the drug bugizi by al-Shabaab, which is usually administered to mentally ill patients. We were dressed in al-Shabaab clothes and dressed 'ninja style'. We were taught how to use weapons, like knives and guns, but I did not go out to fight. Men would give the orders but there were also women, who were more brutal than the men. We were verbally and physically abused. I did not get married to any of the group's members but they would use us for sexual purposes and we were given contraception so that we did not conceive. They did not use protection.

I escaped one day with the help of one of the female leaders of the group I had befriended. She gave me a thousand shillings and some clothes, and I ran through the forest until I came to a tarmac road and found my way back home to my parents. My parents were surprised to see me but they were welcoming even after I told them where I had been. After I returned, I remarried and started selling chips and did not struggle for employment. I have a son who is one and a half years old, and have been married to my current husband for three years.

I do not feel part of the organisation and have severed ties with them. I am not afraid of the group and I'm not afraid they will come looking for me. I am not afraid my first husband will come back. I was stressed and crying all the time, but after getting married again I am much better and hopeful. I would consider joining community groups that try to persuade young people not to join such organisations because groups like al-Shabaab have impacted on our community by taking away young women.

> I feel afraid about the government and fear I will be 'disappeared' if they were to find out about me. Government efforts to counter violent extremism are not working and are not visible in the community; they are not targeting the right people. I am not aware of the government amnesty programme. I am still a practising Muslim and have never converted to another religion. I believe my religion is under threat because those who are guilty of terrorism and those who are not guilty are treated in the same manner by the authorities. I wish the community would support us and not stigmatise women like us.

Revenge for the treatment of loved ones by security agents was noted as a key factor influencing women to become involved in violent extremism. In all the FGDs, women spoke of their experiences, including extra-judicial killing of their family members, police brutality and the disappearance of innocent people, allegedly at the hands of security agents, as factors that have led to radicalisation.

Even women who did not join their partners in Somalia were drawn into the realm of violent extremism through their relationships. As pointed out above, the mothers, wives and girlfriends of extremists often end up – through choice or coercion – playing supportive roles for their loved ones who have chosen to join extremist organisations.

Harmon and Holmes-Eber explain that women close to violent extremists 'may end up advocating for their male family members when the men are arrested or jailed'.[226] Women in this study discussed how wives would support each other and their husbands at trial, or would go to the police station to provide food for their loved ones in the cells.

As Fink et al have argued, current literature often views women as 'passive or coerced actors or supporters rather than active participants or perpetrators of terrorism and violent extremism'.[227] The findings from this study, however, suggest the women's motivations to join violent extremist organisations defy simplistic labelling, such as choice or coercion.

If agency and coercion exist on opposite sides of a spectrum, women's reasons for becoming involved with violent extremism can be positioned from one extreme to the other and in all the shades of grey in between. Drivers such as relationships, grief and economic hardship are too complex to assign categorically to either choice or coercion.

Economic factors, for instance, reduce the agency that women might have under more favourable circumstances and may lead them to make 'choices' they would not have had to make in other circumstances. Agency and coercion may apply at different stages of the process of becoming involved in extremist groups. Returnees interviewed for this study chose to travel to Somalia to search for jobs and be reunited with their loved ones. However, personal agency was later overtaken by coercion and the women became trapped in situations where they did not want to be.

The impact of radicalisation on women

The findings demonstrate that violent extremism has multiple, and often mutually reinforcing, effects on the lives of women in Kenya, and on their families, communities and the continuing dynamics of the affected areas.

The interconnectedness of these effects – with each other and with the broader context of historical development challenges, community relations and community-government dynamics – is a core finding of this study, as is the complex relationship between drivers and impacts, which establishes dynamics that enable violent extremism.

On a personal and family level

Victimhood is usually a *role* assigned to women within the context of violent extremism, but the findings of this study show that victimisation can also be seen as one of the *impacts* of violent extremism on women in Kenya. As Sureya Roble-Hersi has noted, women experience the worst effects in all types of conflict situations.[228]

Sexual violence perpetrated by violent extremists was reported by the returnees as well as government officials. All three returnees described being sexually abused by fighters during their time with al-Shabaab. Reports indicated that the women in the camps were forced to use contraception, so they did not conceive, but that the men who raped them did not always use condoms, resulting in one of the returnees reporting having contracted HIV.

> Girls are led by other women to believe that forced marriage is a part of life in violent extremist organisations

An ATPU investigator reported that girls who had travelled to Somalia to join al-Shabaab – having been lured through Facebook – were often used 'to provide sex to fighters, so the fighters do not think about going back home'.[229]

As well as rape, forced marriage to extremist fighters was also reported. A senior police investigator in Nairobi said that 2% of cases handled countrywide involved girls, recruited between the ages of 14 and 16, who had been forced to marry fighters. He described a 2008 case in which two 16-year-old female recruits were forced to marry fighters whom they had never met, and both were widowed at a young age.[230] These young girls would then have been forced to marry another fighter because 'when a woman loses her husband in Somalia, she is passed on to another man'.[231]

It was reported that girls are led by other women to believe that forced marriage is a part of life in violent extremist organisations.[232] One official indicated the view that young girls are usually new converts to Islam who do not have a good

understanding of the religion, are susceptible to false teachings, and want to prove that they believe and belong.[233]

Sexual violence was also reported as having occurred during police raids and other CT operations, including during Operation Usalama Watch in 2014.[234] It was unclear whether the alleged perpetrators were security agents or citizens taking advantage of the confusion of the raids and vulnerability of the women caught up in them.

According to the women in the FGD in Eastleigh, some women who were pregnant at the time suffered miscarriages as a result of Operation Usalama Watch, and some families were not allowed to visit their relatives, who had been rounded up into a stadium.[235]

The likelihood of psychological trauma resulting from kidnapping or rape has been well documented. Akwash, for instance, argues that impaired memory and concentration, as well as recurring fear and anxiety, are some of the signs of the psychological impact of kidnapping,[236] while 'devastating mental health problems' are 5.5 times more likely to occur in rape survivors than among the general population.[237]

One of the returnees interviewed for this study, who reported being held against her will and sexually abused, showed signs of concentration difficulties during the interview and said she had experienced memory loss. This particular returnee (Amina, see case study 3 below) is currently on antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and is receiving counselling, but one of the other returnees reported that she was too afraid to seek counselling, putting her at risk of mental and physical health problems.

Case study 3: Life history of Amina (not her real name)

I am 30 years old and was born in Majengo. I was brought up by both parents and there was no violence in our home. I loved skipping as a child and had friends. I wanted to become a teacher but was not able to attend secondary school because my parents were struggling financially. I was caned on my hand at school if I did something wrong, and at home my mother punished me but my father made the rules in our family.

My marriage was filled with many arguments but no physical abuse. One day, my husband suddenly left for Somalia and I have never seen him again. After he left, some of his friends tried to convince me to join him, saying I would get a job if I went. So I decided to go to Somalia to join him and find work. I left my six children behind with my family. Unfortunately, I did not meet up with him. When I got to Somalia, I was held as a prisoner in a dark room and repeatedly sexually abused by up to six masked men. We were all forced to use drugs by al-Shabaab.

My job at the al-Shabaab camp was to cook, wash clothes and have sexual intercourse with the fighters. I was beaten whenever the fighters did not like something I cooked. The fighters would threaten to kill you if you ever refused to have sex with them. Sometimes the men who sexually abused me used condoms and other times they did not. I never became pregnant while there because I was given contraceptives. But other women who became pregnant were given something to cause an abortion.

Some other women were taught to use weapons but this was dependent on your physique. There were a few women in the camp who were leaders. These women were brutal. They would beat us and give orders. Most of the women in my camp were Somali but I do not know how many. Women who were captives were very rarely allowed to interact with one another. I used leaves for sanitary towels. I secretly escaped one day and hid in the forest for nine days until I found a boat to Lamu and then a lift home. When I arrived home, my family was very happy to see me because they thought I had died. I was very ill as I had contracted HIV while in the camp and had several bruises from the beatings I had endured. I had to be taken to the hospital.

I have not communicated with any of the people from my camp since then. The militants do not know where I am. Life after being in Somalia has not been easy. I take treatment for HIV and tuberculosis, and have serious problems with my memory. I try to work doing odd jobs, like washing people's clothes, when I can but because I am often ill, I cannot always work, and rely on my brothers. Nowadays, I live with my children and my sister's three children in a rented place. I cry constantly and live in fear that al-Shabaab will come looking for me. I would never consider recruiting people to join the group. I instead like to join groups to help educate people about al-Shabaab. I have not seen any government initiatives in the community but I rely on good Samaritans and NGOs for assistance and counselling but these have been too short-term to help. I think the government should not use force in dealing with violent extremism. A softer approach is preferable. I am not aware of the government amnesty programme. I think there is also no point in the government pursuing the returnees, as it puts them in a difficult position.

Returnee women need to be heard. More should be done to raise awareness in communities to prevent people from joining al-Shabaab and the government should also help people returning from Somalia to set up businesses.

Violent extremism also affects women's physical safety. In Mpeketoni, some of the women who participated in the FGD had lived through an attack by al-Shabaab on 15 June 2014. The women described the attack, which lasted for over 10 hours, as terrifying, recounting how the attackers used knives, rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles in their rampage around the town. One woman reported counting at least 30 dead bodies, including the body of a woman who was mentally ill.[238]

In Nairobi, women described their experiences of an attack on Gikomba Market in 2014 and a minibus grenade attack in Eastleigh.[239] In Garissa, the women had witnessed the attack on Garissa University College, where 148 people were killed.[240] Some women lost relatives and friends as a result of these violent attacks.[241] Women also reported being caught in the middle of firefights between the KDF and al-Shabaab.[242]

When attacks occur, women reported being forced to flee or hide.[243] Some women from Lamu were forced to hide in the Boni Forest, where they were vulnerable to being attacked.[244]

One government official reported that sometimes women experienced collateral damage during CT operations. The official cited CT operations in the Boni Forest, where it was alleged that some officers gave resources to desperate women, who were fleeing their homes, in return for sexual favours. The same official noted that women had also been raped by militants hiding in this forest.[245]

Although the psychological impact of violent extremism cannot be assessed by this study, there is evidence from respondents that violent extremism can have serious mental (and subsequently physical) health implications.[246]

Few, if any, studies have been conducted on the psychological impact of violent extremist attacks on individuals in Kenya. However, a review of the literature relating to mental health following a terrorist attack found that of those directly affected by the attack (meaning they had been physically present during the attack or had lost a loved one as a result of it), 30% to 40% were 'likely to develop a clinically diagnosable disorder' within two years of the incident.[247]

Post-traumatic stress disorder was the most common disorder attributable to the attacks, followed by depression, 'although other sequelae include traumatic grief, panic, phobias, generalised anxiety disorder and substance misuse'.[248]

It is important to note that several women referred to themselves or to others as being 'depressed' (including in the accounts described below). This is, of course, not a clinical diagnosis but a catchall description of their feelings of unhappiness, stress, sadness, despondency, heavy-heartedness, despair, etc.

The grief of losing a loved one – be it from death, disappearance or from being abandoned by someone who joins al-Shabaab – has a profound impact on the women affected. These are some of their stories:

- A woman in Tiwi is experiencing depression after her son disappeared during the Mombasa Republican Council raids, leaving behind a wife and two children.[249]

- In Majengo, one of the respondents related how the grief of her brother's wife, after his death in Somalia, led the wife into deep sadness and despair, and the decision to leave for Somalia herself.[250]

- Another woman related her distress following the disappearance of her husband, reportedly at the hands of the police, leaving her to look after their five children. Her husband was later found dead in a forest.[251]

- In Mombasa, a woman described how she was not coping with the grief and distress of losing her son after he had been recruited by al-Shabaab.[252]

- A woman from Majengo shared her grief at having lost her 19-year-old son, who died as a suicide bomber during an attack on a hotel in Somalia.[253]

- A respondent from Mombasa indicated that her husband was in Somalia with al-Shabaab and, although they were currently separated, she had to move to a different part of the city for fear that he might come back looking for her.[254]

- Women whose children had left for Somalia reported suffering from extreme anxiety, coupled with the fear of not knowing the whereabouts or well-being of their children.[255]

A government official in Garissa pointed out that the death of women's husbands and children as a result of terrorism resulted in immense trauma. He said this trauma was what made women 'the biggest victims in all this'.[256] A meeting convened by the US Embassy in Nairobi and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims found that 'women go through psychological trauma because their husbands and children [who have joined al-Shabaab] in general end up being killed. The women are left to fend for themselves without mechanisms for counseling'.[257]

Violent extremism can also result in trauma in families and trigger the breakup of family units

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The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) corroborates this, explaining how 'many mothers and wives … tell their stories secretly, covered head to toe in hijabs and niqabs, at a discreet location in Mombasa County. Many are in a state of perpetual mourning, stricken with a very specific form of grief that can be expressed only in the safe company of those most familiar with it'.[258]

In addition, whether they are involved in violent extremism or not, women in the affected communities live in constant fear – for themselves and for their families – of violent attacks, the actions and attitudes of security agencies, stigmatisation or reprisals from community members, and of the extremists. This trauma reverberates through the different aspects of women's lives and influences their day-to-day interactions.

Some women in Eastleigh impose curfews on their children, making sure they are home by 18:00 each day.[259] In the Diani region of Kwale County, some women

have relocated from their homes as a result of the violence in the areas in which they lived. They described how they were not coping with the stress and fear in their daily lives. In Majengo and the Coast Region, women live in persistent fear of retaliatory terrorist attacks perpetrated by both violent extremists and returnees, and have to be constantly vigilant.[260]

However, the returnees are also reported to be living in fear of both security agencies and al-Shabaab members, following the assassination of a prominent returnee in Kwale. Many returnees have gone into hiding as a result.[261]

Fear of security agencies and law-enforcement officers was also expressed repeatedly in the findings. In Garissa, the heavy presence of security officials caused widespread anxiety,[262] while Muslim women in Mombasa said that people were afraid to worship in case the police raided their place of worship and harassed them. Some of the women described how they felt confined to their homes for safety reasons, and had to constantly stay in touch with family and friends to check that they were safe.[263]

Economic deprivation is both a driver and an impact of violent extremism for women

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A woman in Majengo said she lived in fear of the police who constantly intimidated and harassed her to reveal the whereabouts of her son, who was in hiding after recently returning from Somalia.[264] A government official in Garissa confirmed that the hard security approach taken by the police could result in fear and mistrust of the security agencies. He said women whose husbands had been arrested were sometimes subjected to repeated interrogations by the police.[265]

This finding was corroborated by the head of a community organisation, who reported that the women associated with men who had disappeared to join al-Shabaab were regularly interrogated by the police, judged and vilified by their communities, and sometimes even 'forced to relocate to avoid their children being labelled as a bad influence'.[266] It was reported that owing to these kinds of tactics, women were afraid to report the disappearance of sons and husbands for fear of victimisation and harassment at the hands of the police.[267]

Women in Majengo, Lamu, Mpeketoni and Mombasa also reported being stigmatised, harassed and profiled by the police on a regular basis.[268] Women in Mpeketoni, dressed in *buibui* (attire worn by Muslim women), described how they were subjected to invasive body searches by the police, arguing that non-Muslim women were not targeted in the same way. Women in Mombasa shared similar stories of being subjected to searches because of the way they were dressed, making them feel like terror suspects.[269]

In addition, Muslim women reported facing suspicion, harassment and stigma from other community members, and from their own family, especially if their

children or husbands were suspected of being involved with al-Shabaab.[270] According to a government official in Nairobi, the community often shuns the wives, widows or children of men suspected of involvement in terrorist activities.[271]

Violent extremism can also result in trauma in families and trigger the break-up of family units. To give some examples, individuals suspected of links with extremist organisations have been ostracised by their own families;[272] families have experienced years of physical separation when husbands or children have left home to join al-Shabaab in Somalia;[273] families have been separated when suspects are arrested; many women have been widowed as a result of violent extremism, and some of them have been forced to remarry someone not of their choice;[274] and families have suffered when violent extremist acts are committed by someone within or close to the family.[275]

In addition to the socio-economic implications of changing family structures – including poverty, lack of access to adequate healthcare and education, neglect and the erosion of social support systems – family disintegration also has a direct implication for P/CVE efforts.

Studies have shown that families are vital to P/CVE from 'shaping attitudes toward non-violence to serving as a "front line" actor in identifying signs of possible radicalization to violence, preventing such radicalization's onset, and intervening in the radicalization process, families represent key … partners in P/CVE efforts'.[276]

Economic deprivation is both a driver and an impact of violent extremism for women. Women in this study disclosed that the death or disappearance of their husbands and sons as a result of violent extremism had forced them to assume the role of breadwinner and provide for their children and other family members.[277]

These women described having to borrow money from each other and from friends, usually sinking them into debt as a result,[278] or trying to support themselves and their children by doing odd jobs, like washing other people's clothes.[279] Some women incur additional expenses that they can ill afford. For instance, mothers of suspected terrorists held in police custody reportedly had to pay for their sons to be released.[280]

Apart from these economic difficulties, taking on the role of breadwinner in a strongly patriarchal society may be difficult socially and culturally for many women, and may even result in social backlash. At the same time, the fact that women are assuming roles traditionally reserved for men – even in relation to the perpetration of violent extremism – may result in the disruption of inequitable gender norms, and the establishment and acceptance of new norms where gender is irrelevant to the assignment of roles.

This shift in societal dynamics calls for a gendered analysis of the impact of the changing roles of women in these communities, beyond the links to violent extremism.

Another finding of this study was the impact of violent extremism on the families of members of the security services, especially those who had died in the course of their duties. For instance, a government official in Garissa spoke about the psychological impact that violent extremism had had on security officials and their families, especially those families who had lost loved ones in the line of duty protecting citizens from violent extremism or fighting against violent extremists.[281]

Security officials noted that the wives of members of security agencies who were injured or lost their lives during CT operations or during violent extremist attacks also suffered from deep trauma. Security officials noted this was a challenge in the security-enforcement community because post-traumatic counselling facilities, such as psychology practices, were not adequately available for officers. This issue needs further exploration if the full impact of violent extremism on women is to be understood and suitable responses developed.

Understanding how these broad experiences of victimisation may deter or promote the dynamics of radicalisation and violent extremism is crucial for designing and implementing effective interventions and prevention strategies in these affected communities.

On a community level

The reported harassment of certain population groups by the police, terrorist attacks and sensationalised media reporting have, together, served to fuel suspicion and mistrust between Muslim and non-Muslim members of the affected communities.[282] Community relations have suffered as a result, according to women in Kwale, with people living in fear and mistrust of one another.[283]

This stigmatisation of certain groups and community tension are particularly marked in places that have experienced a terrorist attack. For instance, the attack by three women on a police station in Mombasa described earlier in this report 'has created suspicion and mistrust of Muslim women within the community, both among themselves and by others'.[284] In Garissa and Mpeketoni, women described how terrorist attacks had damaged social cohesion and generated 'disaffection between Muslims and non-Muslims'.[285]

In Garissa it was reported that non-Muslims felt threatened by women in hijabs,[286] and Muslim women in Majengo complained that they could not form support groups without being viewed and treated with fear and suspicion.[287]

The attacks have therefore heightened differences between Christians and Muslims. The perception among some Christians that Muslims are terrorists has aggravated these tensions.[288]

One respondent in Mpeketoni described how women in the community no longer felt comfortable or safe leaving their children with their neighbours, and that tensions had reached the point that Muslim and Christian children had started fighting at school, accusing each other of the terror attacks.[289] As a result, interfaith dialogues for children have had to be organised in schools.[290]

Tensions within communities have also been intensified by government CT activities. Respondents alleged that security agencies created suspicion between community members by publicly profiling ethnic Somalis and Muslims, amplifying existing grievances among these ethnic and religious groups. In addition, the government's response to violent extremism has strained relations between Kenyan security agencies and communities affected by violent extremism.

Human rights abuses – including enforced disappearances, torture, beating and extra-judicial killings of individuals suspected of links with al-Shabaab – have been documented both by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and HRW.[291] This has led to fear of victimisation, harassment and worse by security officials, and resentment in the communities affected by violent extremism.

Other studies have shown that lack of trust in the authorities can help foster grievances that alienate such communities.[292]

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine to what degree these fault lines in community relationships and trust may serve to generate sympathy or support for violent extremist groups such as al-Shabaab, but it is an important dynamic to keep in mind, considering that community members may not be willing to assist CT efforts under these circumstances.

This tension between different groups in the same community has several implications. The crucial support networks that many women have grown accustomed to as an essential component of communal living are breaking down.

Mistrust between parents of different religions may be passed on to their children, thereby perpetuating the cycle of tension and conflict along religious and ethnic lines. The consequences of people retreating into ethnic or religious silos may include increased feelings of marginalisation, difference, victimisation and a sense that one's personal identity is threatened – all of which have been identified as drivers of radicalisation.[293]

Little is known about the effects of collective trauma and stress on communities, and how these may not only affect social cohesion, but also feed into the dynamics of radicalisation and involvement in violent extremism in certain communities. It is therefore an area that needs more research and understanding.

It also emerged from the respondents that violent extremism has had a serious impact on the education of young people in the affected areas. In Mpeketoni, women narrated how schools were closed and people forced to migrate from the area following the terror attacks, to the detriment of their children's education.[294]

There were similar accounts in Garissa, where educators fled the area and children dropped out of school, or could not attend school regularly, when the community was afflicted by violent extremism or in the aftermath of attacks.[295] These factors, according to government officials, have led to a decline in school attendance in these areas.[296]

The economic impact of violent extremism has been discussed at some length above in relation to individuals. But it is also important to bear in mind that the loss of individual livelihoods and jobs has a wider impact on the area as a whole, which becomes collectively poorer as it becomes deprived of essential resources and business activities.

The insecurity caused by terrorist attacks along Kenya's coastline has led to a decline in tourism in these areas, with many foreign governments issuing travel warnings to their citizens. Hotels have laid off workers or closed down, leading to an increase in unemployment and rising levels of poverty in the area.[297]

Women who ran businesses that served the tourism industry, such as providing supplies to hotels, have lost their livelihoods.[298] In Lamu, the government-imposed security curfews have restricted fishing operations, leading to a decline in the catch that fishermen rely on for subsistence and to sell in order to earn a living.

In Mpeketoni, women described how people who usually brought food to sell in the area were coming less often for fear of being attacked en route, which has limited the availability of food in the area.[299] Similarly, in Lamu, the availability of basic commodities is limited because of the reduction in vehicles transporting basic goods to the area, and this has resulted in limited food supplies and increased food prices.[300]

The burning down of a market after a terrorist attack in Garissa town in which three police officers were killed, as well as the Garissa University College attack,[301] caused businesses to shut down.[302] According to a government official in the area, the university is an integral part of the community and provides a source of indirect economic opportunities – such as shops, hotels and hair salons – for many women. These small businesses had been forced to close since the attack, as they had lost their clientele.

The official emphasised that the economic downturn had been largely to the detriment of small and medium-sized enterprises, many of which were run by women.[303] The women who had lost their livelihoods reported that they now depend on the government for support and relief, although they did not elaborate on what exactly this entailed.[304]

The economic slowdown and scarcity of supplies also present an opportunity for al-Shabaab to exploit the situation they have created by becoming the suppliers of goods and services in the affected areas.

The effect of current responses

The framework for responding to radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya includes a range of legislative, policy and programmatic activities. These are funded and implemented by the government, community-based organisations and other local and international stakeholders.

How government officials understand violent extremism

Legislation and policy on issues of national importance are informed by the knowledge, understanding and attitudes of the policymakers and legislators who draft and pass those laws and policies. The efficacy of such statutory frameworks, however, is dependent on the education, training, skills and will of those required to implement them. It is therefore important to understand how the government officials in Kenya interviewed for this study understand violent extremism as a precursor to assessing the initiatives in place to address it.

> Legislation and policy are informed by the knowledge, understanding and attitudes of the policymakers

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There was no common understanding among government officials in the study of the term 'violent extremism'. Whereas many government officials associated violent extremism with terrorism,[305] others associated it with a particular political or religious view.[306] Some government officials linked violent extremism directly with Islam or with violent jihadist acts.[307] Others made the connection with Islam, but noted that violent extremists were 'misusing religion and interpreting [it] wrongly' because 'Islam does not advocate harming anyone'.[308]

Some saw violent extremism as rooted in political grievances; others saw it as the consequence of particular areas being favoured over others – or of young people taking advantage of the gap left by the government to act violently in order to make their 'ideas felt'.[309]

Government officials noted that dealing with violent extremism in Kenya was particularly difficult because, as one said, 'we do not know and cannot differentiate between who is a terrorist and who is not; before it was the Somali communities but now any community can conceal terrorists, therefore complicating the entire issue'.[310]

However, it was noted that in the Coast Region violent extremism had taken root in predominantly Muslim areas where the youth had received training in Somalia and targeted soft spots, such as churches, hotels and security organisations and personnel, to inflict as much death and injury as possible.[311]

Government officials perceived the dynamics that created the conditions for violent extremism to be failures in the education system,[312] poverty and unemployment,[313] and indoctrination ('people who are weak, idle or uneducated listen to harmful narratives').[314] Others noted that involvement in violent extremism stemmed from peer pressure, which happened when young people interacted with 'known radicalised persons and terrorists', who lured them in and persuaded them to join the organisation.[315]

Respondents also linked violent extremism to broader contestation and criminal violence in Kenya, referring to 'thugs' who operate for personal gain,[316] the violence associated with groups such as the Mungiki sect,[317] and the ethnic conflict that may become associated with or integrated into violent extremism.

In considering the gendered dimensions of violent extremism, respondents acknowledged that women had a different experience of violent extremism to men,[318] and that some men imposed extremist views and actions on women through rape and domestic violence.[319]

Respondents' assessment of responses to terrorism

Government officials

Although there are a number of official policies and programmes dealing with violent extremism in Kenya, the findings below reflect only what was reported during the fieldwork for this study. They therefore provide an indication of the kinds of responses to violent extremism that government officials interviewed for this study are aware of, rather than a list of those that are actually in effect.

Government officials categorised their responses to violent extremism into security responses, policy and programmatic responses, and community outreach programmes.

Government officials explained that the ATPU, police and KDF adopted a securitised approach to countering violent extremism.[320] The government, they said, was reportedly increasing security across areas affected by violent extremism. These measures include monitoring hotspots and gathering intelligence that can be shared through security briefings;[321] information sharing and departmental alerts;[322] investigations, arrests and prosecutions of those suspected of links with extremist organisations;[323] introducing better security screening in areas under threat (such as the use of sniffer dogs and the deployment of trained officers with search equipment);[324] and increasing the resources for CT initiatives.

Military patrols in forested areas have increased in Kwale and Lamu;[325] the deployment of police officers to respond to violent extremism in Lamu has increased from 800 to approximately 1 500 (in addition to five military camps already in the area);[326] and KDF troops outnumber citizens in Kiunga.[327]

The government has also provided equipment to the affected areas in the form of helicopters for aerial surveillance, motor vehicles for administrative offices and motorbikes for local chiefs to assist them in enhancing surveillance in their jurisdictions in order to increase security.[328]

The police have posted additional assistant county commissioners to the seven Lamu Divisions (Faza, Kizingitini, Kiunga, Amu, Hindi, Witu and Mpeketoni) given the threat of terrorism in that area.[329]

Some government officials in Mombasa, Lamu and Garissa explained that the government's use of hard security measures to combat violent extremism were in line with national law. Others noted that the hard security approach was sometimes heavy-handed. In Nairobi, one official recognised that terror-related arrests carried out by some law-enforcement officials had caused tensions in certain Muslim communities, preventing people from speaking out when they had information that could have been useful in investigations.[330]

Another official, this time in Lamu, reported that at times, people suspected of violent extremism had been held for months – their whereabouts unknown to their families.[331] However, one official in Mombasa disputed such claims and explained that because of the secretive nature of violent extremism, some families were unaware that their relatives were involved – and that therefore they were unjustified in their sense of being unfairly discriminated against or harassed.[332]

The Kenya National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism

The Kenya National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism was launched in September 2016 with the aim of 'protecting and advancing the liberty and prosperity of [the Kenyan] people'.*

- The strategy gives the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) a mandate to carry out and coordinate P/CVE work.
- Although the drafting of the strategy was an internal government process, various stakeholders, including international donors and national CSOs, were engaged in the development of the strategy through consultations and opportunities to comment.**
- The pillars of the strategy – education, social, political, economic, media and online, psychological, faith-based, community resilience, and law and policy – demonstrate the shift towards addressing the problem of violent extremism through a P/CVE rather than hard security approach.
- The priorities of the strategy are, among others, to:
    - Develop a comprehensive approach to support local communities fighting violent extremism and to address communal grievances upon which violent extremist recruiters mobilise support.
    - Develop radicalisation early-warning and early-intervention measures, so that the parents, teachers, friends and colleagues of those being radicalised are able to recognise the signs and know where to turn to for help.
    - Develop and implement a coordinated government and community-based approach to ensuring effective demobilisation and reintegration of violent extremists who have disengaged or responded to amnesty offers, including psychosocial support, education and training.
    - Develop expertise in non-coercive approaches to CVE in the government and the security sector.

> – Conduct research to ensure that Kenya's CVE actors have the benefit of a dynamic action-ready and research-informed understanding of the evolution of violent extremist ideologies, organisational models, and radicalisation methodologies.
> • The strategy works with communities to build their resilience to respond to violent extremism, and with the government (at the national and county levels) to address structural issues and the government's response.
>
> The strategy is gender-neutral and does not address the specific intersection of women and radicalisation or violent extremism, nor does it speak to the importance of including women in national and community-level CVE efforts.

Sources:
* Government of Kenya, National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism, September 2016, vii.
** Interviews conducted on 15 and 16 December 2016 with representatives of the Netherlands government in Kenya and an anonymous donor funding P/CVE initiatives in Kenya.

The government has included the community in certain security initiatives. Community-policing initiatives, which involve the police working hand in hand with the community – for instance through information sharing and the reporting of suspicious activities – have helped counter the perception that the police are the enemy, and have led to a reduction in the number of terror-related attacks in communities.[333]

The police also encourage community defence units and provide guidance on security issues. An official in Kisumu said the government was working with communities, churches and others involved in P/CVE efforts.[334]

An official in Lamu mentioned the Nyumba Kumi initiative – described as a 'homeland security system intended to create national security awareness amongst citizens'[335] – which decentralises security to the local communities and prioritises their needs.[336]

There are also government community outreach initiatives aimed at sensitising and educating communities about violent extremism at various levels. Sensitisation is reportedly conducted in schools and universities, because the youth are deemed the most vulnerable.[337]

In Mombasa a government official spoke of community projects that partnered with NGOs, such as the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya, to reach the youth.[338] In Lamu, an official reported that youths who carried messages that countered the narratives of violent extremists were being recognised by the government to encourage the spread of these messages.[339]

Sensitisation is also carried out in mosques and with the Muslim clergy, who are considered crucial to P/CVE efforts considering that they have access to a large section of the community through their teachings.[340] The ATPU targets imams, in particular, about the dangers of encouraging the youth to join militias.[341]

Public outreach occurs through *barazas* (government forums held with members of the public) and workshops in communities,[342] where citizens are made aware of and educated about, among other things, the dangers of joining al-Shabaab,[343] what they should do if their child disappears[344] and what they should report to the authorities. A government official noted that the NCTC also ran outreach programmes, but did not provide details.[345]

A government official in Lamu reported that the government had been providing economic relief in the form of food for those affected by violent extremism in Kiunga, specifically people in the Boni Forest.[346]

Other economic initiatives include extending the Uwezo Fund, which aims to help women and youth access credit to fund businesses, provides financial assistance in various forms, and teaches women in particular the basic skills necessary to start micro- and small-sized enterprises, such as barber shops.[347]

Government officials also noted proactive measures that are in place to support and help rehabilitate returnees, such as initiatives sponsored by the UN on the south coast.[348]

Challenges with the returnees programme

The amnesty, or returnees, programme has been criticised for lacking a legislative, policy or operational framework. This has led to inconsistent implementation of the programme.*

Respondents reported the following challenges with the programme:

- Many returnees do not trust the government and prefer to go into hiding than to enlist in the amnesty programme. This creates challenges for the successful reintegration of returnees into society.
- The government has not established safe houses for women whose husbands have left and for returnees.
- There is a lack of effective screening of returnees to ascertain that bona-fide or genuine returnees are reformed, which undermines the impact of de-radicalisation efforts.
- There is no clear communication about the handling of returnees, who are exposed to numerous risks, including from the government, police and al-Shabaab.**

Sources:
* M Yusuf, How Kenya's al-Shabab amnesty is a loaded gun, https://www.irinnews.org/ investigations/2016/08/31/how-kenya's-al-shabab-amnesty-loaded-gun, 31 August 2016.
** Information taken from interviews conducted with the head of the NGO working group in Mombasa on 22 September 2016, and with an anonymous donor funding P/CVE initiatives in Kenya on 19 December 2016.

According to officials in Nairobi and Diani, the government is reintegrating returnees into society through the government amnesty programme announced in April 2015. The programme encourages all those who have gone to Somalia for training,

and want to return and disassociate themselves from al-Shabaab, to report to government offices for rehabilitation and reintegration.[349]

Replying to the question of whether the Kenyan government's response to violent extremism incorporated gender considerations, most officials commented on the involvement of women in P/CVE efforts, rather than whether the substance of policies and programmes was gendered.

At a national level, officials spoke about gender equality in government in reference to women's involvement in P/CVE. It was observed that 'women are also involved in implementing security initiatives in the national government and at the National Assembly';[350] that 'every department must have a woman';[351] and that 'the two-thirds gender rule … mandates gender representation in government'.[352]

In Mombasa, a government official said women were involved on all levels of responding to terrorism and violent extremism, but did not go into specifics.[353] An official in Nairobi referred to the number of women in parliament and employed as prosecutors in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions as part of government efforts to include gender in P/CVE.[354]

A government official in Diani said women were involved in conceptualising, drafting and implementing P/CVE policies, programmes and practices, such as the Kwale County Strategy.[355]

In terms of security, government officials said that in their capacity as law-enforcement officers, women engaged in addressing violent extremism. In the border town of Busia and elsewhere, for example, only female officers are used to search female suspects.[356] In Malindi, there are female investigators in the ATPU, and reference was made during the FGDs to female police officers involved in house raids in Majengo.[357]

At the government level, there are female government officials – for example, the staff of the NCTC – who work with women's NGOs to sensitise women in affected communities about violent extremism.[358] There are also females working on P/CVE initiatives at the ATPU headquarters.[359]

The substance of government CT strategies was mentioned by one official in Mombasa, who described the initiatives as being in the initial stages of development and implementation, and reported that the government planned to cater for the needs of women.[360]

Donors and civil society

As is the case with the government officials, the findings and analysis below are based on the direct knowledge of the respondents interviewed and do not purport to be an inventory of all the programmes currently implemented in Kenya.

Although P/CVE is relatively new in Kenya, the donors agreed that the design and implementation of P/CVE programming had become a popular intervention among donors working in the areas of development, conflict and peacebuilding in the

country.[361] As such, donors are actively funding the establishment of programmes to address the problem of violent extremism.[362]

The NCTC was described as the focal point for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, a countrywide support mechanism that provides funding for engaging civil society stakeholders in P/CVE.[363]

There was agreement among donors and CSOs that the Kenyan government was responding actively to the problem of violent extremism, but that it had focused its efforts thus far on *countering* violent extremism rather than *preventing* it, and that these efforts had been concentrated at the community level.[364]

P/CVE demands a multi-stakeholder approach where all the various actors need to work together to achieve a common goal

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Donors and CSOs recognised that the government had articulated and demonstrated a willingness to engage with CSOs in their P/CVE efforts, for instance in the development of the Kenya National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism.[365] One of the donors pointed out that P/CVE efforts had created spaces for dialogue in communities, and that Muslim communities had been especially bold in engaging with the government.[366]

Donors and community-based organisations saw the government's willingness to work with a range of actors – civil society, religious leaders and communities – as especially positive and important.[367]

The donors and CSOs did, however, highlight a number of challenges in the government's approach to P/CVE.

P/CVE demands a multi-stakeholder approach where all the various actors need to work together to achieve a common goal. However, one of the biggest challenges noted by the respondents is a perceived lack of trust between the government and the other stakeholders engaged in the fight against violent extremism.[368]

One area of mistrust is between state security forces and local communities. Two donors noted that trust had been significantly eroded as a result of police brutality, extra-judicial killings, the disappearance of people (especially after the amnesty programme was launched) and the targeting of the relatives of those suspected of involvement in violent extremism.[369]

Another area of mistrust is between the government and local CSOs working on P/CVE.[370] According to the CSOs, the government does not understand their roles as civil society and tends to denounce the work of human rights bodies as being critical of the government.

The CSOs expressed frustration that the government was at times suspicious of their work and that it had accused CSOs of sympathising or collaborating with violent extremists.[371] CSOs are optimistic that their relationship with government will improve with the implementation of the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism as it provides a framework for interaction.[372]

Two donors expressed the need for more capacity and resources to be dedicated to implementing the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism.[373] One of the issues brought up was that most of the personnel working at the NCTC had been seconded from the security sector, which raised the question of their willingness to take a softer approach to P/CVE and whether they would allow civilians to be involved in P/CVE implementation.[374]

> CSOs are optimistic that their relationship with government will improve with the implementation of the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism

Another donor was concerned that P/CVE initiatives seem to constitute little more than talk shops, events and conferences, organised by development partners and CSOs, and that these may be ineffectual in terms of preventing violent extremism where it really matters: in the afflicted communities.[375]

A concern was also raised about the impact of P/CVE programming, especially considering that P/CVE is poorly defined in the development sector and can encompass too many issues. This has implications for the effectiveness and impact of P/CVE programming.[376] Another donor was concerned that radicalisation and violent extremism continued to pose a threat to national and human security, despite the large amount of money ring-fenced to address it by international donors, and speculated about what could be done to achieve a greater impact.[377]

The coordination of P/CVE efforts was another challenge raised by donor and CSO respondents. Three problematic areas were identified: insufficient coordination at the technical level among government P/CVE efforts;[378] weak coordination among donors (although a P/CVE donor working group has been established, it includes implementing partners, which may inhibit free dialogue);[379] and a lack of coordination among CSOs, and between CSOs and donors, resulting in replication of P/CVE work supported by different donors.[380] The CSOs also noted the urgent need to understand who was doing what in the P/CVE field.[381]

Other concerns that were mentioned included a lack of engagement with the military;[382] the danger for researchers working in P/CVE in the field; the inability of the Kenyan government to guarantee the safety of CSOs;[383] the gap between P/CVE theory and practice, which can be addressed only by bringing down the barriers between researchers and implementers;[384] and the fact that donor

initiatives were aimed at the macro level, ignoring the push, pull and trigger factors at the micro level.[385]

The donors agreed that as knowledge grows, there is a more nuanced understanding of the different roles that women play in violent extremism and in P/CVE, and the dynamics between these roles. One of the donors noted that despite the myth that women are not predisposed to violent extremism, there had been a recent shift in thinking towards the recognition that women could be both agents and passive actors within violent extremist organisations, as well as the victims of violent extremism.[386]

In the analysis of one donor, women are both victims and perpetrators; they have observed that in north-eastern Kenya some mothers tacitly encourage and take pride in their sons joining al-Shabaab.[387]

However, despite this growing awareness, the donor and CSO respondents admitted that most P/CVE programming tended to overlook the special needs of women and the various roles that women play, as well as the impact of violent extremism on women and girls.[388] According to CSO respondents, most P/CVE responses have been generic and have targeted all those involved in violent extremism.[389] This view was substantiated by one of the donors, who conceded that most of their P/CVE programmes were designed for the youth as a homogeneous group, but that efforts were under way to enhance gender considerations.[390]

> Donor and CSO respondents admitted that most P/CVE programming tended to overlook the special needs of women and the various roles that women played

As such, both CSOs and donors indicated that there were still gaps in programming and that a lot of work was needed to 'widen their lenses' to look at the issue of the roles women and girls play within violent extremism.[391]

CSOs and donors agreed that interventions needed to specifically target women and girls at risk of radicalisation,[392] create safe spaces for women to talk about violent extremism given the cultural sensitivities,[393] as well as listen and respond to the needs of women involved in violent extremism.[394]

Addressing the roles that women play within violent extremism should entail examining and analysing the shifting dynamics that constitute the root causes of and factors driving violent extremism.[395]

In relation to women's involvement in P/CVE efforts, it was noted, on the one hand, that there was a lot of funding that specifically targeted women in P/CVE and that women were involved in P/CVE initiatives through community dialogues and forums, among other types of initiatives.[396]

On the other hand, however, CSOs observed that there were too few female practitioners and researchers involved in addressing the problem of violent extremism in Kenya, and this may have an impact on accessing women who are involved in or affected by violent extremism (and who usually come from conservative religious or cultural backgrounds and are therefore more likely to trust female practitioners and interviewers).[397]

It was reported that local organisations – such as the Catholic Relief Services – provided counselling for women who were traumatised and those who had lost their husbands.[398]

Programmes for women caught up in violent extremism*

Programmes funded by donors to support women who have been involved in violent extremism include:

- Supporting traumatised female victims of violent extremism and women whose husbands and sons have been involved with al-Shabaab.
- Teaching women to recognise the signs of radicalisation at home.
- Working with women teaching in madrassas.
- Training female peace ambassadors to help them understand the signs of radicalisation in their communities.
- Providing trauma healing for women who have been affected by terrorism.
- Providing a platform where guidance can be given to those holding radical views, including psychosocial support for such women and working with religious leaders to dissuade women from joining violent extremist organisations.

It was reported that these programmes are informed by baseline studies, but upcoming programmes are going to identify more closely how violent extremism has specifically affected women.

* Information taken from interviews conducted with anonymous donors funding CVE initiatives in Kenya, 15-19 December 2016.

The women who attend support groups are encouraged to share their experiences and feelings, and, according to USAID, a 'trained psychologist works with the group, and the women individually, to overcome their grief and focus on their own personal development, including coping with extreme pressure from society'.[399] Women in Majengo and Garissa, however, say they are largely on their own and need to stay strong through mutual support, as there are no counselling services there.[400] A government official in Mombasa noted that the women affected by violent extremism banded together in solidarity to support one another.[401] He gave the example of women coming to court to offer support to other women when their husbands were on trial.[402]

There were also reports of interfaith peace dialogues – organised by the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics, the Catholic Relief Services and others – that had

helped in healing and easing tensions between Christians and Muslims in the community.[403]

Finally, one donor observed that it was too early to say whether current initiatives responded to the needs of women and girls effectively, because although it was clear that women played various roles as preventers and actors in violent extremism, none of these areas had been explored thoroughly enough to inform programming.[404]

Women respondents

A major cause for concern among woman respondents was the hard security approach to violent extremism adopted by the Kenyan government. In all the research sites, women described government CT initiatives in terms of police brutality, disrespect, harassment, profiling, the disappearance of suspects, missing children and corruption. All of these, they said, made the situation worse.[405] They observed that instead of the desired effect, the government's CT efforts were leading to increased radicalisation.[406]

Some women in Diani reported that they did not attend the government-initiated public *barazas* because they were afraid of being suspected as sympathising with violent extremists or of harbouring extremist sympathisers.[407]

There were women in various locations who supported the government's P/CVE efforts. Some women in Tiwi said the initiatives were working to an extent, but that it was taking too long to implement projects, such as the amnesty programme.[408]

Some Muslim women in Mpeketoni reported that they did not mind being searched by female police officers because they wanted to feel safe.[409] And in Diani, some women conceded that some CT efforts, particularly the returnee programme, had helped in small ways. They gave the example of government support for returnees to start seedling nurseries.[410] They did, however, have concrete recommendations for some of the ways that the government might improve its CT efforts. These included:

- Increasing the number and regularity of peacebuilding forums hosted by the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government (National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management) and the National Cohesion and Reintegration Commission.[411]

- Police response during al-Shabaab attacks should be more rapid. According to women in Mpeketoni, police officers were incapable of responding while they waited for reinforcements and for weapons to be brought from the armoury.[412]

- There should be programmes aimed specifically at girls and women, such as the parenting class titled Dream Parent in Majengo aimed at boys, which teaches parents about children at risk of criminal behaviour.[413]

Women in the areas most severely affected by violent extremism, such as Lamu, Majengo and Garissa, also noted that they had been the subject of multiple research studies undertaken by CSOs and international organisations. Women in these places reported being weary of repeatedly participating in research studies and felt over-researched.

They added that the results of the studies were seldom shared with them, and that they had not noticed any changes to the situations within their communities or in their daily lives as a result of the research. CSOs admitted the existence of 'professional interviewees' in some areas where communities were over-studied.[414]

Respondents reported that at the local level, women had tried to counter violent extremism by organising themselves into community-based organisations. One example is the Kikozi programme in Lamu, a community-based and women-run organisation funded by USAID, which works towards building peace by countering violent extremism.[415]

The Kikozi programme has implemented a number of initiatives, including engaging madrassa students in fighting violent extremism; running competitions on Islamic calligraphy and public speaking that were premised on messages of peace and involved female teachers and girls; holding public forums and meetings to spread a message of peace; and talking to parents about protecting their children.[416] The Kikozi programme works with 13 other women's groups and many of their meetings are run on an interfaith basis.[417]

The Kikozi programme is concerned that boys have been left out of P/CVE interventions and therefore started an initiative titled 'Protect the Lamu boy child' movement, which provides counselling and mentorship to boys and young men.[418]

In an attempt to soften the economic blow of violent extremism, women in Kwale, Majengo, Lamu and Eastleigh have formed 'merry-go-rounds', or savings groups, whereby they make contributions of Ksh200-300 a month, and out of this pool they are able to provide loans to members of the group. These loans are used to start small businesses.[419]

In Garissa, women had formed self-help groups before the attacks, but some of these no longer functioned because of tensions following the university attack.[420] Some women in Lamu, Eastleigh and Garissa reported that their focus was now on keeping their children safe, and that they took comfort in and relied on their faith to cope.[421]

There were reports in Tiwi, Diani and Garissa of women playing roles as deputy elders, deputy chiefs and leaders in local peace committees – traditional committees that are meant to involve local communities in peace processes.[422] In Lamu, women have formed a lobby group to advocate for their issues and concerns. This group has been involved in discussions about addressing the problem of violent extremism.[423]

Challenges with current responses

There are a number of challenges currently limiting the comprehensive and effective inclusion of gender in current responses to violent extremism in Kenya.

Lack of consistency among stakeholders

The concept of violent extremism, as understood by practitioners and bureaucrats in Kenya, is disjointed – and this lack of coherence is mirrored in the country's current P/CVE responses. The lack of a clear understanding of and consensus around the definition of violent extremism is a primary contributing factor to this challenge. Government officials included several types of violence and many different role players in their understanding of violent extremism, including the Mungiki sect, the separatist Mombasa Republican Council and Islamist extremism.

Because the understandings of violent extremism are so diverse, the various stakeholders involved in responding to violent extremism in Kenya have different views on what should be done to address the complexities of violent extremism.

With no definition of violent extremism included in the Kenya National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism, different stakeholders rely on their own conceptualisations, understandings and definitions of violent extremism instead of responding to an agreed-upon threat.

This lack of conceptual clarity is a global problem, meaning that even multinational and international stakeholders in Kenya may lack a common definition of the issue, which may differ from that held by the Kenyan government, both of which may differ from that of the people in the communities.

This fragmentation has major implications for the effectiveness of the response to violent extremism, including hampering attempts to successfully combine the 'hard' security approach of CT with the 'softer' security approach of P/CVE.

The findings indicated a lack of coordination among the actors involved in P/CVE in Kenya – the government, donors and civil society – as well as in their activities and programmes.

An indication as well as a consequence of this is the duplication and repetition of work conducted by different actors in the P/CVE environment. This has led, as mentioned, to a feeling that women are being 'over-researched' in some of the affected communities, such as Lamu, Majengo and Garissa.[424]

This is largely due to the saturation of the P/CVE environment with organisations that do not coordinate their efforts or successfully translate the information obtained from their research into action. The result is that communities see no change to their current situation despite the ubiquitous research.

Even different departments and agencies within the government were largely unaware of what others were doing in relation to violent extremism or the initiatives that they were implementing. This could be as a result of inadequate

communication by the government in its efforts to address violent extremism, including a possible disconnect between the government's CT and P/CVE initiatives.

A case in point is the returnee amnesty programme: some government officials interviewed for this study had not heard of the programme; two of the three returnees themselves had not heard about it; and many women in the communities affected by extremism were not aware of it.

Government and counter-terrorism

Continued terror attacks across Kenya have placed the government under extreme pressure to address the crisis. The Kenyan government has prioritised and invested in a hard security CT approach to violent extremism and terrorism, supported by many major donors. HRW argues, however, that the security crisis in Kenya has had an impact on the Kenyan government's human rights record, and that the rise in human rights abuses coincides with the heightened security challenge in the country.[425]

Women in the communities affected by violent extremism were largely in agreement that security agencies' response to violent extremism was harsh and, for the most part, resulted in fear and mistrust. Donors, government respondents and women from the communities all highlighted the significant levels of mistrust between the government and the communities affected by violent extremism. For one donor, mistrust between the government and its citizens was described as 'one of the biggest challenges' in responding to violent extremism.

> Opinion was divided over the efficacy of the government's response to victims of violent extremism

Some government officials acknowledged that although some mistakes may have been made by the government in how it responded to violent extremism, these were being investigated; the officials also indicated that there were other ways that the government had been making efforts to respond appropriately to violent extremism.

The majority of government officials, however, denied the existence of harsh CT responses such as mass arrests, profiling and disappearances. Some government officials attributed the women's experiences of police brutality to ignorance about their husbands' or sons' involvement in violent extremism. Others said that sensationalist media reports were misleading people about police responses.

These discrepancies can be analysed in different ways. Hard security CT measures are developed to neutralise a threat to national security and their wider impact on communities is not necessarily taken into consideration.

Because hard security processes follow a chain of command, those effecting the strategies follow orders and do not have the inclination or capacity to look at the broader P/CVE picture. It may also be that some of those who carry out the government's CT measures are not willing to see the brutality of the response in the same way that those on the ground experience it, or to take responsibility for it.

Opinion was also divided over the efficacy of the government's response to victims of violent extremism. Government officials noted that the Uwezo Fund was the government's attempt to meet the financial needs of women and youth in Kenya, and one CSO pointed out that the fund was an option for helping women access financial assistance. However, women in Garissa said the fund was not easily accessible, while women in Majengo said that they had difficulty accessing the fund because only groups could apply for the fund and they were afraid of forming groups due to their fear of stigmatisation and harassment if they did.

> Even if there are some P/CVE initiatives taking place in communities, they are inconsistently implemented and poorly publicised

While some government officials indicated that psychosocial support was available for women affected by violent extremism, others were not aware of the availability of counselling programmes. In the FGDs, some women noted that NGOs were providing counselling, but many others said no such support was available. These responses illustrate that even if there are some P/CVE initiatives taking place in communities, they are inconsistently implemented and poorly publicised.

Drivers and dynamics: directing initiatives

The findings reflect both a level of alignment and a disconnect between the drivers of women's involvement in violent extremism and the nature of the response to violent extremism.

The findings from Majengo, Mombasa and other coastal areas show that women are drawn into violent extremism because of, among others, their dire economic predicament. Groups like al-Shabaab have become masterful at exploiting the economic situation in vulnerable communities.

Because getting out of poverty and economic hardship is a key priority for women in these communities, they will continue to seek ways to sustain themselves economically and the source of their economic sustenance may well continue – in the absence of alternatives – to be al-Shabaab.

In spite of this, the findings show that the requisite economic response to violent extremism is either minimal or lacking. Attempts at addressing the dynamics that lead to the radicalisation of women in Kenya that do not encompass a strong

economic focus will therefore miss a crucial opportunity to effect real change on the P/CVE front.

Another key finding of the study is how personal relationships influence women's involvement in violent extremism. This dynamic emphasises the familial, social and communal elements of women's involvement and therefore cannot be addressed without partnerships between a variety of stakeholders, such as the government, civil society, local communities and others.

The findings show that the government and CSOs have engaged in initiatives to provide counselling to those who have been traumatised and to sensitise people to the threat of radicalisation as ways of responding to this challenge.

There is broad acknowledgment from a range of stakeholders that counselling can play an important role in helping women cope with the psychological impact of losing a loved one to violent extremism. Similarly, there is evidence that the government's efforts to partner with CSOs and communities in raising awareness on radicalisation and violent extremism are reaching the right audiences. CSOs and other organisations have been able to reflect this aspect as a key priority in their work.

The challenges of limited coordination, inconsistent implementation and insufficient interventions severely inhibit the efficacy of CVE responses

However, the challenges of limited coordination, inconsistent implementation and insufficient interventions severely inhibit the efficacy of this aspect of the response. Friction and mistrust between the government and communities, and between the government and CSOs, also hamper efforts to successfully address the familial, social and communal elements of women's involvement in violent extremism in a fundamental way.

Religious motivations, described as 'indoctrination', also emerged as a dynamic that influenced women's decision to become involved in violent extremism. This likely calls for responses such as education in communities and madrassas, and partnerships between religious leaders and the government. Involving imams and other religious leaders to help correct distorted religious teachings has been suggested in P/CVE programmes in several contexts.

Yet, as is the case with addressing the other two key drivers behind women's involvement in violent extremism, although this issue receives some attention from all stakeholders there are also weaknesses in implementation. Insufficient religious sensitisation programmes in madrassas and mosques from CSOs and government, and mistrust between the government and Muslim women, hamper efforts to successfully tackle this problem.

Positioning women in the response to violent extremism

There are real instances of good practice in including women in the response to violent extremism. For example the Kwale County Plan for Countering Violent Extremism (KCPCVE), launched in February 2017, was developed to 'define the manifestation and practical measures for countering radicalisation and violent extremism in Kwale County'.[426] The KCPCVE specifically emphasises 'the role that women can play as strategic partners and actors in countering violent extremism', and includes women as stakeholders in the plan. The KCPCVE outlines the elements for success as:

- Prioritising meaningful inclusion of key stakeholders, particularly women, in the development and implementation of CVE approaches aimed at addressing the underlying causes of violence.

- Recognising and accounting for the broad range of roles women play in supporting and countering violent extremism.

- Allocating adequate funding to advance multi-sectoral CVE initiatives that build bridges between civil society and actors in the security sector and, in particular, bringing women together from different sectors to advocate for inclusive security approaches are effective ways to bridge the sector divides.

- Prioritising resources and technical support for small organisations, particularly woman- and youth-focused civil society entities, to allow them to secure the personnel and capacity-building training necessary to evaluate programmatic impact.[427]

It will be important to monitor the implementation of the KCPCVE to ensure that these commitments are followed through. If so, it could serve as a blueprint for other counties in Kenya in their fight against violent extremism.

In addition, the availability of female police officers at checkpoints to search female civilians reveals a degree of respect for the rights, dignity and cultural sensitivities of women in Kenya. Similarly, the use of female investigators, especially in cases involving female suspects, can facilitate investigations by helping women feel more at ease in police stations.

According to donors, there are some programmes under way to respond to the challenges of the impact of violent extremism on women, such as trauma counselling and teaching women how to be aware of the signs of radicalisation. These initiatives are an important start, but they are not consistent or systematic enough to respond to the problem adequately.

There need to be more deliberate efforts, nuance, consistency and accountability when including women in the response to violent extremism, taking into account the various roles women play in violent extremist organisations or their support, as well as the roles they play in CT and P/CVE at various levels.

However, current responses are not systematically inclusive of women, nor are they substantively and sufficiently gender-specific or gender-sensitive.

Critical initiatives at the policy level in Kenya do not adequately respond to the needs of women either as actors in or victims of violent extremism. The fact that women's challenges and needs are invisible or oversimplified within existing policy frameworks suggests that Kenya is at risk of losing intervention opportunities that would help to address this challenge.

The National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism does not reflect the sensitivities or the needs of women in relation to violent extremism and treats the impacts of violent extremism as gender-neutral. Because the unique contexts within which women may be drawn into violent extremism or the specific impacts of violent extremism on women are overlooked, responses fail to target women affected by violent extremism.

> Current responses are not systematically inclusive of women, nor are they substantively and sufficiently gender-specific or gender-sensitive

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The Kenya National Action Plan (KNAP) touches on violent extremism only as it relates to the broad security context of Kenya. There are aspects of the KNAP that could apply to women's involvement in violent extremism and P/CVE in the most general sense, such as the following elements of the KNAP:

- Pillar 1: Participation and promotion
    - Conducting research on the impact of conflict on Kenya's women and their roles, practices, and involvement in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and security mechanisms and processes.
    - Encouraging and supporting women's active involvement in alternative forms of dispute resolution, including reconciliation, mediation, arbitration, and traditional dispute-settlement mechanisms and leadership institutions.
- Pillar 2: Prevention
    - Research and advocacy on safety, security, and prevention measures and strategies in crisis, conflict, and post-conflict settings, as well as in fragile humanitarian situations resulting from wars and natural or other disasters.
    - Providing appropriate services, such as reproductive healthcare, HIV/AIDS services and treatment, psychosocial services, legal assistance, and education, to vulnerable women and girls, particularly those living in camps for refugees and internally displaced people.

- Providing specialised gender training for all National Police Service, Kenya Defence Forces, and civilian personnel deployed in conflict-prevention and peacekeeping missions.

- Employment of gender experts and deployment of relevant technical expertise in Kenya's National Police Service, Kenya Defence Forces, and other institutions involved in conflict-prevention and peacekeeping operations.

- Pillar 3: Protection

  - Promulgation, ratification, and implementation of national, regional, and international laws and policies that promote gender equality and women's human rights.

  - Enhancing awareness among all duty bearers and rights holders on the constitution and existing laws that protect women and girls.

  - Referral, investigation and prosecution of cases of violations against women and girls' human rights.

  - Implementing the countrywide alternative dispute-resolution policies that promote the participation of women and integrate gender perspectives in their structures and procedures.

- Pillar 4: Relief and recovery

  - Providing and encouraging women's access to basic socio-economic services, including community land for all women and girls in situations of humanitarian crisis.

  - Providing holistic healthcare for women and girls affected by conflict, insecurity and humanitarian crisis.

  - Incorporating a gender perspective into all disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation efforts.[428]

However, if these aspects of the KNAP are to apply to those women involved in and affected by violent extremism, there would need to be an explicit recognition that violent extremism is a form of conflict that affects women in particular ways and that women affected by violent extremism are entitled to the same socio-economic services and psychosocial care as women affected by other forms of conflict. This essentially means that a P/CVE approach would need to be formally integrated into the CT approach currently prioritised by the Kenyan government.

The KNAP is silent on the active participation of women as sympathisers, perpetrators and enablers of violent extremism, and on how this challenge ought to be addressed. In addition, although security agents and government officials throughout this study acknowledged that women were involved in violent extremism, it is clear that CT and P/CVE responses have not been gendered in responding to the specific needs of women, particularly returnees.

The government amnesty programme was cited as an example of an initiative that was gender-neutral in addressing the particular needs of female returnees.

Analysts note that:

> for policies and programs targeted at preventing violent extremism and terrorism in particular, the contradiction between assumptions of agency when women partake in prevention roles versus a rejection of agency when women are perpetrators poses a number of conceptual and practical challenges [resulting] in missing key intervention opportunities (particularly those aimed at women) that could have ripple effects into the women's social circles.[429]

This observation is supported by the Global Counterterrorism Forum, which emphasises the need to be mindful of women's issues within P/CVE efforts, especially in relation to women's roles as actors in and victims of violent extremism, and as actors in P/CVE.[430]

Because violent extremism affects women differently to men, there is a specific need to include gendered considerations in the design and implementation of CT and P/CVE policies and initiatives.

As Yanar Mohammed, co-founder and president of the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, said during the UNSC's open debate on Resolution 2242, 'improving women's participation in efforts to counter extremism and build peace is not just a normative concern about equality; including women's insights offers a strategic advantage to those looking to build lasting peace and prevent conflict and violent extremism'.[431]

> Despite the challenges, the government is keen to ensure women's inclusion as actors in P/CVE efforts in Kenya

In addition, the representation of women within CT and P/CVE initiatives is inconsistent. It was evident from the interviews with government officials that there was no clear overarching policy or strategy for including women in any systematic way in government CT or P/CVE work. Their answers about how women were included were vague, sometimes citing the two-thirds gender rule in the Constitution of Kenya[432] and sometimes affirming that women were involved, but without giving specific details.

It is therefore clear that if women are involved in any meaningful way in processes relating to the design and implementation of P/CVE policies and initiatives, their participation is limited and women's issues within CT efforts are evidently not prioritised.

Interviews with government officials revealed that, despite the challenges, the government was keen on ensuring women's inclusion as actors in P/CVE efforts in Kenya, in line with government policies to ensure representation of women in all sectors of government. This is a step in the right direction. But a firm commitment to which the government can be held accountable is what is needed, and the needs of women affected by violent extremism must be adequately addressed. Korir argues that:

> excluding women from conversations [about CVE] has been a missed opportunity: women often head their families and generally spend more time with their children since they are their primary caregivers, and they spend much of their time in the settlement. For these reasons, they are often the holders of key information related to the men and boys in their lives.[433]

This means that they are often in a unique position to shed light on the drivers of radicalisation and provide key insights into how radicalisation in their communities can be prevented. But it is crucial that women are supported through this process.

Halima Mohammed of the Coast Education Centre – a community-based organisation based in Mombasa that aims to promote human rights through education – explains that although women are in a prime position to observe changing behaviours and attitudes in their children or loved ones, and although this observation may be instinctive, 'the awareness and understanding of the process of radicalization is not. Even if mothers recognize the signs, they often lack the skills needed to intervene. Women need to be equipped and supported in their efforts to prevent their children from joining extremist groups, and also to build their own capacity to reject the influence of extremism and violence'.[434]

Two important issues emerge from the findings of this study in relation to positioning women in P/CVE responses. Firstly, within the context of countries that are still developing and suffer from high rates of poverty, there is a need to develop a nexus between development initiatives and P/CVE strategies in order to unravel the complex web that binds together the drivers, impacts and responses to violent extremism.

As discussed above, women's agency in contexts where poverty and lack of opportunity prevail is extremely limited. The creation of alternatives for women to enable real choices – thereby giving them material agency – is crucial in such settings. These would include initiatives such as the creation of education and employment opportunities for women and youth, access to capital to start small businesses, combating historic marginalisation and alienation, combating poor governance and corruption, and programmes that address the causes of sustained poverty.

Kessels and Nemr explain that 'development assistance can play an important role in strengthening community resilience against violent extremism and reducing many of its enabling factors, including relative deprivation and marginalization'.[435]

Secondly, more attention needs to be given to women's involvement in P/CVE at the grassroots level. Tapping into the roles that women can play to counter violent extremism within their own communities is especially important to build sustainable peace at the local level.

Some of the most effective P/CVE efforts happen at the community level, and the government needs to recognise this by partnering with and supporting women on the ground to achieve some of their objectives. This would also necessitate investing time and resources in peacebuilding initiatives that seek to rebuild trust between different ethnicities and religious groups in Kenya.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

This report has aimed to explore, in the context of relevant sites in Kenya, the roles that women play in relation to violent extremism and P/CVE, the impacts of violent extremism on women, and the efficacy of current responses to violent extremism in as much as they relate to women. In keeping with the study's focus on women, this section provides recommendations that pertain specifically to women in the context of P/CVE interventions in Kenya.

To the government of Kenya

Policy and programming recommendations

- Evaluate current P/CVE and CT strategies and policies for the extent to which women's issues are included, as well as their operational impact on women. The possible implications for promoting radicalisation among women at the community level should be specifically considered.

- Create mechanisms for the accountability of all government role players for their services and functions relating to CT and P/CVE programming, including how the involvement of women and women's issues in P/CVE policy and programming are addressed.

- Specifically review and take action where security actors are abusive and act outside the bounds of the human rights and rule-of-law provisions, and support the safe means through which complaints relating to security actors can be made and investigated.

- Promote the participation of women in the drafting, design, implementation and evaluation of P/CVE policies and programmes.

- Ensure implementation of the relief and recovery pillar of the KNAP with regard to holistic healthcare for women and girls affected by violent extremism, and by incorporating a gender perspective into all disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation efforts.

- Design future P/CVE strategies and national action plans with reference to United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 to acknowledge and address the emerging and active roles of women in violent extremism as actors, enablers, supporters, facilitators and sympathisers.

- Ensure that security agencies are trained to respond effectively to women

affected and impacted by violent extremism within the framework of a CT or P/CVE strategy.

- Increase and avail post-trauma psychological and material support for security officers involved in CT/CVE, and their wives and families.

- Formalise the returnee and rehabilitation programme through the development of comprehensive policies and operating guidelines.

- Prioritise the NCTC's outreach programmes that are specifically aimed at engaging women in affected communities, in conjunction with local women's groups.

- Develop communications strategies that publicise and increase the visibility of available P/CVE initiatives, such as the amnesty programme for returnees.

Socio-economic recommendations

- Provide counselling services to women who have been victimised by violent extremism.

- Provide comprehensive psychosocial support and healthcare for women who have been victims of sexual violence in the context of violent extremism.

- Develop and implement programmes that sensitise women to the early warning signs of children's radicalisation and involvement in violent extremism, and provide reliable safe support for mothers whose children are at risk of radicalisation.

- Provide economic development programmes to allow women in affected areas to empower themselves to address the circumstances faced. This should include augmenting programmes such as the Uwezo Fund.

- Include women's groups in programmes to rebuild relations between communities where they have broken down by working with community leaders, religious leaders and women's groups to iron out prevailing grievances and rebuild trust where it is lacking.

- Increase awareness through better communication of existing economic programmes available for women and youth, such as the Uwezo Fund.

To donors and international actors

- Strengthen the coordination of P/CVE activities in Kenya to ensure that a number of relevant, evidence-based programmes are supported, including specific programmes to address matters relating to women, families, children, young men and young women. Assign funding specifically for gender-related P/CVE programmes.

- Implement strong accountability mechanisms to hold authorities and beneficiaries of funding accountable for programmes and strategies.

- Direct financial support to benefit communities affected by violent extremism, including:

  – Economic development programmes focused on providing job skills, especially directed at women and young men

  – Psychological and material support for victims of violent extremism

  – Local programmes aimed at strengthening local governance, accountability of security and other actors, and adherence to the rule of law

  – Support community programmes to educate and support women and their families to help them understand the risk and resilience factors relating to radicalisation, and offer practical programmes aimed at reducing risk and enhancing resilience, based on research evidence, including this study

- Direct training initiatives to the affected regions, and ensure that funded training programmes for government officials (including security officials) and CSOs include a strong gendered dimension, providing guidance on addressing the specific needs of women and men.

- Build an evidence-based culture and approach to all funded P/CVE. This means ensuring that programmes' designs are informed by context-specific empirical evidence. Programmes should be evaluated, documented and publicly reported on. Sharing results (through appropriate means) should be prioritised for those involved in P/CVE programme delivery.

To civil society organisations

- Strengthen evidence-based approaches to programme design by designing programmes that are based on context-specific empirical research.

- Undertake evaluations, document programme outcomes and share evaluation findings.

- Avoid over-researching the same respondents (women and communities) without them experiencing some benefit from research efforts. Provide feedback to those who have participated in research and ensure that institutions that can offer programme responses are fully informed of the findings.

- Follow up on implementation of recommendations from research.

- Constructively critique and engage the government through various means, including forums for dialogue and partnerships.

To community-based organisations and community leaders

- Promote the participation of community members, especially women, in the design and evaluation of P/CVE programmes.

- Engage government and development actors to ensure a better understanding of local conditions, risk factors and how to promote resilience.

- Promote dialogue, trust building and the resolution of conflict where these issues prevail in communities, and among security and other actors in government.

- Implement information campaigns and discussion forums to increase awareness of violent extremism and its impact and to help community actors to contribute to addressing the problem.

- Help address the stigmatisation of women in the community whose husbands and sons may be implicated in violent extremism.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

For some time, women were perceived simply as the victims of violent extremism. As more attention has been paid to the issue, it has become clear that women play multiple and complex roles in relation to violent extremism, along a spectrum that extends from their roles as perpetrators of violent acts through to their roles in shaping policy to prevent or counter violent extremism.

As actors, women commit, support, facilitate, prevent and counter violent extremist acts. The findings of this study show that the roles women play are intricately connected to their broader socio-economic, individual, cultural and political contexts, but at the same time these roles are deeply nuanced and cannot be generalised across the board. However, the motivation and the extent of this phenomenon requires further interrogation.

Development issues underpin the drivers and impact of violent extremism in Kenya. The development-security nexus is a matter of priority for policymakers addressing this security challenge in the Kenyan context. As such, empowering and engaging women will be key to unlocking women's potential as partners in preventing and responding to violent extremism.

At the same time, the social and psychological impact of violent extremism on women in Kenya requires urgent attention if the cycle of victimisation and violence is to be stopped. This includes efforts aimed at healing the trauma of women who have been affected by violent extremism, and initiatives geared towards repairing tears in the social fabric of Kenyan society.

This study reflects the fact that the challenges in responding to violent extremism in Kenya are linked to difficulties in conceptualising and coordinating P/CVE efforts, insufficient resources, and a perceived lack of government transparency and consistency in communicating and applying responses. But perhaps most importantly it reflects the mistrust between the government and the communities affected by violent extremism – mistrust that has been exacerbated by the hard security approach to violent extremism prioritised by the authorities.

Taking into account the development-security nexus explored in this report, as well as the dynamic formed from the interdependent web of drivers, impacts and responses, it is imperative that stakeholders in the P/CVE field in Kenya adopt a broader socio-economic approach to the problem, but at the same time ensure that efforts at the community level are context-driven and multi-method-based.

Urgent attention is needed to prioritise women in the context of violent extremism in Kenya and to widen the lens through which women's connections with violent extremism are perceived. Failure to do so will hamper efforts to comprehensively address the changing nature of violent extremism as well as the multifaceted impact of violent extremism in Kenya. It would be a missed opportunity to fully engage women in effective efforts to counter violent extremism in society.

Annex 1

Summaries of findings in the geographical areas under study

Tiwi

The small beach town of Tiwi – 20 km south of Mombasa – is a tourist resort in Kwale County, which is situated in southern Kenya on the border with Tanzania. Tiwi had a population of about 19 500 in 2009, of which almost half lived below the poverty line.[436] Women in the FGDs for this study reported widespread narcotics abuse by youths in Tiwi that, according to them, was perpetuating poverty and crime in the area.

Extremism in Tiwi

According to the FGD respondents, extremism in Tiwi manifests in the sudden and sometimes unexplained disappearances of family members who leave to join al-Shabaab in Somalia. One woman lost her brother in 2011 and her family suspects he went to Somalia; although the family reported his absence to the police, it is believed no action was taken.[437] Another respondent explained that her 34-year-old female cousin was radicalised by her husband and left Tiwi to join him in Somalia, where he had become involved in al-Shabaab.[438]

Effect and impact of extremism

Women in Tiwi described how terror attacks in neighbouring towns had had a grave impact on the tourism and fishing industries, which local communities relied on for their livelihood. As a result of the economic downturn, many people have lost their jobs.[439] At the same time, women reported that the disappearance of their husbands and sons – presumably to join al-Shabaab – had forced them into the role of breadwinner to provide for their children.

One respondent spoke of experiencing depression following the disappearance of her son. Unknown people allegedly took him away during Mombasa Republican Council raids, leaving behind his wife with two children.[440]

Violent extremism has also resulted in mistrust and mutual suspicion in the community.[441]

Responses to extremism

Respondents identified three forms of government response to violent extremism: law enforcement, government financial support and the amnesty programme.

According to government officials, the government's security initiatives in the area include the police investigation of violent extremist incidents and security briefings to stakeholders.[442] However, women in the FGDs said government CT efforts were intimidating to communities.[443]

Muslim women said they felt profiled and discriminated against by the police when wearing their *buibui*. They also said the police had picked up people in Ukunda on suspicion of terrorist activities, and those people were not heard from or seen again.[444] Women in Tiwi also mentioned other human rights abuses in the government's security response, alleging that girls had been raped during police raids.[445]

A government respondent in Tiwi noted the involvement of women in peace and security initiatives geared towards countering violent extremism. According to him, women are involved as deputy elders, deputy chiefs and leaders in peace committees (traditional committees that are meant to involve local communities in peace processes).[446]

A government official pointed to the Uwezo Fund as an example of the financial support government provides to women who have been affected by violent extremism.[447] The women respondents mentioned a community initiative that had been established to mitigate the economic blow of violent extremism. Known as merry-go-rounds, women make contributions of between Ksh200 and Ksh300 a month to a savings group and give each other loans. The loans are then used to start small businesses.[448]

Women in the FGDs said the amnesty programme was taking too long to implement; however, they acknowledged that it was a concrete response in Tiwi.[449]

Diani

Diani, also referred to as Ukunda, is a popular tourist destination in Kwale County. Diani has a population of about 62 500 people,[450] and according to the respondents is plagued by high levels of poverty and drug addiction.

Extremism in Diani

One government official explained that violent extremism had taken root in predominantly Muslim areas.[451] Women in the Diani FGD attributed the prevalence of extremism in the area to a lack of understanding about Islam, the misinterpretation of the Koran and the preaching of extremist ideology to vulnerable individuals.[452]

While the government official reported that some women in the area were involved in violent extremism through facilitating M-Pesa (money wallet) transactions

that channel money to the wife of a controversial Muslim cleric to fund terrorist activities,[453] this view was not shared by women in Diani.

According to one respondent, 'women are not involved, maybe the youth'. She argued that the stereotypes about Muslims could contribute to the perception that women may be involved as perpetrators of violent extremism.[454]

Effect and impact of extremism

According to Diani respondents, everyone is affected by violent extremism, including women and children.[455]

In detailing the psychological impact of extremism, respondents said women and their children in Diani were not coping with the stress, fear and grief caused directly or indirectly by extremism. Some respondents reported having relocated from their homes because of the stress associated with the violence where they lived. One woman in the Diani FGD lost her husband a month before this study; she suspects the police killed him. Widespread fear was also sparked by the assassination of a prominent al-Shabaab returnee in Kwale.[456]

The heavy economic burden of violent extremism was emphasised by all respondents. One woman, whose husband was murdered three years ago, allegedly at the hands of the police, now shoulders the burden of providing for their five children.[457] An official in Diani detailed how extremist attacks had resulted in unemployment because of the decline of the tourism industry, with hotels closing down or operating below capacity in the region.[458]

Violent extremism has also negatively impacted the fishing industry, one of the industries in the tourism value chain that communities in this region have historically relied upon for income. A decline in the number of tourists results in a corresponding decrease in demand for fish and the need to find other opportunities.[459]

The social impact of extremism is illustrated by a deterioration in community relations, with women now mistrusting one another.[460] The family unit has suffered, with husbands leaving their families to join al-Shabaab in Somalia.[461]

Government officials also said that crime rates had risen in the absence of a source of livelihood for many.[462] The impact of violent extremism on children's education was also evident in Diani, with a government official indicating that the attacks affected children's education when schools had to be closed.[463]

Responses to extremism

Government initiatives in the Diani region include security initiatives, the amnesty programme, financial support and community outreach initiatives, supported by several major donors. One official reported that returnees were benefiting from the amnesty programme.[464]

A government official pointed out that financial assistance was offered to women, as well as capacity-building support through the provision of basic skills that

had enabled them to start barber shop businesses.[465] Government-community engagement also takes the form of sensitising the public through *barazas* and workshops twice monthly.[466]

According to a government official in the area, women are involved in conceptualising, drafting and implementing these policies, programmes and practices. Women are also employed in security services and peace committees.[467]

Some women in Diani refuted the effectiveness of government efforts. For example, women said that even if they did attend the public *barazas*, they did not speak up because they were afraid of being presumed to be sympathisers or to harbour sympathisers.[468] Women described violent encounters with the police during CT operations but said they were afraid of reporting cases of brutality for fear of victimisation and harassment.[469] However, women concurred with the effectiveness of the returnee programme in Diani, saying it had helped returnees to start plant nurseries.[470]

In Diani, the effectiveness of counselling organised by NGOs such as the Coast Education Centre was highlighted.[471] This organisation, which has been in operation since 2009, works with traumatised and stigmatised women as well as women whose husbands have been killed.[472] One community leader said a widow could hardly cope or speak before attending group meetings and counselling services.[473]

Lamu

Lamu is one of the six counties in the Coast Region, situated in the north-east of Kenya on the border with Somalia. The port town of Lamu is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the oldest Swahili towns in Africa.

Lamu's population is approximately 101 539,[474] with 30% of the population living in poverty.[475]

In this study, Lamu stood out from other regions because of the comparatively higher level of education of the women who took part in the FGDs. In the other areas, with the exception of Garissa, the majority of women in the FGDs had only primary school education and were unable to complete secondary education owing to a lack of money for school fees.[476]

Extremism in Lamu

A government official from Lamu noted that violent extremism emanated from 'young people interacting with some known radicalised persons. They form clubs and are sometimes employed by the terrorists, then they are convinced to join. Then they are introduced to "wrong teachings"'.[477]

In his view, young people who are newly converted to the Islamic faith sometimes end up being more violent than those who are born Muslims.[478] According to this official, young people defend their ideology by causing destruction after they have

undergone radicalisation.[479] He pointed to extremist writings and inscriptions on the walls in Lamu as an open form of propagating extremist messages.[480]

Women in the Lamu FGDs perceived radicalisation as linked to the economic predicament of women in the community. According to them, women in Lamu could be lured into extremist organisations through promises of employment, money and better opportunities elsewhere.

Effect and impact of extremism

The impact of extremism in Lamu is largely economic. According to respondents, the insecurity caused by terrorism has resulted in a decline in tourism and a loss of livelihoods from this industry.[481] Respondents also indicated that terrorism had destroyed the fishing industry due to the imposition of security curfews.[482]

An official pointed out that there was a shortage of basic commodities because vehicles that used to transport food had stopped supplying the area due to the threat of violent extremism, causing food prices to rise.[483]

A government official in Lamu reported that there was an economic burden on women associated with the arrest and detention of family members suspected of terrorism-related crimes. The costs of bail and food for those in police cells are additional costs that women and families might incur.[484]

Respondents also indicated that violent extremism affected their children's education when schools were closed in the aftermath of attacks.[485]

Responses to extremism

Officials in Lamu elaborated on the government's reactive measures, such as CT initiatives, and proactive measures, such as community engagement and the provision of economic assistance. According to these officials, the deployment of security officers to the area has increased from 800 to around 1 500, not including the military personnel hosted in five military camps nearby.[486] In Kiunga, a ward in Lamu County, KDF troops outnumber the citizens.[487]

The government has also provided resources in support of CT initiatives, such as helicopters for aerial surveillance, motor vehicles for administrative offices and motorbikes to enable chiefs to access remote parts of the county in a bid to increase security.[488] The national government has posted assistant county commissioners to Faza, Kizingitini, Kiunga, Amu, Hindi, Witu and Mpeketoni in Lamu County to assist in CT initiatives.[489]

Government officials in Lamu said security measures taken to combat violent extremism were in line with the law, contrary to allegations that had been made against the ATPU and the Kenyan government more generally.

Government officials also said women were part of the response to extremism, and gave the example of the ATPU's use of female detectives in Malindi.[490]

The government's more proactive response to extremism in Lamu includes *barazas* and workshops in communities twice a month, where citizens are sensitised about violent extremism and taught about the dangers of joining al-Shabaab.[491]

An official described how young people who disseminated counter-extremism messages were recognised by the government and encouraged to spread these messages at the local level.[492] Officials in the government said a lobby group for women's issues and concerns in Lamu was part of discussions to address all the problems in the community, including those relating to terrorism.[493]

Another official mentioned the Nyumba Kumi initiative, which decentralises security to the communities and prioritises their needs as part of government's community engagement.[494]

In terms of economic relief to the people of Lamu, government officials said many projects were under way.[495] The national government has been providing food relief in Kiunga and to the people living in the Boni Forest.[496]

Woman respondents in Lamu noted that contrary to government reports, CT initiatives had worsened the situation, equating the government's CT response with police brutality, profiling, disrespect, harassment and the disappearances of suspects.[497]

They said the government's CT approach had fostered mistrust between neighbours and community members because people had begun spying on and reporting each other to the authorities. Profiling had also, according to women in Lamu, brought about tensions and lack of trust between Muslims and non-Muslims.[498]

Women in Lamu also expressed 'research fatigue' – in other words, they are tired of repeatedly participating in research without seeing any results or changes to the situation in their communities or individual lives. This is largely due to the saturation of the CVE environment and the various actors' failure to coordinate their efforts or successfully channel the information obtained from research into action that might change the situation in these communities.

Mpeketoni

Mpeketoni is an inland town in Lamu County with an estimated population of 50 000,[499] of whom 31% live below the poverty line.[500]

Mpeketoni was the only town in the study where Christian women took part in the FGDs.

Extremism in Mpeketoni

Respondents described an attack on Mpeketoni by al-Shabaab that took place on 15 June 2014. The attack lasted for over 10 hours with al-Shabaab using knives and rocket-propelled grenades to kill, injure and destroy property.[501]

Women in Mpeketoni also reported that some women from the community had been blackmailed and intimidated into joining violent extremist groups, while others had been kidnapped by the extremists.[502]

Effect and impact of extremism

Respondents described how fewer traders were bringing food into the area, out of fear that they would be attacked en route, with a knock-on effect on food supply and cost.[503]

Respondents also indicated that the attacks had disrupted their children's education as schools were forced to close and people were displaced following the attack.[504]

Women also reported that the attacks had created mistrust among people in the community and heightened the differences between Christians and Muslims. The perception that Muslims were terrorists had soured relations between Muslims and Christians.[505] Tensions in the community had increased to such an extent immediately following the terrorist attacks in June 2014 that Muslim and Christian children were fighting at school, accusing each other of the attacks.[506]

Responses to extremism

The government's security response to violent extremism has included the posting of additional assistant county commissioners to the area to better respond to terrorism.[507]

Women in the community, however, described the government's security response as discriminatory and corrupt. Some Muslim women in Mpeketoni described, for instance, how invasive body searches conducted by police left them feeling harassed; however, others said they did not mind being searched because they wanted to feel safe.[508]

Muslim women dressed in the *buibui* reported feeling profiled and discriminated against, since Christian women were not being searched.[509] Citing how security officials selectively searched vehicles at checkpoints, one respondent in Mpeketoni referred to terrorism as 'a business'.[510]

Women in Mpeketoni also noted that the police were incapable of responding quickly to terrorist attacks because they lacked accessible weapons and nearby reinforcements.[511]

Mpeketoni respondents suggested that the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, which visited the area soon after the June 2014 attack to conduct a peacebuilding forum, should conduct regular visits to the area.[512]

Community-based initiatives in Mpeketoni have also been part of the response to violent extremism. Some women have participated in trauma counselling organised by NGOs such as the Catholic Relief Services.[513] Other women described how sensitisation campaigns organised by the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics, Catholic Relief Services and others had helped to ease tensions in the communities.

Interfaith peace dialogues for children were organised in schools to ease tensions between Christian and Muslim children.[514]

Mombasa

Mombasa County is considered to be the heart of Kenya's coastal tourism. Mombasa has a population of 1.2 million,[515] with 44% of its population living below the poverty line.[516]

Extremism in Mombasa

Respondents spoke of the attacks carried out in Mombasa by extremists, including that of an attack by three young women on a police station in Mombasa in 2016.[517] Respondents believe youth who migrate from other coastal parts of Kenya are radicalised in Mombasa.[518] One woman noted that she had seen young people leaving her community to join al-Shabaab in Somalia because of poverty and peer pressure.[519]

Women in Mombasa also spoke about the disappearance of relatives who had left their families to join al-Shabaab. They described how some women were pressured by their husbands to join them in Somalia. A respondent from Mombasa said her husband travelled to Somalia to join al-Shabaab without her knowledge. She reported having received a call from him asking her to join him after disappearing for months. A government official in Mombasa reported that once radicalised, women in the area provided support for extremists.[520] A female government official in Mombasa said:

> Before, there was the general perception that women were simply taken as wives and cooks but now they are used to collect information and conduct surveillance because they are viewed with less suspicion. Women are being radicalised because of the way they are brought up as Muslims and the fact that Muslim women are taught to accept everything that their husbands, fathers and or brothers say.[521]

Effect and impact of extremism

Violent extremism has created suspicion among community members in Mombasa, as well as mistrust of Muslim men and women.[522] The government is aware of this strain in community relations due to extremism. A government official noted that stigma was attached to the families of terror suspects and perpetrators, with people in the community not wanting to associate with them and treating them with suspicion.[523]

According to a government official, there has been an increase in prostitution and petty crime as a result of extremism.[524]

A state of fear has gripped many in Mombasa. Some respondents said people were afraid to attend places of worship for fear of police raids, and people were constantly in touch with family and friends to check on their well-being.[525] A woman

whose husband left Kenya to join al-Shabaab said she moved to a different part of the city for fear that he might come back looking for her.[526]

Respondents said their fear of security agencies came from experiences of police brutality, the disappearances of suspects (which they also attribute to security agencies), and perceptions that security forces were not investigating and releasing suspects.[527]

A woman in Mombasa reported that she was unable to cope with the grief and stress of losing her son to violent extremism.[528] Another said that she now suffered from high blood pressure and diabetes brought on by the grief of losing her son.[529]

Respondents in Mombasa experienced economic challenges as a result of extremism. One woman said she had become the breadwinner and had to support her family because her husband disappeared, suspected of joining al-Shabaab. She has a one-year-old and 10-month-old child to take care of.[530]

Responses to extremism

A government official in Mombasa reported that the Kenyan government was engaged in security-related responses, such as arrests and prosecutions, as well as UN-sponsored initiatives to support and help rehabilitate returnees.[531]

Government responses have not been favourably received in Mombasa. According to woman respondents, the police conduct frequent searches and police raids have become commonplace. For these women, police raids are associated with the arrest and disappearance of family members, harassment and police brutality. One woman said she witnessed her husband being removed from a mosque by the police in 2014, and that he had not been heard from since.[532]

Another woman told of how her husband was arrested on his way to work because the police suspected him of being an al-Shabaab sympathiser. The women also shared stories of being profiled and subjected to searches because of the way they dressed. They said they had lost trust in the government.[533] Some Muslim women in Mombasa, however, felt that the police searches were justified to guarantee their safety.[534]

Respondents in Mombasa also spoke about community-level efforts to counter extremism. One woman who works to support women in communities affected by violent extremism reported that she had helped a female returnee from Somalia.[535] Besides this, community projects that partner with NGOs, such as the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya, sensitise the youth about extremism.[536]

Eastleigh

Eastleigh is a suburb within Pumwani Ward in Nairobi County, to the east of the Nairobi central business district. Eastleigh has a population of approximately 348 778, predominantly made up of Kenyan Somalis and immigrants from Somalia.[537] It is divided into Eastleigh North and Eastleigh South, and further

partitioned into three areas: Section I (Juja Road area), Section II (the commercial centre) and Section III (situated towards Jogoo Road).[538] In 2016, the US government singled out Eastleigh as a high-risk area that should be avoided.[539]

Extremism in Eastleigh

Eastleigh has been severely impacted by terrorism. The area has experienced over 10 terrorist attacks since late 2011, with Sections I and II hardest hit between 2011 and 2013.[540] The extremists used grenades, improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers in these attacks, killing at least 25 people and destroying property. Some of the woman respondents had witnessed this violence, such as the attack on Gikomba Market in 2014 and a minibus grenade attack in Eastleigh.[541]

Effect and impact of extremism

Violent extremism-related insecurity in Eastleigh has led to business closures, a reduction in investment and people having to leave for safer areas.[542] This has also resulted in declining employment activities, especially for casual workers, and an increase in the cost of living.[543]

Social activities in the area have declined, including attendance at churches and mosques, especially after attacks. Women in Eastleigh reported that they lived in perpetual fear for their children's safety owing to potential violence in the area; they imposed curfews on their children, making sure they were home by 6.00 pm.[544]

Responses to extremism

The government conducted Operation Usalama Watch in March 2014 following two terrorist attacks. This CT operation has been criticised for human rights violations by human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.[545]

Women in Eastleigh were vocal about the harassment and intimidation they experienced at the hands of the police carrying out CT measures.[546] They reported that young people had been arrested in the area merely on suspicion of being al-Shabaab sympathisers.[547] Muslim women reported that they felt profiled and discriminated against by the police as well as members of the public because of the way they dressed. One woman was singled out and referred to as 'al-Shabaab' when she disembarked from a public-service vehicle; she attributes this to the way she looks and how she was dressed.[548]

There were also reports from Eastleigh that women have been raped during police raids and other CT operations, including Operation Usalama Watch.[549] According to the women in the FGD, some women who were pregnant during Operation Usalama Watch suffered miscarriages as a result. The women also reported that after the operation, families were not allowed to visit their relatives, who had been rounded up into a stadium.[550]

Majengo

Majengo is an informal settlement on the outskirts of Nairobi, within the Pumwani Ward. It is notorious for high levels of commercial sex work and extreme poverty;[551] more recently it has become known as a place where young people are recruited into violent extremism.[552]

Extremism in Majengo

Women from Majengo blamed poverty, unemployment and a lack of opportunities for the youth in their community for the radicalisation of their children and the inducement to join al-Shabaab.[553] They noted that al-Shabaab was exploiting these circumstances by promising young people jobs, money and 'free stuff'.[554] A well-known female recruiter in Majengo lures the youth – young men in particular – to join al-Shabaab with the promise of jobs.[555] One woman shared how her son, who had joined al-Shabaab after being offered employment, became a suicide bomber and died at the age of 19 during an attack on a hotel in Somalia.[556]

Women in the FGDs reported that young people in these areas had been radicalised through mosques and the peer pressure of friends. One woman explained how her nephew, whom she had raised since he was a toddler after his mother died, left for Somalia when he was a teenager. She explained that his behaviour and attitude began to change after he attended a local madrassa for a few months; he became insulting towards her and criticised the way she dressed, saying she should be covering up.[557]

There were also reports of women and girls at risk of radicalisation from their husbands and partners who had become involved with al-Shabaab; some have left to join their loved ones in Somalia.[558] Many of the girls from Majengo who have followed men to Somalia are 'as young as 16 and 19'.[559]

Effect and impact of extremism

Women in Majengo live in constant fear of terror attacks and have to be constantly vigilant for their own safety and that of their families.[560]

Muslim women reported facing harassment and stigma from other community members as well as their own family members, especially if their children or husbands were suspected of being involved with al-Shabaab.[561] They are afraid to form support groups because they are already viewed and treated with fear and suspicion.[562]

Women in Majengo also reported doing odd jobs, like cleaning people's houses, to help them cope financially after losing a breadwinner to violent extremism.[563] To support each other financially, women have formed savings schemes such as 'merry-go-rounds' to provide loans to each other.[564] Some mosques in Majengo help to pay the school fees of those children whose fathers have left for Somalia.[565]

Women in Majengo reported that there are few counselling services in their communities to help them with their depression and trauma.[566]

Responses to extremism

Women in Majengo were critical of the government's CT efforts, saying they had observed that current CT responses were counterproductive and were leading to increased radicalisation.[567] They reported being stigmatised, harassed and profiled by the police on a regular basis, of whom they were now afraid.[568] They also described how their sons and brothers had been 'taken' by unknown individuals – whom they believed to be security agents – and had not been found.[569]

Kisumu

Kisumu County is located along the shore of Lake Victoria in western Kenya, and is home to 952 645 people.[570] Kisumu County performs below the national average on most socio-economic indicators: poverty is prevalent and manifests in various socio-economic outcomes, such as poor nutrition, health and education, as well as lack of access to basic services. Youth unemployment is a major challenge in Kisumu.[571]

The city of Kisumu is Kenya's third largest city, serving as a trading and transportation hub for western Kenya.[572] Fishing, agriculture and some limited opportunities in commercial ventures and public services are the sources of work for the majority of the population in Kisumu.[573]

Extremism in Kisumu

A security official noted that every community in Kisumu had had some members radicalised by violent extremists.[574] Reports suggest that the youth in the region are vulnerable to recruitment because of the high levels of poverty and unemployment.[575]

Effect and impact of extremism

Government officials reported that there had been no violent extremist attacks in Kisumu but that the town had been indirectly affected by violent extremism through the recruitment of youth from the area.

Responses to extremism

An official in Kisumu said the government was working with communities and other stakeholders in efforts to counter radicalisation and violent extremism.[576]

Busia

Busia County is in western Kenya, bordering Uganda, and has a population of 743 946.[577] Busia has one of the highest income inequality levels and worst access to essential services levels of the 47 counties in Kenya.[578]

Extremism in Busia

Government officials in Busia reported that there had been no terrorist attacks in

Busia County. However, they noted that the area was a possible transit point for radicalised youths leaving or entering Kenya, as well as an area where extremist organisations carried out recruitment.[579] A government official noted that a few years ago, some young men were intercepted on a bus travelling from Mombasa suspected of being on their way to join an extremist group.[580]

Responses to extremism

A government official noted that pre-emptive efforts had been used to deter violent extremism from occurring in Busia County.[581] Immigration officials noted that the government was working collaboratively with security agencies, such as the police, through information and intelligence sharing, and through meetings of various security agencies.[582]

Garissa

Garissa County is in north-eastern Kenya and has a population of 623 060.[583] The majority (59%) of the population live below the poverty line,[584] while 74% of Garissa County residents have no formal education, with only 6% having completed secondary education and above.[585] The Dadaab refugee camp in Garissa County has a Somali refugee population of 256 868.[586]

Extremism in Garissa

The government has called for the closure of the Dadaab refugee camp citing security concerns, including recruitment of al-Shabaab fighters and the fact that it has allegedly been used to launch and plan some of the attacks that have been perpetrated in Kenya by the militant group.[587]

An attack on Garissa University in April 2015 killed 148 people, mostly students, and injured more than 79.

A government official from Garissa reported that, in his experience, most perpetrators of violent extremism were males between the ages of 16 and 25.[588] However, there were reports of women in the refugee camps acting as recruiters for al-Shabaab, as well as participating in the logistical processes for violent extremist organisations, such as arranging transport and financial support for recruitment in Garissa.[589]

Effect and impact of extremism

In the aftermath of the Garissa University attack, businesses have closed down or relocated and livelihoods have been destroyed. There were also alleged reports of al-Shabaab blocking lorries carrying goods in order to levy charges/taxes and confiscating livestock from community members.[590]

Women described how the attack on the university had damaged social cohesion and created discord among people from different communities,[591] creating 'disaffection between Muslims and non-Muslims'.[592] A government official in Garissa pointed out that the deaths of women's husbands and children as a result of violent

extremism had led to immense trauma for those affected. In Garissa, the heavy security presence causes anxiety and there is widespread fear of the security forces and law-enforcement agencies.[593]

A government official in Garissa also described the psychological impact of violent extremism on security officials and their families, especially on those wives, husbands and children who had lost loved ones in the line of duty, protecting citizens from violent extremism or fighting against violent extremists.[594]

Responses to extremism

A government official in Garissa explained that a previous disconnect between the police and communities regarding government responses to violent extremism had been bridged by community forums and community-policing initiatives.[595]

Community policing, which entails the police working hand in hand with the community – for instance through information sharing and reporting of suspicious activities – is reported to have helped counteract the perception that the police are the enemy, and has led to a decline in the number of terror-related attacks. At the sub-county level, there were reports of women playing roles as deputy elders, deputy chiefs and leaders in local peace committees.[596]

Despite government reports that the disconnect between CT initiatives and the community had been bridged, women in Garissa described government CT initiatives in terms of police brutality, disrespect, harassment and profiling – all of which, they reported, had made the situation worse. Women from FGDs in Garissa described how their sons and brothers had been 'taken' by unknown individuals – whom they believed to be security agents – and had not been found.

Women in Garissa spoke about the disappearance of young people in the area, which they believed was due to victimisation, profiling and arrest by the police.[597] Muslim women clothed in *buibui* reported that they felt profiled and discriminated against by police because of the way they dressed.

Women in Garissa had formed self-help groups before the attacks, but some of these no longer worked because of tensions in the community following the university attack.[598] There are no readily available counselling services in the area, so women in Garissa take comfort in and rely on their faith to cope.[599]

Annex 2: Questionnaires

Focus group questionnaire for women

Date of focus group:
Location:
People present during interview:
Language of interview:
Was the informed consent procedure completed: Yes/No

Questions:
1. Have you encountered terrorism in your community? (Note: prompt about possible spread of harmful narrative as well) (Context)
    – Can you describe the nature of the experience? (Note that government responses to terrorism may be reflected in the response)
2. Through what processes, in your experience, do people become involved in terrorist activity and why?
    – Through what processes do women become involved in terrorist activity?
3. In your experience, has terrorism brought about any changes in your community?
    – How has this benefited or damaged your community? (Note the physical, psychological and economic impact)
    – If it has caused damage, how do you cope?
    – In your experience, how do other women in your community cope with problems caused by terrorism?
4. In what ways are women participating in terrorism in your community?
5. In your view, how are girls involved or impacted by terrorism?
6. In your view, what impact, if any, have counterterrorism efforts had in your community?
7. What do you think needs to be done to address the problems experienced?
    – What are women doing to address the situation? Are these activities working?
    – What kind of support do you need to improve the situation in your community?

Life-history questionnaire for returnees

Date of interview:
Location:
People present during interview:
Age of respondent:
Language of interview:
Was the informed consent procedure completed: Yes/No

Questions:

1. Family and early childhood
    1.1. Where were you born, and date and place of birth?
    1.2. Did you grow up with both your parents? If not, why not?
    1.3. Did you have other carers growing up (e.g. grandparents, extended family)?
    1.4. How many siblings do you have? What is your position in the family? What was/is your relationship with your siblings like?
    1.5. Please describe your childhood to me.
        Researcher to prompt about the following if necessary:
        – Home circumstances – rural, urban, settlement type, financial circumstances of family (was there enough money for school fees, food, clothes etc.)
        – Did you have a stable home or did you move geographically? If so, how many times, and from where to where?
        – What did you do for fun growing up?
        – Who did you socialise with growing up (extended family, friends of parents, school friends etc.)?
        – Who made the rules in the family?
        – Were you punished when you did something wrong growing up? If so, what was the method of punishment (physical, verbal, emotional)? Who did the punishing? How severe was the punishment?
        – Was there any parental substance abuse or domestic violence in the home?
        – Was there any loss/death of parents or other family members?
2. Experiences at school
    2.1. Did you attend school?
        – What type of school – public/government, private, religious (Christian or Islamic)?
        – What was the emphasis at the school you attended (regular curriculum, religious teachings)?
        – How many years did you attend school? What grade did you reach?
    2.2. Please describe your relationship with your peers at school, including any intimate relationships and any instances of bullying.
    2.3. Please describe your relationships with your teachers, including

discipline/physical abuse at school.

    2.4. Did you attend a tertiary institution? If so, what did you study and did you complete your studies?

3. Post-school experiences

    3.1. Have you ever been employed?
- If so: when, for how long, in what job, and why did you leave that job?
- If unemployed: did you stay at home or did you actively seek work?

    3.2. Are you currently, or have you ever been, married?

    3.3. What has been the quality of your intimate relationships – support, abuse (verbal, controlling behaviour, physical violence), economic dependence on spouse?

    3.4. Have you ever suffered the loss or death of a spouse/intimate partner? If so, in what circumstances?

    3.5. Do you have any children? If so, how many?

    3.6. Have you ever suffered the loss/death of a child? If so, in what circumstances?

    3.7. With whom, where and under what circumstances do you currently live?

    3.8. Have you ever used or abused substances (drugs, alcohol)?

    3.9. What do you do for fun, relaxation, and recreation?

    3.10. What is the current state of your mental and physical health?

4. Identity

    4.1. Was your family religious when you were growing up? Which religion did you practise? Was anyone in your family actively involved in your religion or considered a religious leader?

    4.2. Did you have contact with people from other religions while you were growing up (at school or socially)? Did you have friends from other religions while you were growing up?

    4.3. Growing up, did you live in an area where your religion was a minority? If so, did you ever feel discriminated against because of your religion?

    4.4. What is your current religion? How important is your religion to you?

    4.5. Have you ever converted from one religion to another? If so, what were your reasons for converting?

    4.6. Do you believe your religion is under threat?
- If yes, what type of threat (discrimination, violence, ideological)? Who is the main agent of the threat (government, other enemy, external enemy)?

    4.7. What do you feel about other religions? Do you have friends from other religions? Would you ever marry someone from another religion?

    4.8. What ethnic/tribal group do you belong to? How important is it for you to belong to this particular ethnic/tribal group?

    4.9. Do you feel discriminated against for belonging to this particular ethnic/tribal group?

    4.10. Do you believe that your tribal/ethnic group is currently under threat?
- If yes, what type of threat (discrimination, violence, ideological)? Who

is the main agent of the threat (government, other enemy, external enemy)?

    4.11. What do you feel about people from other ethnic/tribal groups? Do you have friends from other ethnic/tribal groups? Would you ever marry someone from another ethnic/tribal group?

5. Political experience

    5.1. Did your family ever discuss politics while you were growing up?

    5.2. Was anyone in your family actively involved in politics? If yes, in what capacity?

    5.3. What do you feel about the current government?

6. Involvement and experiences in an extremist organisation

    6.1. At what age did you become involved in an extremist organisation?

    6.2. Can you describe the circumstances and thought processes that led you to become involved in an extremist organisation?
        Researcher to probe:
        – Was it a gradual process over time (if so, over how long?), or a specific event/experience that prompted you to join?
        – Who introduced you to the organisation?
        – What emotion best captures your decision to join the organisation (e.g. anger, fear, guilt, contempt, hatred)?
        – Did you join for yourself, for your family, for your community or for your religion?

    6.3. What was your primary reason for joining the organisation (i.e. religious, economic, political, adventure, personal)? Did you travel to join the group? Can you describe your journey there?

    6.4. Was anyone in your family aware of your involvement?
        – If yes, who? Did they support your involvement?
        – If no, what was their reaction when they found out?

    6.5. Did you join the group with anyone else?

    6.6. Did you recruit anyone else (including family) to join the organisation?

    6.7. Did you feel a sense of belonging once you joined the organisation?
        – If yes, can you describe what aspects of the organisation or people in the organisation gave you this sense of belonging?

    6.8. Can you describe what your life was like while you were a part of the organisation?
        Researcher to probe:
        – Living conditions – both in Kenya and if sent to another country (accommodation, meals, clothing, how did you receive female sanitary ware, sanitation etc.).
        – Did you enjoy being part of this organisation? (Depending on whether they joined voluntarily or forcibly)
        – Was there any education or training provided by the organisation (religious, technical, physical, military, explosives etc.)?
        – What kind of activities were you involved in (e.g. domestic tasks,

training, making munitions, carrying out terrorist activities etc.)? What role did you play in the organisation (educator, trainer, fighter, cook, cleaner, messenger etc.)?

– Was there a hierarchy in the organisation? If so, who (men or women or both) were the leaders? Who did you report to or take orders from?
– Did you experience any abuse (emotional, verbal, physical, sexual) while in the organisation?
– Did you get married to any of the group's members/leaders?
– Did you have any children while you were in the group?

7. Leaving the extremist organisation

7.1. Can you explain why and how you left the extremist organisation? Researcher to probe:
– Was it a gradual process over time (if so, over how long?), or a specific event/experience/person/ideology that prompted your decision to return home?
– Was the organisation (or anyone in the organisation) aware of your decision to return home, or did you leave in secret? If you left in secret, did anyone assist you to leave?
– Did you leave with your child(ren) (For those who became pregnant while in the group)

7.2. Can you describe your journey home?

7.3. Can you describe the reaction of your family and community when you returned home?

7.4. Did your family and community accept your child (for those who had children while in the group)?

7.5. Do you still feel yourself to be a part of the organisation, or have you severed ties with the organisation?
– If you still feel a part of the organisation, are you in contact with the organisation and do you continue to support their cause? Has this affected your standing in your family or in the community? Are you ever asked to take on tasks related to the organisation in the community?
– If you have severed ties with the organisation, has this affected your standing in your family or in the community? Are you fearful of the organisation?

8. Life after returning home

8.1. Can you describe what your life has been like since you returned home?

8.2. Are you currently employed or looking for work? If not, how are you spending your time?

8.3. What is your perception of the organisation now that you are back home?

8.4. Would you ever consider:
– Returning to active involvement in the organisation? If yes, why?
– Recruiting other young people to join the organisation? If yes, why?

       – Joining community groups that try to persuade young people not to join such organisations? If yes, why?

  8.5. How do you think organisations like the one you were part of have impacted on your community?

  8.6. What do you think of the current initiatives in your community that work to counter extremism/the activities of organisations such as those you joined?

       Researcher to probe:

       – Do you think they are targeting the right people?

       – Do you think their methods are effective?

       – Are you aware of the government amnesty programme? Are you part of it? What do you think specifically about such government-led initiatives?

  8.7. What do you think should be done in your community about groups like the one you were part of?

  8.8. What kind of support do you think is needed in your community and for women like you to respond to the actions of groups like the one you were part of?

Questionnaire for civil society organisations

Date of focus group:
Location:
People present during interview:
Language of interview:
Was the informed consent procedure completed: Yes/No

Questions:

1. How are civil society organisations currently contributing to preventing and responding to violent extremism in Kenya?
2. What interventions are specifically focused on (1) matters relating to gender, or (2) focused on women and girls specifically?
3. How do current civil society programmes specifically identify what roles you think women play in violent extremism and terrorism?
4. Do you think that the many roles that women and girls may play, and the impacts on them, are fully addressed?
5. What are the current general strengths and weaknesses of civil society programmes relating to preventing and responding to the threat of violent extremism?
6. In what ways do donors and civil society actors work with or complement government efforts in addressing radicalisation and terrorism in Kenya? Is this sufficient, and what else should be done?
7. In your view, what impact are current counterterrorism efforts having? Is this sufficient, and what more needs to be done?

8. What are your recommendations for future actions to address women and girls, and violent extremism in Kenya?

Questionnaire for government officials

Date of interview:
Location:
People present during interview:
Language of interview:
Was the informed consent procedure completed: Yes/No

Questions:
1. Can you describe to us what the government understands by the concept of violent extremism?
2. How does violent extremism manifest in Kenya?
3. In your view, how has violent extremism impacted on women and girls in Kenya in general?
4. In your views, what are the different roles that women and girls play in the context of terrorism in Kenya? How do you know this?
5. Which regions and communities have been directly and most significantly affected by terrorist activity?
6. From your knowledge, what are the current government initiatives to respond to terrorism in Kenya and affected communities?
    6.1. Are these CT strategies working? (RQ3)
    6.2. Are current CT strategies gendered? Are you working with women in your CT efforts?
7. Are women (government or otherwise) involved in conceptualising, formulating, drafting, or implementing government programmes or initiatives to respond to terrorism in Kenya?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current CT/CVE policies and programmes?
9. Do current policies and programmes adequately address the many ways that women and girls are involved or affected?
10. What more, in your view, should be done in relation to empowering women and girls in affected communities? Who should do this?
    10.1. What kind of support do women need to respond to terrorism?
    10.2. What kind of support does the government need to respond to terrorism?

Questionnaire for donors

Date of interview:
Location:
People present during interview:
Language of interview:
Was the informed consent procedure completed: Yes/No

Questions:

1. What roles are donors playing in countering terrorism in Kenya?
2. What role is being played by donors in countering violent extremism?
3. Have these efforts been effective, in your view?
4. How much do you know about government efforts to address/counter radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya?
5. In what ways do donors and civil society actors work with or complement government efforts in addressing radicalisation and terrorism in Kenya?
6. What impact have your counter-terrorism efforts had on women?
7. Do current interventions by relevant actors adequately respond to the needs of women impacted by terrorism?
8. What more, in your view, should be done by donors to respond to the radicalisation of women in Kenya?
9. What more, in your view, should be done by donors to respond to the threat of terrorism in affected communities?
10. What kind of support do women need to respond to terrorism?
11. What kind of support does the government need to respond to terrorism?

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About this monograph

This study seeks to understand how women in Kenya are involved in violent extremism and in efforts to prevent and counter it. It also explores how women are affected by and respond to extremism. The findings show the multifaceted impact of violent extremism on women and their communities. There is also a complex set of dynamics that influence how women become actively involved as perpetrators or, more commonly, as supporters and facilitators of violent extremism. The study shows that more must be done to include women in programmes that aim to prevent and counter violent extremism in Kenya.

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