Preventing violent extremism in Kenya
Why women's needs matter

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Violent extremism has multiple impacts on the lives of women that are compounded by the pressures of poverty and related development factors. Government, donors and NGOs have taken steps to counter and prevent violent extremism in Kenya, but many of these responses are gender neutral and do not sufficiently address women's needs. The failure to prioritise women will hamper efforts to comprehensively address violent extremism, and will miss opportunities to engage women in preventing terrorism.

Kenya faces a persistent and severe terror threat characterised by targeted and indiscriminate attacks both within its borders and in neighbouring Somalia. In 2016 the Global Terrorism Index measured the impact of terrorism on Kenya at 6.578 out of 10, ranking Kenya 19th out of 130 countries most impacted by terrorism in 2015, with the attacks attributed to al-Shabaab.[1]

Assessments of the nature and extent of violent extremism and related insecurity in Kenya, or elsewhere for that matter, cannot be effective without evaluating how women are affected. This is due to the integral roles they play in society generally, as well as to extremist groups' increasing reliance on women to play certain roles and carry out certain activities. It follows that women should be a fundamental part of the response to violent extremism. They have more recently been recognised internationally as being central to counter-terrorism (CT) responses, and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 of 2000 takes cognisance of the importance of women's rights and gender sensitivities in responses to conflict.[2]

In the Kenyan context the key question is: to what extent are gender sensitivities and women's issues addressed in the framework of responses to violent extremism?

> The grief of losing a loved one – whether from death, disappearance, or abandonment to join al-Shabaab – has a profound psychological impact

This report is one of three publications on the results of an empirical study on women and violent extremism in Kenya. The full study is presented in the ISS monograph, *Violent extremism in Kenya: why women are a priority*.[3] This report profiles the impact on women, as well as women's experiences of government and other responses to violent extremism, based on 108 interviews with women from communities affected by violent extremism, returnees, civil society organisations (CSOs), community leaders and organisers, government officials and donors. The background and methodology of the study are detailed in the monograph.

Impact of violent extremism at the personal and family levels

Emotional and psychological impact

Although an assessment of the psychological impact of violent extremism is beyond the scope of this study, there is evidence from respondents that violent extremism can have serious mental (and subsequently physical) health implications.[4] Several women in focus group discussions (FGDs) referred to themselves or others as being 'depressed' (including in the accounts given below). This is, of course, not a clinical diagnosis but often a description of their feelings of unhappiness, stress, sadness, despondency, despair, etc.

The grief of losing a loved one to violent extremism – whether from death, disappearance, or abandonment to join al-Shabaab – has a profound psychological and emotional impact, described by the women affected as depression, deep sadness, despair, distress, anxiety and fear.[5] This trauma has rendered women 'the biggest victims' of the ongoing terror threat posed by al-Shabaab in Kenya.[6]

Another finding of this study was the impact of violent extremism on the families of members of security services, especially the deep trauma of those who have lost loved ones who died protecting citizens from violent extremism or fighting against violent extremists.[7] Security officials noted that this is a challenge within the security enforcement community, as post-traumatic counselling and other support facilities for the affected families are not sufficiently accessible for officers. This issue needs further exploration if the full impact of violent extremism on women is to be understood and suitable responses developed.

Sexual violence

Returnees and government officials reported that violent extremists perpetrated sexual violence. All returnees described being sexually abused by fighters during their time with al-Shabaab; reports indicate that while the women in the camps were forced to use contraceptives the men who raped them did not always use condoms, resulting in at least one of the returnees' contracting HIV. An Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU) investigator reported that girls who travelled to Somalia to join al-Shabaab – having been lured there through Facebook – were often used 'to provide sex to fighters so the fighters do not think about going back home'.[8]

Apart from rape, forced marriage to extremist fighters was also reported. A senior police investigator in Nairobi reported that 2% of cases handled countrywide involve girls between the ages of 14 and 16 being recruited and then forced to marry fighters. He described a 2008 case in which two 16-year-old girl recruits were forced to marry violent extremists whom they had never met; both were widowed at a young age.[9] These young girls were then forced to marry other fighters because 'when a woman loses her husband in Somalia, she is passed on to another man'.[10]

Sexual violence was also reported as having occurred during police raids and other CT operations. During Operation Usalama Watch in 2014 it was reported that some pregnant women had suffered miscarriages as a result of the operation.[11] It was unclear whether the alleged perpetrators were security agents or citizens taking advantage of the confusion of the raids and the vulnerability of the women caught up in them.

> All returnees described being sexually abused by fighters during their time with al-Shabaab

The likelihood of psychological trauma resulting from rape or kidnapping has been well documented. Akwash, for instance, states that impaired memory and concentration, as well as recurring fear and anxiety, are among the psychological impacts of kidnapping;[12] while 'devastating mental health problems' are 5.5 times more likely to occur among rape survivors than the general population.[13]

One of the returnees interviewed for this study (see her story in Box 1), 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 is currently receiving counselling and is on antiretrovirals (ARVs), but one of the other returnees reported that she was too afraid to seek counselling, putting her at risk of a range of mental and physical health problems.

Threats to physical safety

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: 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 that of a mentally ill woman.[14]

In Nairobi women described their experiences of an attack on Gikomba market in 2014 and a minibus grenade attack in Eastleigh.[15] In Garissa the women had

witnessed the attack on Garissa University College, where 148 people were killed.[16] Women also reported being caught in firefights between the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) and al-Shabaab.[17] Some women had lost relatives and friends as a result of these violent attacks.[18]

Fear and anxiety

Women in the affected communities live in perpetual fear – for themselves and for their families – of violent attacks, stigmatisation or reprisals by community members and extremists. This trauma reverberates

Box 1: Amina's story (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 work while in 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 gave 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 would 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 was 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.

through the different aspects of their lives, and influences their day-to-day interactions.

Women in Eastleigh fear for their children's safety owing to the potential for violence in that area; they impose curfews on their children, making sure they are home by 6pm daily.[19] Similarly, in Majengo women are afraid of retaliatory terrorist attacks and are constantly vigilant.[20] In Diani some women have relocated due to the violence in the areas where they had lived; they described how they were not coping with the stress and fear in their daily lives.

Many women – particularly in the Coastal communities – expressed a fear of retaliatory attacks by returnees. However, the returnees themselves are reported to be living in fear of both security agencies and al-Shabaab operatives, following the assassination of a prominent returnee in Kwale; many returnees have gone into hiding as a result.[21]

Fear of security agencies and law enforcement officers is also expressed repeatedly in the findings. In Garissa the heavy presence of security officials causes widespread anxiety,[22] while Muslim women in Mombasa reported that people are afraid to worship in certain mosques in case of police raids. The women described how they feel confined to their own homes for safety reasons, and how they constantly have to stay in touch with family and friends to check that they are fine.[23]

> ### Women live in fear of violent attacks, stigmatisation or reprisals by community members and extremists

A government official in Garissa confirmed that the hard-security approach taken by the police resulted in fear and mistrust of the security agencies.[24] This finding was corroborated by the head of a community organisation, who reported that the women associated with men who have disappeared to join al-Shabaab are regularly interrogated by the police, stigmatised by their

Figure 1: Counties in Kenya where the research was undertaken

communities, and sometimes even 'forced to relocate to avoid their children being labelled as a bad influence'.[25] It was reported that, owing to these kinds of tactics, women are afraid to report the disappearance of sons and husbands.[26]

Women reported that their experiences of fear, grief, and trauma manifest physically in the form of 'high blood pressure and diabetes'.[27]

Stigmatisation

Women in Majengo, Lamu, Mpeketoni and Mombasa also reported being stigmatised, harassed and profiled by the police on a regular basis.[28] Women in Mpeketoni and Mombasa shared stories about being subjected to invasive police body searches because of the way they were dressed (in the Muslim *buibui*), making them feel like terror suspects.[29] They argued that non-Muslim women were not targeted in the same way.

Women also reported facing suspicion, harassment and stigmatisation from both community members and their own family members, especially if their children or husbands were suspected of being involved with al-Shabaab.[30] According to a government official in Nairobi, the community often shuns the wives, widows or children of men suspected of involvement in terrorist activities.[31]

Disruption of traditional familial roles and structures

Violent extremism can also result in trauma in families and trigger the break up of family units. Individuals suspected of links with extremist organisations have been ostracised by their own families;[32] families can experience years of physical separation when husbands or children leave home to join al-Shabaab in Somalia;[33] families are separated when suspects are arrested; many women have been widowed as a result of violent extremism, and some of them have been forced to re-marry someone not of their choice;[34] and families suffer when violent extremist acts are committed by someone within or close to the family.[35]

> Individuals suspected of links with extremist organisations have been ostracised by their own families

Apart from 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 (preventing and countering violent extremism) 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.'[36]

Economic deprivation

For women, economic deprivation is both a driver and an impact of violent extremism. Women across the areas covered in this study said that the death or disappearance of their husbands and sons as a result of violent extremism forced them to assume the role of breadwinner and provide for their children and other family members.[37] These women described having to borrow money from each other and friends, usually leaving them debt-ridden as a result,[38] or trying to support themselves and their children by doing odd jobs such as washing other people's clothes.[39] Some women incur additional expenses that they can ill afford; for instance, mothers of suspected terrorists held in police cells reportedly have to pay for their sons' release.[40]

Apart from these economic difficulties, taking on the role of breadwinner in a strongly patriarchal society may be difficult, and may even result in social

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION IS BOTH A DRIVER AND AN IMPACT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

backlash. At the same time, however, 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 gender norms, and the establishment and acceptance of new norms where gender is irrelevant to the assignment of roles, signalling a shift in societal dynamics.

Understanding how these broad experiences of victimisation – as impacts of violent extremism – may, in turn, deter or promote the dynamics of radicalisation, recruitment and support to violent extremist groups is crucial for designing and implementing effective strategies in the affected communities.

Impact of violent extremism at the community level

Broken community relations

Negative police attention focussed on specific population groups, together with terrorist attacks and often-sensationalised media reporting, have created fear, suspicion and mistrust between Muslim and non-Muslim community members and heightened existing tensions between religious groups.[41]

This stigma and tension is particularly profound in places that have experienced a direct terrorist attack. The attack by three women on a police station in Mombasa 'has created suspicion and mistrust of Muslim women within the community, both among themselves and by others'.[42]

Women in Garissa, Majengo and Mpeketoni described how terrorist attacks have damaged social cohesion: non-Muslims feel threatened by women in hijabs;[43] Muslim women cannot form support groups without being treated with fear and suspicion;[44] women no longer feel comfortable or safe leaving their children with their neighbours; and Muslim and Christian children have started fighting at school, accusing each other of complicity in the terror attacks.[45]

Tensions within communities have also been intensified by government CT activities, with respondents alleging that security agencies create suspicion between community members by publically profiling ethnic Somalis and Muslims. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine to what degree these fault lines in community relationships and trust may serve to create sympathy or even active 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 parts of the same community has several implications. The crucial support networks that many women have grown accustomed to as a component of communal living are breaking down. Mistrust between parents of different religions may be passed on to their children, thus perpetuating the cycle of tension and conflict along religious and ethnic fault lines.

> Security agencies create suspicion in communities by publically profiling ethnic Somalis and Muslims

The consequences of people retreating into ethnic or religious silos may include increased feelings of marginalisation, difference, victimisation and threats to personal identity, all of which have been identified as drivers of radicalisation.[46] Little is known about the effects of collective trauma and stress on communities, and how this may not only affect social cohesion in communities but also feed into the dynamics of radicalisation and involvement in violent extremism. It is an area that needs more research and understanding.

Disruption of childrens' education

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 and Garissa, women told how schools were closed and people forced to leave the area following the terror attacks, thus terminating or disrupting their children's education.[47] These factors, according to government officials, have led to a drop in school attendance in the affected areas.[48]

Loss of livelihoods

The economic impact of violent extremism on individuals has been discussed at some length above, but it is important to bear in mind that the loss of individual

livelihoods and jobs has a wider impact on the community, which becomes collectively poorer when fewer resources make it into circulation.

The insecurity caused by terrorist attacks along Kenya's coast has resulted in a decline in tourism in these areas, with many foreign governments having issued travel warnings to their citizens. Hotels have either laid off workers or closed down entirely, leading to a loss of livelihood for the women who had provided services or goods to the hotels. This has resulted in an increase in unemployment and poverty in these regions.[49] In Lamu the government-imposed security curfews have restricted fishing operations, leading to a decline in the catch that fishermen rely on both to feed their families and to sell in order to earn a living.

Assessing current responses to violent extremism in Kenya

The framework for addressing radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya comprises various activities, funded and implemented by community-based, government, local and international stakeholders, that acknowledge the different levels of threat and insecurity experienced in the country.

The findings and analysis below reflect the direct knowledge of the respondents interviewed for this study rather than reproducing an inventory of all the programmes currently implemented in Kenya.

Government perspectives and efforts

While various official policies and programmes deal with violent extremism in Kenya, the findings below reflect what was reported during the fieldwork for this study. This gives a good indication of which responses to violent extremism government officials are aware, rather than listing those that are actually in effect. Government officials categorised their responses to violent extremism into security, policy and programmatic responses, and community outreach programmes.

Officials explained that the ATPU, the police and the KDF had adopted a securitised and militarised approach to countering violent extremism.[50] The government is reportedly increasing security in the areas affected by

violent extremism. These measures include monitoring hotspots and gathering intelligence that can be shared through security briefings;[51] sharing information and implementing departmental alerts;[52] investigating, arresting and prosecuting those suspected of links with extremist organisations;[53] introducing better security screening in areas under threat (such as using sniffer dogs and deploying trained officers with search equipment);[54] and increasing the resources for CT initiatives.

> The findings here reflect the knowledge of respondents' interviewed for this study about government interventions

There are now more military patrols in forested areas,[55] and more police officers have been deployed to respond to violent extremism in Lamu.[56] The government has also provided helicopters for aerial surveillance, motor vehicles for administrative offices, and motorbikes for local chiefs.[57] The police have posted additional security officials in Lamu.[58]

On the question of whether the Kenyan government's response to violent extremism incorporates gender considerations, respondents noted the following:

- Gender equality in the government – including Parliament and the judiciary – is legislated through the two-thirds gender rule

- Women are involved 'in implementing security initiatives in the National Government and at the National Assembly',[59] and in responding to terrorism and violent extremism[60]

- Women are involved in conceptualising, drafting and implementing P/CVE policies, programmes and practices, such as the Kwale County Strategy[61]

- Women have been engaged as law enforcement officers in addressing violent extremism – for example, in the border town of Busia and elsewhere only female officers are used to search female suspects,[62] while there are female detectives in the ATPU in Malindi[63]

Box 2: 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.

- While the drafting of the strategy was an internal government process, different 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 a shift towards addressing violent extremism through a P/CVE rather than a 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 in order for the parents, teachers, friends and colleagues of those being radicalised to be 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 the 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, however, gender neutral and does not address the specific intersection of women and radicalisation or violent extremism.

* Government of Kenya, National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism, September 2016, vii.

** Interviews conducted on 15 and 16 December with donor representatives funding P/CVE initiatives in Kenya.

- Female government officials – for example, the staff of the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) – work with women's NGOs to sensitise women in affected communities to violent extremism[64]

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.[65]

An official in Lamu highlighted the Nyumba Kumi initiative – described as a 'homeland security system intended to create national security awareness amongst citizens from grassroots level'[66] – which decentralises security to local communities and prioritises their needs.[67]

There are also government community outreach initiatives, aimed at sensitising and educating communities about violent extremism:[68]

- Mombasa: community projects partner with NGOs such as the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) to reach the youth[69]

- Lamu: youths who carry messages that counter violent extremist narratives are being recognised by the government in order to encourage the spread of these messages[70]

- Garissa: sensitisation is 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[71]

- Public *barazas* (formal government forums with members of the public at the local level) and workshops in communities:[72] citizens are educated about, among other things, the dangers of joining al-Shabaab,[73] what they should do if their child disappears,[74] and what they should report to the authorities

Government-led economic initiatives have included the provision of economic relief in the form of food to those affected by violent extremism[75] and increasing women and youth's access to the Uwezo Fund.[76]

Box 3: Challenges in the returnees programme

Launched in April 2015, the amnesty or returnees programme encourages all those who have returned from Somalia and disassociated themselves from al-Shabaab to report to national government offices for rehabilitation and reintegration.* However, the programme has been criticised for lacking a legislative, policy and operationalisation framework, resulting in inconsistent implementation at the local level.**

Respondents reported the following challenges with the amnesty programme:

- Many returnees do not trust the government and prefer to go into hiding rather than enlisting in the amnesty programme. This hampers their successful reintegration into society.

- The government has not established safe houses for women whose husbands have left or for returnees.

- There is a lack of effective screening of returnees to ascertain that they are reformed, which undermines the impact of de-radicalisation efforts.

- There is also no clear communication about the handling of returnees, who are exposed to a multitude of risks, including from the government, police and al-Shabaab.***

*   According to interviews with government officials in Diani (26 September 2016) and Nairobi (4 October 2016).

**   M Yusuf, How Kenya's al-Shabaab amnesty is a loaded gun, *IRIN News*, 31 August 2016, https://www.irinnews.org/investigations/2016/08/31/how-kenya's-al-shabab-amnesty-loaded-gun, (accessed February 2017).

*** Information from interviews conducted with the head of an NGO working group in Mombasa on 22 September 2016, and with a donor funding P/CVE initiatives in Kenya on 19 December 2016.
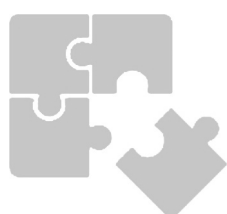
RESPONSES IN KENYA HAVE FOCUSED ON COUNTERING RATHER THAN PREVENTING EXTREMISM

Perspectives from donors and civil society organisations

Donors agreed that the design and implementation of P/CVE programming in Kenya has become a popular intervention area for organisations working in development, conflict and peacebuilding.[77] As such, donors are actively funding the establishment of programmes to address the problem of violent extremism.[78] The NCTC was described as the focal point for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, a country support mechanism that provides funding for engaging CSO stakeholders in P/CVE.[79]

Donors and CSOs agreed that the Kenyan government is responding actively to the problem of violent extremism, but has focussed its efforts thus far on *countering* rather than *preventing* violent extremism, centred on the community level.[80] They recognised that the government has 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.[81] These P/CVE efforts have created spaces for dialogue for communities, and Muslim communities have been especially bold in engaging with the government.[82] Donors and community-based organisations (CBOs) saw the Kenyan's government's willingness to work with a range of different actors – civil society, religious leaders and communities – as especially important.[83]

Box 4: 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 women 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 treatment for women who have been affected by terrorism

- Providing a platform where guidance can be given to those holding radical views, including psycho-social support for such women and working with religious leaders to dissuade them

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

* Information taken from an interview conducted with an anonymous donor funding CVE initiatives in Kenya on 19 December 2016.
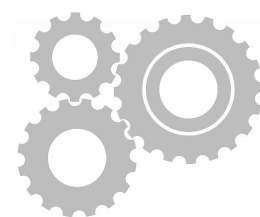
THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO ENGAGE WITH CSOS ON PREVENTING EXTREMISM

Perspectives from women respondents

Uppermost in the minds of the women in the FGDs was the hard-security approach to violent extremism adopted by the Kenyan government. At all the research sites women described government CT initiatives in terms of unwarranted suspicion, police brutality, disrespect, harassment, profiling, the disappearance of suspects, missing children and husbands, and corruption – all of which, they reported, were having the opposite of the desired effect and leading to increased radicalisation.[84]

However, women in various locations supported the government's P/CVE efforts, saying that the initiatives are working to an extent and have helped in small ways,[85] and that the police searches are necessary to make them feel safe.[86] The women recommended that the government:

- Increase the number and regularity of peacebuilding forums hosted by the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government[87]

- Deploy a more rapid police response during al-Shabaab attacks[88]

- Roll out programmes aimed specifically at girls and women that teach parents about children at risk of criminal behaviour or violent extremism[89]

> Perceived injustices against Muslims, as well as media profiling, had created a feeling of being 'under attack' among Muslims

Women in the areas most severely affected by violent extremism, such as Lamu, Majengo and Garissa, also noted that they have been the subject of multiple research studies undertaken by CSOs and international organisations, and felt over-researched. They added that the results of the studies are seldom shared with them, and that they have not noticed any changes to their communities or in their daily lives as a result of the research. CSOs admitted the existence of 'professional interviewees' in some areas, due to communities being over-studied.[90]

At the local level, women have tried to counter violent extremism by organising themselves into CBOs. One such example is the Kikozi programme, a community-based and women-run organisation funded by USAID that works towards building peace by countering violent extremism through engaging madrassa students in fighting violent extremism; running competitions on Islamic calligraphy and public speaking premised on a message of peace and involving female teachers and girls; holding public forums/meetings to spread a message of peace; and talking to parents about protecting their children.[91] The Kikozi programme works with 13 other women's groups and many of their meetings are run on an interfaith basis.[92]

There were also reports in Tiwi, Diani and Garissa of women acting as deputy elders, deputy chiefs and leaders in local peace committees –

KENYA'S STRATEGY TO COUNTER EXTREMISM DOESN'T ADEQUATELY REFLECT THE NEEDS OF WOMEN

traditional committees that are meant to involve local communities in peace processes.[93] In Lamu women have formed a lobby group to advocate their issues and concerns; this group has been involved in discussions on addressing the problem of violent extremism.[94]

Enabling women to respond to violent extremism

The findings from this study show that current responses to radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya are neither sufficiently gender specific nor gender sensitive.

Critical initiatives at the policy level in Kenya do not respond adequately to the needs of women as either actors in or victims of violent extremism. For instance, the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism does not adequately reflect the sensitivities or the needs of women in relation to violent extremism and treats the impacts of violent extremism as gender neutral. This approach does not recognise the unique contexts within which women may be drawn into violent extremism or the specific impacts of violent extremism on women, thereby failing to include targeted responses to women affected by violent extremism.

While aspects of the Kenya National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and Related Resolutions (KNAP) could apply to women's involvement in violent extremism and P/CVE in the most general sense,[95] the KNAP references violent extremism only as it relates to the broader security context in Kenya. This places the country at risk of losing intervention opportunities that could help to address this challenge.

> Addressing the development–security nexus should be a priority for policymakers

Two important issues emerged from this study in relation to positioning women in P/CVE responses.

Firstly, within the context of countries that are still developing and have 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 of and impacts and responses to violent extremism. As discussed above,

women's real agency in contexts characterised by poverty and the lack of opportunity is extremely limited. In such settings it is crucial to create alternatives for women to enable real choices – thereby giving women material agency.

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.'

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. This will involve investing time and resources in initiatives that seek to rebuild trust between different ethnicities and religious groups in Kenya.

Conclusion

Development issues underpin the drivers and impact of violent extremism in Kenya; in this context the development–security nexus emerges as a matter of priority for policymakers. Empowering and engaging women are key to unlocking their 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, but is not limited to, efforts to treat women traumatised by the impacts of violent extremism, as well as initiatives geared towards repairing tears in the social fabric of Kenyan society.

The study also shows that the challenges in responding to violent extremism in Kenya relate to difficulties in conceptualising and coordinating P/CVE efforts, insufficient resources, a perceived lack of government transparency and consistency in communicating and applying the responses across Kenya, and – perhaps most importantly – mistrust between the government and communities affected by violent extremism, which has been exacerbated by the government's hard-security approach.

Taking into account the development–security nexus explored in this report, as well as the dynamic formed

by the interdependent web of drivers, impacts and responses, it is imperative that P/CVE stakeholders in Kenya adopt a broader socio-economic approach to the problem, while keeping efforts at the community level context-driven and multi-method. The failure to prioritise women will hamper efforts to comprehensively address the changing nature of violent extremism as well as its multifaceted impact in Kenya, and will miss the opportunity to fully engage women in effective efforts to counter violent extremism in society.

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