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# POLICY BRIEF

Application of Systems Thinking to Programs

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A NEW APPROACH TO  
P/CVE

**Executive Summary:** The Horn of Africa region faces many and intertwined conflict systems. The existence of terrorism, cross-border conflicts, resource-based conflicts and civil instability has persisted despite the positive efforts from affected states, regional frameworks and the support from the international community.<sup>1</sup> Available data from Scofield Associates show that other conflict systems contribute to the vulnerabilities and narratives pushing individuals into violent extremism and terrorism.<sup>2</sup> Radicalisation and recruitment spaces are dynamic, and the discussions on the role model placement of specific individuals as influencers to violent extremism include politicians and other peer groups in the community.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between young people and charismatic leadership as drivers to VE has a more significant association to peer influence rather than prior knowledge of the leader. The business community is not left out. Apart from the impact of violent extremism to investment, the role they should play to prevent violent extremism cannot be underestimated.<sup>4</sup>

Being one of the most diverse regions - in terms of socio-cultural dynamics, economic practices and capacity, and the political configuration, Kenya presents both viable approaches to peace and challenges embedded in such differentiation. It is because of the relationships between individuals and environment, that result in a transactional, reciprocal and a self-influencing system.<sup>5</sup> Criminal activity including terrorism and VE in Kenya is as a result of disruptions to the system either from within or from outside the system.<sup>6</sup> However, despite all this, often when terrorism is analysed or when decisions about actual or potential conflict are made, the kind of reasoning that is followed is simplistic, linear.<sup>7</sup> It results in disregard for complexity and limits the opportunities for systemic thinking.<sup>8</sup> Exploring opportunities outside the security norm to include agribusiness, private sector engagement and reduction of the vulnerabilities in the conflict systems; would provide gains when dealing with violent extremism. Several entities addressing development and peace-building challenges can, therefore, hinge programming on continuous data consumption that is effective, flexible and sustainably relies multiple systemic variables instead of a linear approach.

**Introduction:** This brief is informed by a stakeholder meeting at the Tribe hotel held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 aimed at discussing sustainable peace and engagement options for 2019. The attendants accounted for fifty individuals from the national and county government, diplomats, civil society, community, academia, and development organisations. The panellist included Dr Michael Hauser from ICRISAT, Dr Halkano Wario from Egerton University, Mr Dominic Pkalya from Act and Ms Pauline Skapper from Rift-valley Institute (Moderator). They responded to four questions touching on preventing violent extremism programming and areas of focus for 2019. Additionally, the discussions also included feedback from the National Counter Terrorism Centre on their programming and data analysis from 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP (2017), Journey to Extremism Report

<sup>2</sup> Scofield Associates (2018), An analysis of the National Strategy and County Action Plans, Report for LPI

<sup>3</sup> Search for Common Ground (2018), Tupatane Maskani Report

<sup>4</sup> KEPSA 2018, Understanding the Impact of Violent Extremism on Kenya's Private Sector

<sup>5</sup> Friedman, B. D., & Allen, K. N. (2014). *Systems Theory*. Sage.

<sup>6</sup> Friedman, B. D., & Allen, K. N. (2014). *Systems Theory*. Sage.

<sup>7</sup> Gallo, Gallo. (2012, 07 16). Conflict Theory, Complexity and Systems Approach†. Italy: Published online in Wiley Online Library.

<sup>8</sup> Burns, D., & Worsley, S. (2015). Navigating Complexity in International Development: Facilitating Sustainable Change at Scale. Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing.

**Purpose and Intended Use:** This policy brief examines some opportunities for learning, from a focused discussion on the gaps available, the changing trends in Kenya and the Horn of Africa. It also has contributions from other development partners, and business associates, who strive to discern their role in preventing violent extremism. The brief reviews feedback is covering; the conflict and violent extremism trends, gains made while dealing with violent extremism, opportunities to explore for 2019 and options for measuring & tracking progress. It provides a recommendation that focuses on complexity aware approaches while situating PVE using the systems theory in 2019.

### Research Questions and Recommendations:

1. What are the trends of conflict and violent extremism in the region, and how do these trends affect development?

Several events show a changing trend on VE in Kenya and globally. The case of Dusit, for instance, does not mention the KDF in Somalia but somewhat influenced by international narratives, including the movement of the US embassy actions in Israel. The Dusit attack showed the local elements taking the active role in the actions of the groups. The profile and geographies of terrorist have changed. Recent events show an update to the profile on the potential extremist. The extremist organisations are upping the game and are trying to look at individuals in not so “hot-spot” geographical areas.<sup>9</sup> Spillover counties require programming based on contextual issues.

2. What are the gains made both in working with government, development partners and communities?

The broad definition acts as one of the gains made. The meaning and intention of VE to include fragility and violence has expanded the engagement process at least from the agribusiness perspective. For every conflict seen, there is a political economy around it that need to be addressed at different levels. The county action plans should not be seen in isolation but as a response to the fragility issues in the said communities. The presence of the CAPs<sup>10</sup> has made it possible for the local community members to play a role and built synergies with NCTC<sup>11</sup>. The new generation caps are now also providing aspirations and experiences and failures from the last developed plans. However, the practicality of the documents needs attention.

In a conflict, transformation model has provided an opportunity to deal with the structures and engagement with the national systems and local governments to deal with the issues. Additionally, we can now openly talk about the challenges relating to VE, and the discussions with NCTC has made it easier to engage. The questions on the devolution of security is now being looked at as a shared responsibility and a process of dealing with the challenge. The disengagement framework is available, but a policy can be better placed to insulate the gains made by organisations within the communities.

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<sup>9</sup> Guldberg, H. (2003, 07 01). Challenging the precautionary principle. Retrieved 04 2019, from Spiked: <http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/5085#.W6i5PRMzbxg>

<sup>10</sup> CAPs: - County Action Plans

<sup>11</sup> NCTC: - National Counter Terrorism <sup>11</sup> Guldberg, H. (2003, 07 01). Challenging the precautionary principle. Retrieved 04 2019, from Spiked: <http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/5085#.W6i5PRMzbxg>

<sup>11</sup> CAPs: - County Action Plans

<sup>11</sup> NCTC: - National Counter Terrorism Centre

3. What are the opportunities to explore when dealing with violent extremism, terrorism and development in 2019?

There is a link between the resource conflict, migration and movement and politics, and therefore, we need to be keen on the areas of intervention. We need to refocus our work on the areas of intervention. Therefore the discussions should remain as broad as possible. The issues of fragility and development still come into play. Some counties are corridors through radical's pass; others are the theatres of violence; others are radicalisation areas. Interventions have the opportunity of reviewing the dynamics through an analysis of the geopolitics of terror in Kenya. The next frontier of VE would be on the critical infrastructure and calls for linkages on the critical infrastructure in the community. The Bill on Critical Infrastructure <sup>12</sup> should be revived to look at VE and its impact.

Engagement in the semi-arid areas including northern Nigeria and Northern Kenya where conflicts abound include risks from Boko-Haram and Al-Shabaab. The space of conflict transformation has blurred the curtain between the resource-based conflict and other conflict issues, including VE and Terrorism. Close attention is required to the local realities and vulnerabilities within these communities. Targeting is essential as reports from development show that the vulnerable age in Kenya is that around 19 years for male and women. Activities should target the right individuals while focusing on engaging the military whom the community views as a stakeholder and avoid harm.

4. How do we measure progress and know what works?

0% radicalisation, 100% counter-terrorism are not yet an achievement, therefore research data should be founded on realistic data and actionable activities. Also, a pioneering plan of M&E is being developed by NCTC to measure the progress of activities being done, recommendations to the government on how to engage in PVE based on organic experiences is critical. Scofield Associates is developing a P/CVE-Index to support these actions. Some of the questions should focus on in 2019 include; What the home-grown solutions are, how our communities bounce back from the challenges of violent extremism, how we understand resilience as a component of violent extremism, how we relate the impact of violent extremism to other issues within these areas and how do we communicate success in our program?

A major challenge we are facing right now is the definition of success in our communities and their contribution to the big discussion on PVE. It is excellent to learn more from what works in the different counties, but critically important is the need to review the mechanisms of failure in our programming. We learn a lot from the mechanisms of failure as these can be related to the challenges faced in our communities.

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<sup>12</sup> Stanley K. Manduku, (2016) Securing Kenya: Overview and Implications of the Critical Infrastructure Protection Bill, ISACA Kenya Annual Conference

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