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POLICY BRIEF

Lessons from the Past can Impact the Future

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

North Eastern Kenya has had a myriad of conflict systems that trace roots to the different massacres in 1990.⁽¹⁾ Though the area witnessed some calm spells in the later 1990 and early 2000, the level of conflict in North Eastern Kenya started rising 2010-2013 resulting from the introduction of the new constitution and the incursion of KDF in Somalia in October 2011. Clan dynamics form the heart of conflicts in the Northeastern region of Kenya. Most of the clans in Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir have a presence and familial links to those in Somalia. The growth and expansion of Al-Shabaab point to interclan wars in Somalia that analysis⁽²⁾ associate ascension to power of different commanders to clan undercurrents. The formation of the Ethiopian Al-Shabaab military wing by Godane points to this fact.⁽³⁾ This wing comprised members of Ogaden, Reer Isaaq, and Reer Haaruun Clan.⁽⁴⁾ During the incursion to Somalia, the Ogaden clan who were at the forefront of the teams contributed to increased radicalisation and recruitment of locals within Somalia.⁽⁵⁾

These dynamics have added to local political competition in a post-2010 North-eastern retro that saw the launch of the new constitution; creating devolved units of governance. The Securing Communities against Threats of Violent Extremism (SECURE), the project was implemented against a backdrop of a conflict system that is institutionalised by the clan systems, creating vulnerabilities that made it easier for Al-Shabaab to permeate. The lessons learnt from projects like these can help future programming by providing insights into what works and available opportunities in communities.

INTRODUCTION

External factors affect countering violent extremism programming. Awareness of these factors including; elections and other political changes, security operation as witnessed in Boni forest, security amendments, and clan conflicts, interact with interventions in the communities, were implementing partners work. Understanding the underlying rhetoric on violent extremism is critical for programming. The role of human agency and relationships associated with personal relationships, social bonds, and group dynamics, provide crucial clues for P/CVE. Personal relations, social networks, and group dynamics account for the formal or loose association with violent extremism. Additionally, lessons from implementing projects in communities can provide insights to at-risk groups, target ages and various responses. The findings from the SECURE project detail an at-risk population that includes children under the age of ten, an at-risk population that provides for herders from the pastoral communities and driving action from the Kenya Defence Forces.

1 Ngala, Chome. 2016. Violent Extremism and Clan Dynamics in Kenya. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 32.

2 Jarle, Stig, Hansen. 2016. Al-Shabaab in Somalia. London: Hurst and Co.

3 IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP) and Sahan Foundation. 2016. Al-Shabaab as a Transnational Security Threat: Fostering Resilience, Regional Integration and Peace for Sustainable Development. Ethiopia: IGAD Security Sector Program, 53.

4 Ibid

Brendon

J, Cannon, and Dominic Ruto Pkalya. 2017. "Why al-Shabaab Attacks Kenya: Questioning the Narrative Paradigm." Terrorism and Political Violence (Tadfonline).; Anderson, David M, and Jacob McKnight. 2014. "Kenya at war: Al-Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa." African Affairs (Oxford University Press) 114 (454): Pg. 1-27.

In 2016, the SECURE project was launched based on the primary aim of supporting community leaders, civil society, and local government to develop community-based strategic CVE plans. The overall goal of the project was 'to protect communities from imminent threats of violent extremism and radicalisation using technology in early warning and response.' The strategic goal focused on countering violent extremist radicalisation and promotion of rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists in East Africa through increased partnerships, community outreach. This also included strategic communications by and between law enforcement and civil society. The SECURE project involved many awareness activities with the local implementing partners on the ills of violent extremism and human rights abuses.

PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE

This brief is informed by an end-line study commissioned by ACT Kenya. The review borrows insights from the SECURE project and intends to provide ideas for programming in Wajir, Mandera and Garissa. It covers the project's contribution to the reduction of radicalisation and recruitment in the community. It provides insights on the level of impact, capacity building initiatives and the resulting actions from stakeholders including law enforcement, women and youth, and, the role of women and family engagement in preventing violent extremism.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Communication of issues related to violent extremism has always been a challenge in the communities. Additionally, success stories from programs have not been shared widely, resulting in a situation where implementing partners try to reinvent the wheel when drafting responses. SECURE project managed to develop a reporting tool called Mulika Uhalifu successfully. From the findings, most of the members of the community appreciated its use as it served as a conveyor in situations requiring quick responses from the government. Programs and activities planned for the northern frontier counties can benefit a lot through the adoption of existing resources like Mulika Uhalifu by providing revisions to address the platform rather than inventing new options that would require awareness in the community.

2. Religious Ideology as a driver of violent extremism in the three counties is shallow and serves as a framer for narratives. Other drivers, including proximity to Somalia and Injustices, have increased by 1% to 8% and 17% respectively, for the men. The women prioritise, poverty at 31%, broken families at 22%, injustice at 17% and proximity to Somalia at 5%. Future programming should concentrate on linking interventions to the issues of devolution and good governance, clan conflict and the need for resources. These issues tie into the narratives that propel Al-Shabaab in the communities.

3. Respondents in Mandera mentioned that some youth were being forced into violent extremist groups and trafficked into Somalia. Though evaluation did not dig deeper into the details of how this process takes place, as a learning area, future programming should also include a focus for migration and movement vis-à-vis the link between human trafficking and violent extremism. The questions related to migration/ movement and violent extremism now form the bulk of the discussions, but limited data from programs and research hinder a response from the community and government actors.

4. Capacity building remains a critical component of preventing violent extremism. Different programs, including SECURE project, develop training manuals on various issues and drivers that relate to violent extremism. As an achievement, SECURE training on Human Rights Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism. This training encouraged community and law enforcement engagement at the community level. Different development partners, including the United Nations, is creating repositories that put together lessons learnt, monitoring and evaluation tools, manuals, and success stories, to aid programs implement activities from evidence. Cross-fertilisation and sharing of available resources support continuity in programs and ensures ease in measuring change over time.

5. Engagement of women in communities has become a new frontier for programing. The processes and mechanisms for engagement have not been clearly articulated as various assumptions server to reinforce myths rather than achieving successes. The SECURE project was able to build the capacity of women to engage. By ensuring interaction and discussion between the women and other stakeholders on issues of security at the community level. One notable success to be replicated in other program activities included the “Child Accountability Platforms.” These platforms ensured accessible information sharing on missing persons and guidance for the women on available options when dealing with violent extremism.

Though the conflict, coupled with the myriad of factors have made program implementation in North Eastern Kenya complex, the lessons learnt from implementing partners, and program like SECURE can provide insights for future activities. The full report covering the findings from the program can be accessed on the Act Kenya Site.

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