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Lessons on the Effectiveness of Multi-Stakeholder PCVE Efforts

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Executive Summary

This qualitative research report provides contextual background and lessons learned on the status of Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE), with a primary focus on Kilifi County. These lessons are based on a research study conducted from 13 to 17 May 2024, as well as engagement forums, including a county workshop held on 23 July 2023 and a capacity-building workshop conducted on 18 and 19 September 2024 under the USAID *Sauti Yako, Amani Yako* programme. The report examines the effectiveness of state and non-state PCVE programmes in Kilifi in addressing community needs and interests, highlighting factors that contribute to their successes and limitations. It also evaluates the extent to which these programmes embed knowledge, skills, and strategies to foster sustainable change. Additionally, the report explores the ways in which young men and women participate in and lead PCVE initiatives. Overall, this report provides an in-depth discussion of lessons emerging from the multi-stakeholder approaches and programmes adopted in Kilifi County to tackle challenges related to violent extremism among marginalised communities.

The report highlights that Kilifi's violent extremism (VE) landscape is shaped by a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and religious factors. Vulnerabilities to continued radicalisation and recruitment are closely linked to socio-economic disparities. At-risk groups, particularly young people in the region, report feelings of socio-economic exclusion and marginalisation, exacerbated by high unemployment, poverty, and political alienation associated with poor and non-inclusive governance. Other motivating factors include misconstruing religious narratives to incite and justify violence.

Some respondents revealed being drawn to extremists while seeking belonging, job opportunities, and a sense of kinship, demonstrating the evolving nature of VE. Young men expressed the absence of peers and mentors, and some are attracted to extremist groups who provide them with a sense of purpose. Additionally, recruitment into violent extremist organisations (VEOs) is also driven by revenge and retaliation against state actors due to the heavy-militarised counterterrorism operations, harassment by security officers, mistrust of law enforcement, and the killing of family members by state or security forces.




Land ownership complexities and ideological conflicts between young and elderly in Kilifi have fostered an environment where violence and insecurity persist, often culminating in the killings of elderly individuals under the guise of witchcraft accusations. Additionally, unresolved land ownership grievances increase susceptibility to radicalisation by provoking violence. The report also highlights the prevalence of drug-related violence involving juvenile gangs. Gender-specific vulnerabilities, including limited support for girls' education, early marriages, and pregnancies, further intensify the challenges. Social media channels have also emerged as contemporary platforms for recruitment and radicalisation in Kilifi County.

Findings on the multi-stakeholder approach reveal key lessons learned from the implementation of the Kilifi County Action Plans (K-CAP). These plans play a vital role in creating an enabling environment for the existence and fostering collaboration among state, non-state, development partners, and community actors in alignment with the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) policy and legal framework. However, challenges to operationalisation persist, such as limited community awareness of the K-CAP among Kilifi community members, insufficient commitment, lack of political goodwill from the county government, unsustainable resources due to overreliance on civil society organisations (CSOs) and time-bound donor funding. Moreover, youth participation in county forums remains limited.

The report highlights the existence of socio-economic initiatives by the county government, which are designed to be inclusive by addressing the intersectionality of gender, age, and ableism. These initiatives focus on opportunities arising from the blue economy, the agricultural sector, and entrepreneurship programmes within the private sector. However, challenges persist, including regional disparities in the distribution of socio-economic opportunities provided by the Kilifi County Government and the prevalence of connection-based rather than merit-based hiring practises.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been actively engaged in PCVE programmes in Kilifi. These include community awareness campaigns, sensitisation forums, education programmes, socio-economic empowerment projects, interreligious awareness and outreach programmes, and psychosocial support services. However, the effective implementation of PCVE activities is hindered by insufficient resources and donor-led funding that is often time-bound. CSOs have also expressed concerns about the limited adaptability of implemented programmes, which restricts their ability to address emerging issues. Moreover, strained relationships between CSOs and the county government have led to misunderstandings about their activities and financial monitoring. Competition and isolated working practises amongst CSOs further undermine their capacity to address vulnerabilities to violence extremism effectively.



This research report emphasises the need for continuous adaptation of PCVE programming to remain relevant and effectively target evolving at-risk groups, emerging actors, and the shifting dynamics of VE. Programme should incorporate alternative and community-based dispute resolution (A/CDR) mechanisms to address historical, socio-economic, and political grievances. Additionally, supporting existing alternative family care systems to address the lack of role models and strengthen mentor-mentee relationships for at-risk young populations. Family-oriented and gender-specific PCVE programmes are encouraged to educate and empower parents while promoting education and economic opportunities for young women. For youths, programmes and various stakeholders are encouraged to expand access to leadership positions for both young people and women and to support innovative channels for youth engagement through sports, theatre and digital spaces. This involves leveraging the role of technology to amplify youth voices, build resilience, and foster economic empowerment.

There is a need to cultivate political goodwill to encourage lead actors to commit to supporting PCVE interventions. This includes raising awareness and building the capacity of state actors by equipping them with the necessary understanding and clarity of their role in mainstreaming PCVE. Additionally, strengthening public-private sector partnerships is essential for establishing sustainable PCVE systems. The findings of this report are pivotal in empowering state, non-state, community leaders, institutions, and collaborative networks. They provide guidance on offering inclusive and responsive socio-economic opportunities, psychosocial services, and security to marginalised people. Furthermore, the findings aim to support multi-stakeholders in advocating for a more effective and inclusive government response. They also identify avenues to amplify the voices of vulnerable and isolated young men and women, enabling them to participate actively in decision-making processes regarding PCVE solutions. There is a need to cultivate political goodwill to encourage lead actors to commit to supporting PCVE interventions. This includes raising awareness and building the capacity of state actors by equipping them with the necessary understanding and clarity of their role in mainstreaming PCVE. Additionally, strengthening public-private sector partnerships is essential for establishing sustainable PCVE systems.

The findings of this report are pivotal in empowering state, non-state, community leaders, institutions, and collaborative networks. They provide guidance on offering inclusive and responsive socio-economic opportunities, psychosocial services, and security to marginalised people. Furthermore, the findings aim to support multi-stakeholders in advocating for a more effective and inclusive government response. They also identify avenues to amplify the voices of vulnerable and isolated young men and women, enabling them to participate actively in decision-making processes regarding PCVE solution

List of Abbreviations

A/CDR	Alternative/Community-based Dispute Resolution
ADPs	Annual Development Plans
CIDPs	County Integrated Development Plans
CAP	County Action Plan
CEFs	County Engagement Forums
CSF	County Stakeholder Forum
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
KEMFSED	Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-Economic Development
NSCVE	National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism
PCVE	Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
VE	Violent Extremism
VEOs	Violent Extremist Organisations

Methodology

This study applied a qualitative methodological approach for data collection and analysis. The study adopted a mixed-method design for collecting qualitative data, including interviews with 20 key informants, facilitating three focus group discussions (men only, women only, and mixed youth group), as well as integrating secondary sources. Insights were also drawn from the Kilifi County Workshop held on 23 July 2023 and a capacity-building workshop conducted on 18 - 19 September 2024. Key informants included community leaders, security actors, religious leaders, village elders, state officials, women and youth leaders from relevant CSOs. These individuals were selected for their expertise and influence within the community. A purposive and snowball sampling approach was used to identify this target population. The data was corroborated and triangulated in the analysis.

Context

Violent extremism (VE) remains a significant threat to national security and peace. The dynamics of the VE landscape are constantly evolving, transcending borders, and manifesting at global, regional, and national levels.¹ In Kenya, the *Al-Shabaab* is mainly responsible for sporadic terror-related attacks along major roads, targeting critical infrastructure and ambushing Kenyan security forces and communities.² These attacks are predominantly, though not limited to, the coastal and northeastern counties. Additionally, radicalisation and recruitment persist, with extremists using open sermons, religious and learning institutions as avenues for disseminating narratives, face-to-face recruitment and online platforms to spread their narratives.

According to the CHRIPS observatory data, Kilifi County has not experienced terror attacks in the past five years. However, the threat of terrorism remains palpable with foreign governments continuously issuing travel advisories for areas from the north of Malindi to the Tana River County limits due to concerns over kidnapping and terrorism.³ In 2002, Kilifi County witnessed the *Kikambala* bombing, when suicide bombers drove explosives into an Israeli-owned hotel, resulting in 17 casualties and 80 injuries.⁴ In 2016, four suspects allegedly responsible for the Garissa University attack, which claimed at least 147 lives, were found and killed in Malindi.⁵ In 2018, Kilifi witnessed an al-Shabaab attack on a shopping centre at

¹ Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (2024) Community-centred collaboration to prevent and counter violent extremism, Policy Brief No. 1. May 2024.

² See https://chrips.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Trends_of_Violent_Extremist_Attacks_and_Arrests_in_Kenya_2023-2.pdf

³ See <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/kenya>; <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/kenya-travel-advisory.html>

⁴ See <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/coast/article/2001395451/kikambala-hotel-bombing-in-2002-changed-our-lives>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35365304>

Chakama, Malindi, resulting in five injuries and the kidnapping of a female Italian student volunteer.⁶

Key informant interviews and focus group discussion data show that radicalisation and recruitment into VEOs remain a prominent challenge in the County. Respondents identified areas such as Malindi as a transit and haven for VEOs.⁷ Moreover, recruitment is often subtle, occurring through friendship, kinship, or family levels. One participant explained *another point is through family. They are there and call other members, telling them that the place I am at is like this so they can entice their peers and cousins to join the same.*⁸ Another participant noted that *some of these bad ideologies we get from home as the parent is not well educated on matters of religion. So, the parent misleads the child. Influence as a parent to the child can be positive or negative.*⁹

At-risk groups, according to key informants, cut across ethnicity, literacy levels, socio-economic class, and religious affiliations.¹⁰ Several susceptibility factors, including low education levels, drug-related violence, unemployment, and idleness, contribute to young people being recruited by violent extremist organisations. Some respondents identified recruitment pathways through deceptive promises of job opportunities in the Middle East, where the candidates ended up in Somalia and forcibly recruited into *Al Shabaab*.¹¹ Another participant noted instances of human trafficking based on false job offers, resulting in increased vulnerability to VE. Victims can become isolated and cut off from the social systems, where they are easily manipulated by VEOs, making reintegration into society challenging.

*There are survivors who have shared stories that the job you apply for is not the job you get. There is a lot of human trafficking. Returning is very difficult. Once they join, they are taken to countries they did not know or given a lift by a vehicle and wake up in a place they don't recognise.*¹²

Youth unemployment is a key issue that can lead to negative behaviour, such as theft due to idleness or feelings of despair, easily exploited by VEOs. It often becomes an outlet for youths to turn to crime as they lack something constructive and economically rewarding activities, with many turning to criminal behaviour out of frustration, boredom, or the need to support their families. In Kilifi, the women's focus

⁶ See https://www.cvekenya.org/media/documents/Trends_of_Violent_Extremist_Attacks_and_Arrests_in_Kenya_Dec_2017_-_Dec_2018.pdf; <https://nation.africa/kenya/counties/kilifi/5-injured-italian-kidnapped-in-kilifi-night-attack-111046>

⁷ Interview with Civil Society Member, 15 May 2024.

⁸ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

⁹ Interview with a CSO Representative, 16 May 2024.

¹⁰ Christine, J. (2024) *The Blue Economy of Kilifi County: A Holistic Approach to PCVE*. Pg. 1

¹¹ Interview with a Religious Leader, 13 May 2024

¹² Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

group discussion (FGD) identified that "our youth are thieves since they are not busy, there is nowhere to keep them."¹³ The transition from school to work is also uncertain, as one participant noted, "The boy finishes class eight and relaxes at home, and they tell me what work they should do, and there is no work, even the ones who have completed form four have no jobs."¹⁴ According to the youth,

*There is a lack of job opportunities; most of the young people are educated, and some are not, but they have skills, but we don't have companies or factories, especially in Kilifi county where it can employ more than a hundred youths who have the same skill.*¹⁵

Moreover, this study found regional disparities in the distribution of socio-economic opportunities provided by the Kilifi County Government, citing the differences in job distribution between people within and outside Kilifi North. Some participants noted, "Children at Tubui are going to work while ours are idle; hence theft is high."¹⁶

Another mentioned,

*I asked someone why are you loitering around; why don't you pick a broom and make the area clean? He said he wants to sweep but could not get the chance. There are a lot of people, and everyone has someone they know, and when the jobs come out, the ones in charge come with their people, others from areas not our own.*¹⁷

While there are job opportunities from the county and national governments in Kilifi, "Let me tell you, there were job offers that were available and on the side of the national government in parliament, there was something started in truth,"¹⁸ a challenge on effective and fair distribution and access persists. The hiring system was identified as connection-based rather than merit-based, with a participant stating, "I was told that he went and took his people and gave them the jobs while our youths are sleeping; those who are educated and the uneducated will get no jobs here."¹⁹ Unfulfilled promises and leadership unaccountability were identified as sources of frustration, especially when dealing with employment.

*Our work is to vote and get people into the county who will, in turn, look out for people of their own, and ours are not identified. It should be free and fair.*²⁰

These issues predispose unemployed and idle youth to feelings of marginalisation and social alienation, making them vulnerable to radicalisation. Regional disparities in job allocation further worsen these frustrations. The absence of economic opportunities leaves young people susceptible to manipulative

¹³ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁴ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁵ Youth Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁶ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁷ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁸ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁹ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

²⁰ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

narratives that seem to provide financial support, steady income, or a sense of purpose and belonging. Even among educated youth, frustrations and disillusionment stemming from unemployment can be exploited by VEOs, positioning themselves as viable alternatives to perceived failed state roles and promising stable income and financial stability.

Deliberate actions and targeted efforts to engage the youth and understand their aspirations for the future are critical. Such engagements enable actors to co-create solutions that empower young people both financially and psychologically. Strengthening sustainable education-to-work transition systems, such as internships, entrepreneurial programs, public-private partnerships, and apprenticeships, is essential for creating clear pathways to employment and bridging the gap between education and the labour market. These initiatives could also incentivise young people to complete their secondary and post-secondary level education, thereby increasing literacy levels and education uptake across Kilifi County.

In Kilifi, radicalisation on religious grounds frequently involves the spread of misinterpreted religious narratives²¹ aimed at luring individuals into joining VEOs. These messages are circulated in learning institutions, religious venues and social places. However, the avenues through which they are propagated continue to evolve. One participant noted that individuals sometimes consume radical religious ideologies from digital spaces. Religious leaders are recognised as pivotal actors in the design and implementation of PCVE initiatives. However, they can also serve as catalysts for recruitment, with some being exploited by VEOs to legitimise violence use among their followers.

While their imperative role in preventing and countering violent extremism is undeniable, this study finds that in Kilifi, religious institutions and leaders are limited in their abilities due to the lack of proper regulation frameworks, creating room for misinterpretation of spiritual teachings. A religious leader noted,

Regulating religion could be considered as part of a broader strategy to combat extremism. However, it is essential to balance regulation with the protection of religious freedoms and ensure that any measures do not infringe on individual rights. The task force established by the President following the Shakahola massacre recommended that all religions should engage in self-regulation.²²

²¹ See <https://www.cve-kenya.org/media/library/2024-Maureen-Nyarangi-Enhancing-Approaches-to-Violent-Extremism.docx.pdf>

²² Participant at a County Workshop, 23 July 2024.

It was also identified that intra-faith tensions and suspicions existed, and sometimes clerics, *ulama*²³, and *imams* must be involved in reducing them.²⁴ However, youth involvement in leadership positions within religious institutions remains limited. Increasing youth representation in leadership could promote leadership continuity of leadership and inspire greater participation by younger generations in religious activities. Youth leaders often introduce fresh perspectives and energy, potentially revitalising religious practices and making them more relatable to their peers. Youth leaders are more likely to understand and address the concerns of their peers. Their presence may encourage more youth participation in religious institutions, fostering a sense of belonging among younger members.

However, generational representation may be imbalanced when only a few youths are in leadership. This could lead to difficulties in succession planning, as older leaders retire without enough younger leaders ready to step in. If only a limited number of youths are in leadership roles, their voices may be marginalised, leading to disengagement among the broader youth population. This could result in a generational gap where religious practices and values feel outdated or irrelevant to younger congregants.

Kilifi faces a significant challenge of poor relationships between security officials and residents, particularly the youths, emanating from mistrust of the law enforcers and a lack of understanding of the law and justice systems. Youths mentioned being wrongly accused²⁵, profiled and discriminated against by security officials based on religion and ethnicity.²⁶ Sentiments on unjust justice systems emerged, with a participant stating, "Another one to be arrested without a crime while those with crime are set free... it is people who are known."²⁷ In addition, participants expressed the presence of police brutality against youths, stating, "Security use a lot of power on the youths, and thus the youths yearn to be empowered so that they can get revenge."²⁸ Another described an instance where "There was a time my friend was attacked by around six policemen."²⁹

The report found that revenge among youths against security officials was a potent motivator of radicalisation. "If you feel you are secluded, you try to get revenge... they tell us that one day, one time, they will take revenge... due to something done to them or their family."³⁰ This quote highlights the breeding violence and vengeance cycles fuelling feelings of social exclusion among youths in Kilifi that can

²³ In Islam, *ulama* are scholars or religious leaders, acknowledged for their profound knowledge of theology. Islamic knowledge is regarded as being guarded and interpreted by them.

²⁴ Participant at a County Workshop, 19 September 2024.

²⁵ "When I got out... I did not have that confidence even to walk on the road. I will want to walk, but you find my freedom... I still see there is someone following me." (Youth Focus Group, 15 May 2024).

²⁶ "It is your name or your religion or maybe because I am a Muslim, am called Ibrahim..." (Youth Focus Group, 15 May 2024).

²⁷ Youth Focus Group, 15 May 2024.

²⁸ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

²⁹ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

³⁰ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

easily be exploited into radicalisation. When youths feel their families were treated unfairly by security officials or VEOs, resulting in losses, they may carry the psychological trauma that, if not addressed, increases their susceptibility to revenge-oriented radicalisation as an outlet for anger.

There is a lack of confidence among community members to approach security officials and report suspicious activities due to the fear of collective punishment applied. Families are often victimised, harassed, or even arrested, an approach that would discourage reporting as one fear the repercussions. In turn, community secrecy and fear can be an enabling environment for continued radicalisation and recruitment, as VEOs are indirectly protected from being exposed. VE activities may thrive in an environment where mistrust of security systems exists, as it allows them to go unnoticed but unchecked. This approach was noted, stating,

One of the reasons why the family does not disclose if one of them joins al-Shabaab is that once the police know, you are all caught, and maybe at first you didn't know, and at the time, you knew the boy had already joined and when they know they arrest all the relatives.³¹

Participants also noted, *"The police who we are looking for help from are the ones that oppress us... because of corruption, it is theirs... you report the matter to the police, and even before you reach your home, you are already threatened."³²*

In addition, the youth's lack of understanding and awareness of the legal and justice systems and procedures was identified. A participant noted that *many young people in Kilifi County, particularly in areas like the Malindi sub-county, are unfamiliar with legal terms such as bail and bond. This misunderstanding often leads to repeated offences, as they mistakenly believe that bribing police officers—ranging from Kshs. 2,000 to 3,000 secure their release without consequences.* This corruption not only undermines the justice system but also perpetuates criminal behaviours among the youth, as they are not aware of their rights within the criminal justice system.

Additionally, youths unable to afford bribes are more likely to face incarceration, fostering resentment and negative attitudes toward law enforcement. This frustration may escalate into feelings of vengeance. A participant remarked, "If you don't have connections, you will be arrested. When arrested, just know the procedures and don't resist arrest; that's how we will be helped."³³ Another stated, "Like now I will go to the police; I see him as a chameleon... you feel they can change any time."³⁴

³¹ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

³² Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

³³ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

³⁴ Youth Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

The findings also highlight the critical role women and girls play in influencing men and boys into practices that would increase their vulnerability to extremism. A village and woman leader noted that some mothers compare their sons with those doing better financially and can support them and their families, but they are in the Al-Shabaab.³⁵ This pressure can drive young men to engage in criminal behaviour, become radicalised or join VEOs to get money, meet familial expectations and achieve a sense of accomplishment by providing for their families. A youth leader mentioned that some girls would contribute to this dynamic by undermining their brothers or boyfriends, suggesting they are not 'man-enough' compared to others their age who have joined such groups and gained financial benefits. Workshop participants also echoed such sentiments during the fieldwork.

Additionally, in Kilifi, the land ownership structure remains profoundly unequal. Wealthy local and foreign landowners control vast areas of land, while many locals live as squatters on land they have historically occupied. The lack of clear land ownership documents and titles has exacerbated the problem, leading to numerous land disputes between locals and external investors or between different ethnic groups. According to the National Lands Commission, 3,743 land injustice cases are under review in Kenya, with Coastal counties comprising 70.1% (2,624) of these cases, and Kilifi has the largest claims for 2,024 land cases. At the national level, Kilifi accounts for more than half of the land claims (54%), while in the coastal region, it claims 77% of all land cases.³⁶

Further, over 1,228 parcels of land in the county have been illegally acquired by squatters or private developers.³⁷ These land disputes have left many communities feeling marginalised, creating a breeding ground for extremism. Young people, frustrated by their lack of economic opportunities and unresolved land grievances, are more susceptible to recruitment by terrorist groups. Al-Shabaab has been known to take advantage of such grievances to fuel radicalisation. Extremist groups often exploit land grievances and related socio-economic factors to win support from local populations or to justify their activities. In Kilifi, the narrative of injustice related to land ownership can be a tool for extremist propaganda.

Persistent land disputes and the perception of weak governance also create an environment where insecurity thrives. Tensions have escalated into violence characterised by elderly killings disguised as

³⁵ Interview with a Woman and Village Leader, 15 May 2024.

³⁶ Oduor, S. (2023) "Kilifi Tops with over 2,000 Unresolved Land Cases," *Nation*, 2 October, <https://nation.africa/kenya/counties/kilifi/kilifi-tops-with-over-2-000-unresolved-land-cases-4387398>. Accessed 28 September 2024.

³⁷ Yaa, E. (2024) "1,228 Land Parcels in Kilifi Grabbed, Says Governor Mung'aro," *The Star*, 10 May, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/coast/2024-05-10-1228-land-parcels-in-kilifi-grabbed-says-governor-mungaro/>. Accessed 28 September 2024.

witchcraft-related, yet they are due to inheritance squabbles and familial grievances. Inter-generational tensions and conflicts over land access and control have also been blamed for the killing of elders. Participants noted,

*There has been a high rise of the elderly being killed because they say the elderly are witches and they do not want to see grey hair.*³⁸

*So that is a thought that has entered the youths; they have been radicalised in such a way that they see the elderly as enemies.*³⁹

*Youths radicalise one another against the elderly; those who are involved in the killings are family members. The child killing his mother, father, or grandfather because they believe they are witches responsible for their misfortunes.*⁴⁰

In relation to elderly killings, between 2020-2022, there have been about 138 witchcraft-related reported murders in Kilifi County. Malindi had the highest number at 45 cases, followed by Ganze (34), Magarini (23), and Rabai (15)⁴¹.

In addition, Interviews with key informants and FGDs information show that conflicting ideologies between young people and the elderly highly contribute to the elderly killings. Land access and ownership, especially by the young people of Kilifi, is viewed from an economic lens. It is an opportunity for financial empowerment and an avenue for sustainable development. A woman leader stated:

*Many youths lack jobs. It is a trend when they are eighteen years of age; they want to ride motorcycles, so when they go to their grandfather and tell him they want to cut the land, and they refuse, the youth will do anything possible to kill the old man even if it is saying they are witches in order to sell the shamba and buy a motorcycle.*⁴²

Land is seen from a socio-cultural and historical lens among elders, with an emotional attachment associated with its cultural identity and heritage.⁴³ However, a youth leader explained that young people felt excluded from land management issues within their families. Nonetheless, in the last three years, the number of elderly deaths has decreased, reflecting the effectiveness of existing mitigation strategies. These include community sensitisation and awareness campaigns targeting harmful cultural practices and effective alternative community-based dispute resolution (A/CDR) mechanisms, capacity-building

³⁸ Woman Leader, 15 May 2024.

³⁹ Religious Leader, 13 May 2024.

⁴⁰ Woman Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁴¹ Haki Yetu, (2023) *THE AGED, ON EDGE: Witchcraft and Abuse of the Elderly in Kilifi and Kwale County* Haki Yetu, July 2023, <https://hakiyetu.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/The-Aged-on-Edge-B5-print-1.pdf>. Accessed 28 September 2024.

⁴² Interview with a Woman Leader, 14 May 2024.

⁴³ Wekesa, C. Ndalilo, L. and Swiderska, K. (2021) "Towards a Biocultural Heritage Territory in Rabai Cultural Landscape: Exploring Mijikenda Cultural Values and Practices for Sustainable Development" (Kilifi, Kenya: Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI). <https://www.kefri.org/assets/publications/articles/Towards%20a%20Biocultural%20Heritage%20Territory%20in%20Rabai%20Cultural%20Landscape.pdf>. Accessed 8 October 2024.

initiatives for law enforcement agencies, sensitisation among police on reporting, and the creation of systems and initiatives to access justice.⁴⁴ These findings were corroborated by a youth leader who noted security improvement in Kilifi, citing reduced elderly killings. The youth leader stated that through a film and theatre group, they educated youths in the villages and posted educative materials on social media on the issue.⁴⁵

Finally, juvenile gangs of boys and girls aged 13 years are also contributing to violence in Kilifi County. The gangs are engaged in petty crimes and robberies targeting the local community, and it is feared they can be easily recruited into extremist groups. One respondent mentioned that young boys are involved in theft, and young girls lure unsuspecting community members into situations where they become easy targets for criminal activities. Various participants mentioned the growth of juvenile gangs is due to peer pressure (youths recruiting each other to create a sense of belonging) and socio-economic factors (unemployment, high levels of school dropout). Others believed that some of the young people do not have families, role models, and social support systems, and they end up in drug use and violent crime. At the family level, lack of accountability and denial further worsens the issue as parents often do not accept allegations brought forward that their child is involved in a gang or abusing drugs.⁴⁶ A participant stated, "When we report, it's like it is carried by the wind...the child may be seen doing something bad, and when taken to the authority, the parents come and refuse all allegations, saying my child cannot do that."⁴⁷ Essentially, the children are not held accountable for their actions and hence continue in gang-related activities.

The abuse of *Cozepam*, identified as a highly addictive tranquilliser that slows one's central nervous system, causing sedation and muscle relaxation, was cited as common in the County.⁴⁸ Research participants noted drug abuse among young men and women, which emanated from easy access to drugs, idleness, unemployment and a lack of parental guidance.⁴⁹ One participant in women's focus group discussions (FGD) stated, *when your child says today there was no work, what will you do? Isn't it better if I eat khat to relieve stress?*⁵⁰ A youth leader noted that a parent is defending their child by saying that he has not done anything, and they have done it.⁵¹ Low education levels and high dropout rates due to the inability to pay school fees/poverty levels were also identified as contributing factors, with many young people resorting to joining gangs and having to take drugs to engage in criminal activities. "Children

⁴⁴ Haki Yetu, 'THE AGED, ON EDGE: Witchcraft and Abuse of the Elderly in Kilifi and Kwale County'.

⁴⁵ Interview with a Youth Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁴⁶ Interview with a Village Elder, 13 May 2024.

⁴⁷ Interview with Village Leader, 13 May 2024.

⁴⁸ Interview with a Youth Leader, 14 May 2024.

⁴⁹ Interview with a Woman Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁵⁰ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

⁵¹ Interview with a Youth Leader, 14 May 2024.

don't want to read, and there are school dropouts and mostly that brought by poverty and single parenting...many people are divorcees and single parents,"⁵² said a participant. Lack of role models and pervasive peer pressure to belong by joining gangs were also identified as crucial vulnerability factors for the youths in Kilifi.

The Kilifi County respondents also cited gender-specific vulnerability factors affecting young girls. One participant noted early teenage pregnancies and drug-related deaths among young girls.⁵³ This was attributed to a lack of education and high school dropouts since the parents could not afford school fees. When limited funds are available for education, the parents favour the boys over the girls.⁵⁴ A participant noted, "Our youths have lacked education, and others are denied the opportunity to education by parents since they say that the girls should wait for the boys to study so others (girls) develop mental health problems and enter drugs."⁵⁵ According to a study conducted, it revealed support for 'girls' education in Kilifi remains low due to the argument that they would be married and would benefit other families.⁵⁶ Additionally, the report also found that parents encouraged their daughters to engage in prostitution as a source of income.⁵⁷

Therefore, there is no linear or single driver of vulnerability to VE in Kilifi, necessitating collaborative responses.

Multi-Stakeholder Approaches to VE in Kilifi County

Operationalisation of the Kilifi County Action Plan (CAP)

A multi-stakeholder approach presents opportunities for state, non-state, and community actors to engage, leveraging each other's strengths and complementing efforts geared towards PCVE. In Kilifi County, the 'Whole of Government-and-Society' continues to be adopted as guided by the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE)⁵⁸ and the Kilifi County Action Plan (CAP). The NSCVE "adopts a multi-pronged approach emphasising elements on fostering national unity, early warning systems, disengagement and reintegration support, government expertise development, and effective

⁵² Interview with a CSO Representative, 15 May 2024.

⁵³ Interview with a Woman Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁵⁴ Interview with a Woman Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁵⁵ Interview with a Woman Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁵⁶ Darby O. and Reineke, P. (2022) "The Future of Work for Young Women in Kilifi," *Insight Report Kilifi, Kenya: WONDER Foundation*, <https://wonderfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Kenya-report-2021-the-future-of-work.pdf>. Accessed 28 September 2024.

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ The Government of Kenya. (2016). *NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM*. The Government of Kenya. Retrieved from <https://counterterrorism.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/National-Strategy-to-Counter-Violent-Extremism-NSCVE-1.pdf> Accessed 01 October 2024.

law enforcement."⁵⁹ At the county level, a multi-stakeholder approach to PCVE has been institutionalised through the CAPs, providing non-state actors with the official mandate and policy framework from the NSCVE to partner and complement state efforts to PCVE. The K-CAP is updated annually to keep track of the ever-changing PCVE dynamics and environment.

The county takes pride in its vibrant and robust stakeholder environment, which includes CSOs, government agencies, and development agencies working on PCVE. Additionally, the county has a Peace Directorate, a Peace Policy, and peace committees at the sub-county levels. The structures for coordination and operationalisation have also been developed, each outlining the composition and functions to guide effective implementation.

The Kilifi County Action Plan (CAP) strengthens collaboration between government agencies, civil society organisations, and communities through the County Engagement Forums (CEFs). The CEFs are mandated to develop respective annual CAP work plans in line with the NSCVE, a responsibility that has been followed well, as seen with the most current K-CAP 2023/2024. This development process involved a collaboration between the Department of Gender, Social Services, and Culture with the "Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DANIDA), which provided financial support through Act Change and Transform (Act!) and Kenya Community Support Centre (KECOSCE) who provided leadership and technical support throughout this process."⁶⁰ This demonstrates the multi-collaborative approach encompassing contributions from international and civil society organisations.

Secondly, the CEFs play a vital role in coordinating CAP's implementation process, guiding resource mobilisation, supporting PCVE mainstreaming, raising awareness of the CAP framework, and assisting capacity building of the county stakeholder forum (CSFs). However, field research data shows the Kilifi CEF faces challenges that hinder the full implementation of these mandates. Most Kilifi community members said they lack knowledge and awareness of the K-CAP.⁶¹ Moreover, the County government is not active in the CEF, which hinders a stronger national-county government PCVE partnership. Most of the activities are resourced by the CSOs through donor funding. As articulated by a participant, *in implementing the CAP (County Action Plan), there is a challenge in securing a commitment from the*

⁵⁹ Saraiva, R., & Erfe, A. (2023). Preventing violent extremism with resilience, adaptive peacebuilding, and community-embedded approaches. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*. doi:10.1016/j.cosust.2023.101271.

⁶⁰ Kilifi CAP 2023/2024

⁶¹ Participant County Workshop, 23 July 2024. "One major barrier is the limited access to education on PCVE strategies among community members. Additionally, most county government departments have not integrated PCVE initiatives, leading to a lack of mainstreaming these important strategies within the county's governance framework."

*government, as it has been largely the responsibility of CSOs.*⁶²

Activities of CEF have led to communities becoming more aware of violent extremism and its drivers. However, it was noted that public participation in county-initiated forums was on an invitation basis. If people, especially youths, were invited but expressed views critical of the government, often they would be excluded from attending subsequent forums.

While the policy frameworks for PCVE execution are present and updated regularly, their operationalisation and implementation remain a challenge. One participant noted the discord between the county government's role and its actual impact in addressing PCVE, exacerbated by the adverse effects of regime shifts, a lack of political goodwill,⁶³ and a lack of a designated PCVE leadership.⁶⁴

County Government-Community Initiatives

The County government has also started supporting socio-economic initiatives for all ages and genders to address VE vulnerabilities. For instance, it has been providing economic support to female *bodabodas riders (motorcycle operators)*, working with Technical and Vocational Education Training institutions (TVETs) to strengthen educational opportunities, and facilitating job placements for young people, among other activities.⁶⁵ The Kilifi County government also works with single parents and older women left with young children, providing them with economic opportunities. Different gender dynamics were established in the allocation of economic empowerment opportunities.

A village male leader noted that the county gives us seeds *from the government's organisation*. A CSO representative stated that *the Governor has launched a program to provide fishing boats to youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PWDs)*. A woman leader noted the presence of initiatives supporting female *bodabodas*, providing seedlings among farmers, and offering financial grants to empower youth initiatives such as boat and *bodaboda* businesses.

Right now, the county government has the resources to teach the youth in the Department of Agriculture; they have bought popcorn machines and maize grinders. I saw that the governor had authorised the officers to look for groups so that the affected youth could be bought hens through the gender office. They are given chicken and their feed plus medications.

⁶² Participant at a County Workshop, 23 July 2024.

⁶³ Whenever we call for meetings or give the next point of action these people are nowhere. It's only the office of county commission that sends a representative. When it comes to the county government they are nowhere. (Interview with a CSO Representative, 16 May 2024.)

⁶⁴ Participant at a County Workshop; Christine, J. (2024) The Blue Economy of Kilifi County: A Holistic Approach to PCVE.

⁶⁵ Interview with a State Actor, 14 May 2024.

Also, women and youth groups are given maize grinders, and they mostly target the ones on drugs; you are given contributions as a group. Others are given boats so that they can become fishermen so as not to enter drugs. The governor also gave out car wash machines and irrigation pumps for agriculture.

I have heard that now they have begun employing these youth, like sweeping roads and being county officers, and many are employed here in Kilifi as county police. ⁶⁶

The county also partners with boat operators within the coastline for economic empowerment and gathering intelligence.⁶⁷ The blue economy was highly referenced as a source of business opportunities in Malindi and Kilifi North. Blue economy is the "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems."⁶⁸ To address the socio-economic challenges young people face, the Kilifi County government has initiated blue economy programs.⁶⁹ One workshop participant brought attention to a program the governor started that gives fishing boats to women, children, and people with disabilities (PWDs). Another participant brought up ongoing initiatives in the County's Blue Economy Department, like the Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-Economic Development project (KEMFSED), which aims to improve youth living standards throughout the coastal region.

With support from the World Bank, the Kilifi State Department for Blue Economy and Fisheries is implementing a five-year KEMFSED project from 2020 to 2025. The initiative aims to foster community empowerment by boosting capacity in the management and governance of fishing operations and support community empowerment by increasing access to supporting livelihood activities.⁷⁰ A study conducted in Kilifi also found that young girls and women actively participated in blue economy activities, such as aquaculture, seaweed farming, mangrove harvesting, and fish selling.⁷¹

Blue economy programmes and initiatives provide avenues for providing economic stability among at-risk groups, as they allow youths to be engaged, may define their sense of purpose, and provide financial independence. A participant mentioned, "There is a woman who got funds with the blue economy. She found things to do business and to better their lives. There are youth groups who have their boats and

⁶⁶ Interview with a Female Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁶⁷ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

⁶⁸ National Environment Management Authority (2024) "Waste-Free Kenya Building The Circular Economy," NEMA, [https://www.nema.go.ke/images/ Docs/Awareness/Blue%20Economy.pdf](https://www.nema.go.ke/images/Docs/Awareness/Blue%20Economy.pdf).

⁶⁹ Christine, J. (2024) The Blue Economy of Kilifi County: A Holistic Approach to PCVE.

⁷⁰ Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-Economic Development Project, "Project Background – KEMFSED."

⁷¹ See WIOMSA and UN-Habitat report <https://www.wiomsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Blue-Economy-Case-Study-Kilifi-Final.pdf>

machines."⁷² Therefore, the blue economy presents a viable alternative to mitigate socio-economic conditions, breeding feelings of exclusion and equally reducing vulnerability to recruitment. Moreover, multi-stakeholder collaboration is evident through initiatives like the *Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-Economic Development project (KEMFSED)* and the *Go Blue Initiative* blue economy projects.⁷³ Equally, these collaboratives can be leveraged in PCVE efforts.

Other County government-led socio-economic initiatives include the *Kazi Mashinani* programme that aims to recruit 58 youth from each of Kilifi's 35 wards, prioritising rehabilitated drug users in areas such as Malindi, Shella, and Mariakani areas.⁷⁴ Additionally, in the Garashi area, Action Aid supports over 200 school dropouts and young mothers through its Local Rights Programme (LRP) and the Education for Life Project (ELP), addressing critical needs within the community, including promoting access to basic rights and services through the Local Rights Programs (LRP) that trains on leadership, human rights, and legal frameworks and increasing education uptake among children through the Education for Life Project (EFL).⁷⁵ These programmes contribute to the larger goal of building capacity in marginalised communities and eradicating poverty.

However, despite these programmes, access to government-based opportunities remains a challenge, sentiments noted from youths and women focus group discussions. Youths expressed frustrations with heavy bureaucratic processes to access opportunities involving complex application processes, which hinder their ability to benefit from these initiatives.

There are platforms where money has been put, like Wezesha and Uwezo, but even the youth who are getting that money always give up on the way. Those processes going and coming back cause a lot of disturbance.

I visited many groups yesterday; they applied for blue economy programmes, and when people were on their way, they lost hope. They were told about papers and imagine I was going and coming back, convincing them to fill them. You find that morale has gone down because of the procedure that the government has put in place.⁷⁶

⁷² Youth Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Participant from the Kilifi County Workshop, 23 July 2024.

⁷⁵ See <https://actionaid-kenya.org/kilifi-county/>

⁷⁶ Youths Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

CSO Engagements

The CSOs, NGOs, and inter-faith organisations have played a critical role in implementing PCVE programmes in Kilifi County. These efforts include community engagement forums, education programmes, socio-economic empowerment initiatives, interreligious awareness and outreach programmes, and offering psychosocial support. A participant noted the integration of mentorship programmes to build at-risk groups' self-awareness, self-esteem, anger management, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, increasing their resilience. Another indicated that their organisation collaborated with TVETs, county departments, and private sector businesses to create a job placement system.

We take them to TVETS and help them register. We have enrolled some of the youths. We call stakeholders forums and invite business people from around. We share our programs with them, and sometimes they absorb some youths to employment opportunities, e.g., Dolla, Safaricom, and any other private stakeholders. We also invite government stakeholders, e.g., the Ministry of youth gender and sports. They talk to them about issues with the Mbegu fund and Uwezo funds. We support them in applying for the funds from the groups we formed.⁷⁷

Respondents in Malindi emphasised the relevance and positive impact of psychosocial support initiatives. Previous programmes were identified as having created sustainable mentor-mentee systems, particularly in Malindi, to help at-risk groups find ready support and guidance from their mentors. Identified mentors included teachers in schools, churches, and madrassas, as well as from the CSOs.

CSOs were also identified to create awareness and sensitise communities on the risks and signs of radicalisation among youth, both in physical settings and through online platforms. These strategies demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of grassroots-level awareness campaigns in identifying and preventing early signs of radicalisation.

We always sensitise the community. We have our group whereby we go to other groups and talk with women and tell them anyone can join terrorism. How they know their child is not okay is by the child secluding himself, the child is silent, dropping grades and the timing in which they arrive home.⁷⁸

Cooperation among various religious and cultural groups was established in Kilifi as strategies women have adopted to prevent violent extremism. In the women's FGD, a participant stated,

We used to accept all four religions, which were Christians, mosques, and the rest, and we would go to a church and spend the day together. In another week, we would go to

⁷⁷ Interview with a Civil Society Member, 14 May 2024.

⁷⁸ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

*the mosque, and the sequence would go on. We would visit the Kaya and debunk all the theories of witchcraft, and we must respect them as much as we go to the church, madrassa, and Sunday school, educating our children.*⁷⁹

A participant in the men's FGD demonstrated *what we did with ustadhas matters regarding peace and security in the community through these dialogues—issues like police security and brutality. We brought 10 from each religion: Muslims, Christians, and traditionalists.*

*We held open discussions in 2022, where we worked with influencers to educate the masses and saw the partnership we had with the chief and local administration.*⁸⁰

These collaborative efforts on inter- and intra-religious visits and education demonstrate avenues for interfaith dialogues and the creation of awareness of cultural sensitivity, as well as mutual respect. These initiatives help to dispel the misconceptions of particular religious beliefs and cultural practices exploited by VEOs to polarise communities, allowing the prevention and countering of divisive and extremist narratives and equally fostering unity and resilience among community members in Kilifi.

However, the sustainability of these community-based initiatives is hindered by resource constraints, as women found it difficult to fully engage and support these efforts and strategies as they struggled to meet their basic needs. *Organisations have come and educated us, but it is not enough for us since we do not have employment or income that we get. Putting women like them here to educate them; they rely on you to feed them.*⁸¹ These challenges underscore the importance of strengthening existing community efforts on PCVE, especially among women-led organisations, and encourage the adoption of alternative engagement forums, such as online platforms of engagement. A participant noted an alternative to limited resources for physical community efforts, "sometimes it becomes tricky, but we go to the community and youth groups to sensitise that terrorism is there on online platforms."⁸²

Insufficient resources and funding were found to hinder significant barriers to the effective and continued implementation of PCVE activities in the region. The direct implementation and financing of the K-CAP have largely relied on donor-led funding and civil society. However, this over-reliance strategy on external funding becomes unstable as funds can lapse over time, and donor priorities may shift, making the implementation of PCVE efforts inconsistent. A CSO representative highlighted this challenge, stating, *Actually, we don't have any projects at the moment since we are independent, and it depends on whether*

⁷⁹ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

⁸⁰ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

⁸¹ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

⁸² Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

*the chair lady is sharp enough to look for funds since you can depend on donors.*⁸³ Another stated that *CSOs often rely on donor funding, which is time-bound.*⁸⁴

Some programmes were not adaptable to the changing context and did not align with community needs. A critical lesson established was that while donor-led programmes will conduct baseline surveys or community needs assessments before the beginning of a programme, they will emphasise implementing partners to stick to the initial proposals. This becomes a challenge as, during the implementation period, community needs may have evolved or changed, and a programme will not be timely in its intervention. One participant stated,

*One of the challenges is that sometimes the donors want you to go as you had proposed when making the proposal. In reality, some things are changing when you go to the community. When you want to change, it is not easy for them to accept it. Not all donors are flexible, and not all are easily convinced of the need for change. The budget is also a challenge as things on the ground change, and they want you to stick to the same budget.*⁸⁵

Sometimes, the relationship between CSOs and the Kilifi County governments is strained, hampering the partnerships. CSO participants noted that organisations working in the PCVE sector were mandated to clearly communicate their activities to the government, as they were subject to misunderstanding and misinterpretations.

*When you do CVE projects, you also have to be clear so they (the government) know exactly what you are doing. You have to engage them earlier. When you say you are doing a project, there may be misunderstandings and miscalculations like we were thought to be Al-Shabaab sympathisers as we were concentrating on CVE only.*⁸⁶

These restrictions sometimes resulted in the freezing of accounts and constant monitoring of their financial reporting.⁸⁷ A participant noted, "Even our accounts in 2015 were frozen, and KRA started following us. By that time, we had a lot of projects, and thus they suspected us."⁸⁸ Secondly, there are strained CSO relationships amongst themselves, characterised by competition and working in silos. One participant mentioned that *Organisations are more interested in sticking to their own mandate and implementing their own activities rather than coming together to implement.* When CSOs focus on their

⁸³ Interview with a CSO Representative, 15 May 2024.

⁸⁴ Participant at a County Workshop, 23 July 2024.

⁸⁵ Interview with a CSO Leader, 15 May 2024.

⁸⁶ Interview with CSO Representatives, 14 May 2024.

⁸⁷ Interview with CSO Representatives, 14 May 2024.

⁸⁸ Interview with CSO Representatives, 14 May 2024.

mandates rather than collaborating, their ability to address systemic PCVE issues effectively is diminished. With collaboration, CSOs can leverage each other's strengths, share resources, and create synergistic solutions that could achieve a broader impact.

Research Findings

Learning on the VE Context

- Continuous adaptation in PCVE programming is necessary to remain relevant and targeted towards the evolving at-risk groups, emerging actors, and VE dynamics. A diverse understanding and interpretation of VE in Kilifi changes with the evolving dynamics related to other crimes. Moreover, VE recruitment has evolved to incorporate personal motivating initiatives and educated individuals. These findings challenge the conventional narratives that only marginalised and socio-economically or politically disenfranchised groups are vulnerable to VEOs. Therefore, a key lesson is the continued shift and adaptation in radicalisation and recruitment strategies adopted by VEOs to remain appealing to a broader target of marginalised and educated individuals, each experiencing the sense of ideological, political, or socio-economic deprivation that independently necessitates similar PCVE adaptable programmes.
- Integration of PCVE programmes utilising alternative and community-based dispute resolution (A/CDR) mechanisms can address historical, socio-economic, and political grievances. One area that would benefit from this is the widespread issue of land disputes and elderly killings. Besides, research shows that community sensitisation, awareness creation, education on land rights, harmful cultural practices, and conflict resolutions are effective. Programming that empowers alternative and community-based mechanisms of addressing the tensions and relationships between young people and older generations will help address the root causes of violence over land ownership. Multi-collaboration can also strengthen the effectiveness of the A/CDR mechanism, as seen with the newly formed multi-sectoral steering committee, including representatives from government agencies (national and county), civil society organisations, village elders, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), and the Directorate of Social Development.⁸⁹ The county's alternative justice system can also be supported to champion a people-centred approach to conflict resolution and reduce the burden for formal justice institutions.

⁸⁹ Okwembah, N. (2024) "Committee Established to Stop Killing of Elderly in Kilifi," *The Standard*, 21 September, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/coast/article/2001503073/committee-established-to-stop-killing-of-elderly-in-kilifi>. Accessed 01 October 2024.

- Family-oriented PCVE programmes and interventions to educate and empower parents. Awareness and education on vulnerability factors, such as identity crisis and differential attitudes toward boy-girl child education, can be targeted within these programmes. Moreover, women's empowerment is crucial at the family and community level, as mothers are the first contact persons with their children, enabling them to identify, probably predict, and respond to radicalisation. A participant noted,

*Positive parenting sessions on prevention and response to violence as this is where all these things start. The youth gangs are where violence begins in the community, so we should involve the parents.*⁹⁰

It is crucial to empower them with the appropriate knowledge to recognise early warning signs and equip them with skills and resources to address them before they escalate and be able to access safe reporting channels. Women experience difficulty in reporting incidents of violence and abuse due to a lack of secure channels and fear of victimisation and targeting from the authorities.⁹¹

*There is a need for mentors, specifically for women and parenting sessions, as some parents lack proper parenting skills and understanding of their children. Unfortunately, there are no safe spaces and support systems in the community and families, indicating a gap in the community support system.*⁹²

Empowered women can also influence and build the capacity of others facing similar problems, creating a support system. Moreover, these programmes exist in Kilifi. Therefore, they can be mapped out, identified, and strengthened through continuous support. For instance, a participant noted *I participated in the program, working with youth and women, and I strongly believe that the program should be continued.*⁹³ Another participant stated, "We really thank the government for introducing positive parenting since they noticed the need."⁹⁴

- Supporting existing alternative family care systems to address limitations of the lack of role models and to strengthen mentor-mentee relationships for at-risk young populations. For instance, the *Kafaalah* or guardianship family care system can be further strengthened in Kilifi. This system is implemented through collaborative efforts between state and non-state across

⁹⁰ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

⁹¹ Women Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

⁹² Participant from a County Workshop, 23 July 2024.

⁹³ Participant from a County Workshop, 23 July 2024.

⁹⁴ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

sectors like education, gender, children's services, and religious sectors.⁹⁵ The system is recognised by both International and national legal frameworks, which recognise this guardianship family care system and is mainly practised among Muslim communities. It occurs when an individual or family member voluntarily takes up the roles of maintaining, educating, and protecting a deprived child as a parent would do with a biological child.⁹⁶ Therefore, this system can be supported and championed through the "National Framework for Implementation of Kafaalah, the Alternative Family Care (AFC) Standard Operating Procedures- to which the Kafaalah SOP is integrated within and the Kafaalah Regulations.⁹⁷

- Gender-specific PCVE programmes and interventions are needed to empower young women through increased education and economic empowerment uptake. Interventions tailored to re-entry and increased enrolment of girls and teenage mothers in school can be effective. These interventions may include stakeholders championing school re-entry policies and conducting (re)enrolment campaigns. The Department of Education can be leveraged at the county level to map out vulnerable youths under the Kilifi County Ward Scholarship Fund Act⁹⁸ and the Help Fund.⁹⁹ TVETs and the private sector can also develop sustainable employment programmes for in-school and out-of-school youth, offering them viable pathways to skills development and employment.
- Supporting and expanding the uptake of youth and female leadership positions. For instance, empowering women to take up positions of chiefs, Nyumba Kumi leaders, and religious and village elders (peace ambassadors)¹⁰⁰ will increase their access to at-risk girls and enable them to address gender-specific vulnerabilities in ways that probably male village leaders may not. There is also a need to encourage more youths to take up leadership positions, as they can act as peace ambassadors, offer spiritual guidance, and influence attitudinal change among other youths in offline and digital spaces.
- Adopting creative channels of young engagement through sports, theatre, and digital spaces increases their engagement and effectively reaches broader populations. Using a multi-stakeholder approach, meaningful youth engagement in the whole government and society is crucial to increase agency, influence behavioural and attitudinal change, increase participation,

⁹⁵ See https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/kafaalah_4_pager_2024_24may2024_1_1.pdf

⁹⁶ This system differs from adoption in that in the Kafaalah, a child maintains their family name, ties, and inheritance rights from the birth family. The child also does not get inheritance rights from the guardian family, not unless it is provided within a contractual will or offered as a gift.

⁹⁷ See https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/kafaalah_4_pager_2024_24may2024_1_1.pdf

⁹⁸ See <https://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/2020/KilifiCountyWardScholarshipFundAmendmentAct2020.pdf>

⁹⁹ Women's Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Women FGD, 15 May 2024.

and amplify their voice in PCVE. Programmes can identify and train youth ambassadors within these spaces to educate and create awareness of the creative approaches of PCVE. Supporting and nurturing youth talent can be leveraged in sports, music, acting, and online work through the digital economy, and remote work can be accessible through the *Ajira* Digital programme. Moreover, supporting the online and offline gig economy platforms and networks can help young people access job opportunities. Creating awareness of online gig economy opportunities in sectors such as driver and rider services, personal and household services, business services, delivery services, professional services hospitality and medical care, as well as offline sectors requiring seasonal or casual workers can provide job opportunities.¹⁰¹

A participant noted *we also have youths who are talented in football, but if you look at Kilifi County, it has never been the case where ten or three people were taken to be supported.*¹⁰²

Kilifi County participants noted the integral role of the Sports, Gender, and Youth County department in using sports as a means of conflict prevention and resolution that can be strengthened and supported. A participant echoed,

*I see the Department for Gender, Youth and Sports to try and solve violence in the community. They try to use sports to solve violence in the community.*¹⁰³

The adopted strategies have also been diverse and inclusive of people with disabilities.

*Even now, they have gone the extra mile for people living with disabilities. There was a time when PWDs were able to participate in wheelchair sports.*¹⁰⁴

When looking at how young men and women in Kilifi have participated in and led PCVE initiatives, it was identified that an effective engagement strategy involves identifying different sector leaders in every location and training them on PCVE strategies.¹⁰⁵ The information is then cascaded to their sector members. Empowered youths can also help create relationship blocks that increase access to socio-economic, political, and psychosocial support for at-risk individuals, in addition to focusing on attitude and behavioural change.

¹⁰¹ See https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Youth_Impact_Labs_Kenya_Gig_Economy_Report_2019_1.pdf pg. 5- 6

¹⁰² Youth Focus Group Discussion, 15 May 2024.

¹⁰³ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

¹⁰⁴ Men's Focus Group Discussion, 14 May 2024.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with a CSO Member, 15 May 2024.

Learning on the Multi-Stakeholder Approaches to VE

- Cultivating a culture of political goodwill can lead actors to commit to supporting PCVE-related interventions. Creating awareness and sensitising political actors on institutionalising PCVE within the county's development agenda can create a pathway to a sustainable funding model and mechanisms at the state level and reduce overreliance on donor funding. The involvement of political leaders, including members of the office of the Governor and the county assembly, can influence resource allocation for the CAP implementation "through mainstreamed County plans such as County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and Annual Development Plans (ADPs)."¹⁰⁶ Incorporating PCVE programs into the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) development, planning, and budgeting can increase institutionalisation, localisation, and sustainability. Sustained resources and coordinated efforts are necessary for the effective and successful implementation of the K-CAP.
- Mainstreaming the K-CAP pillars into the County Departments could increase the county government's involvement in PCVE initiatives. Mainstreaming will create an environment of working in tandem rather than standalone projects designed independently for County and CSO actors. The Department of Gender, Social Services, Youth, and Culture can serve as an entry point, as it led the collaborative efforts to develop the K-CAP 2023/2024 through training and awareness on mainstreaming. Departments responsible for land matters, the blue economy, education, ICT, environment, health, and corporate development are also crucial in mainstreaming the PCVE agenda. The training ensures that all relevant stakeholders are well-informed about the CEF, K-CAP, mainstreaming its objectives, and managing and utilising the funds effectively. These elements will help eliminate duplication of responsibilities among stakeholders and refine resource utilisation in the county. However, there is a need for a legally binding framework for compliance and accountability among all responsible actors. According to a participant,

*There is representation from the national government, local governments, and CSOs in each pillar. CSOs report on their work during their monthly meetings. Nevertheless, officials of the county and national governments do not share their reports.*¹⁰⁷

Institutionalisation can also provide a safety net to the implementing CSOs who are at risk from government actors due to being misinterpreted and subject to scrutiny when implementing CVE programmes and initiatives.

- Strengthening public-private sector partnerships to create sustainable government-enabled and private-sector-led systems for PCVE. The county government and private sector can work

¹⁰⁶ Kilifi County Action Plan 2023/2024 pg., 19.

¹⁰⁷ Participant at the Kilifi County Workshop, 23 July 2024.

together, leveraging the benefits of local industries within the blue economy and other sectors, aligning with available skills among the youth. It is crucial to sensitise the private sector and demonstrate their role and entry points in matters of PCVE. They can also develop supportive strategies within their corporate social responsibility frameworks as an entry point to provide social support.

- Leveraging the role of technology and digital spaces to amplify youth voices in PCVE: Online platforms present risks that VEOs can exploit to radicalise users, especially youths, through direct communication with recruiters and sharing extremist resources. At the same time, these spaces also create opportunities to amplify youth voices through the availability of resource hubs, the presence of platforms to offer online spiritual and mentorship sessions, digital commerce opportunities, and safe spaces to debate different issues. Stakeholders in ICT departments in Kilifi County and telecommunication companies can partner to create knowledge repositories that are easily accessible to youths on religious narratives, alerts on county development and socio-economic programmes or funds. The online platforms can also be avenues for safely reporting suspected cases of radicalisation and recruitment.

In addition, technology can be leveraged to champion the uptake of the digital economy and remote working among the youth to diversify employment opportunities. Existing strategies, such as the *Ajira* Digital programme and the gig economy, can be leveraged. Government, CSOs, and private sectors can partner to train youths on remote job platforms, content creation, and social media monetisation, among other opportunities.

- Capacity building and creating awareness of PCVE among state actors. Increased awareness of PCVE and ways to integrate it into county department initiatives is crucial among government officials. These include capacity building the CEF and pillar heads on mainstreaming skills and a better understanding of PCVE dynamics in Kilifi. Strengthening the CEF will help cascade the knowledge of the PCVE agenda among political actors. More training among county and national leadership will also equip them with the necessary understanding and clarity of their role in mainstreaming PCVE.

Moreover, training manuals, mentoring programmes, or transitional plans can be developed and institutionalised into the county and national government orientation programmes for all new and existing personnel to be trained. This could help address the challenges of turnover rates, leadership transitions, and the lack of knowledge retention on PCVE when staff changes occur. It would ensure continuity, support institutional memory, and promote sustainability.

- Youth capacity building on resilience and effective citizen engagement to amplify their voices. There is a need for mentorship programmes that impart knowledge on identity awareness, soft skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership, as well as entrepreneurial skills and digital literacy to increase their resilience and strengthen their agency. This approach would better prepare young people and community members to engage with different vulnerabilities that extremists may exploit to lure them.

Conclusion

The violent extremism landscape in Kilifi County continues to evolve, necessitating the adaptability of adopted interventions, which are strengthened through a multi-collaborative whole of society and government approach. As the VEOs adapt to the existing prevention and countering violent extremism (PCVE) measures and the ever-changing socio-economic and political landscapes, so too must the PCVE programmes and actors. As VEOs align with global influences on ideological shifts and technological advancements, PCVE measures and actors should adopt and embrace an evolving and adaptable nature within PCVE programmes and efforts for increased effectiveness.


There is a need to consider drawing county-specific lessons that reflect the unique experiences and progress in implementing the Kilifi CAP. Strengthening both state and non-state actors to address grievances and feelings of marginalisation to prevent the exploitation of these issues by extremist groups in a coordinated and seamless manner is the cornerstone of sustainable PCVE efforts and interventions. This coordination should be strengthened by legally binding policy and legal frameworks to increase the effectiveness of adopted interventions and institutionalise change. Furthermore, sustainable funding mechanisms and resource pools must be created for the effective implementation of PCVE initiatives by mainstreaming them into the county departments, organisational objectives, and legal frameworks. Building long-lasting and robust relationships between stakeholders is crucial, including cultivating a culture of political will and support for PCVE issues among state actors, as well as good relationships between state actors and CSOs.

Strengthening the education sector in Kilifi County will improve literacy levels and impart technical, vocational, digital, and soft skills and knowledge. Additionally, capacity building and sensitisation should be encouraged to impart knowledge, attitudinal change, and develop sustainable healthy habits among various state and non-state actors, community, women, religious, youth leaders, and youths. By extension, it enhances citizen engagement of county initiatives and processes, strengthened through

continuous sensitisation, community awareness, and education on public engagement processes to embrace data-driven and evidence-based policy advocacy strategies.

This report also highlights the importance of acknowledging and promoting the different roles women, girls, and young men play at all levels, including within families, communities, civil society, educational institutions, the private sector, and government, including security, intelligence, and law enforcement. Finally, supporting existing support systems and strengthening connections between different stakeholders is important to increase sustainability and effectiveness. These systems include job placements (formal and informal systems, education-to-work transition systems), mentor-mentee relationships, family and gender-based programmes, socio-economic initiatives (*Kazi Mashinani*, the *Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-Economic Development project (KEMFSED)*, the *Go Blue Initiative* blue economy projects, and the online or digital economy (*Ajira Digital* programme and the gig economy platforms), peace committees and community policing frameworks, County Engagement Forums (CEFs), A/CDR mechanisms (such as the alternative justice system and the multi-sectoral steering committee on stopping elderly killings), and educational systems (the Kilifi County Ward Scholarship Fund Act).

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