

April 2022

Violent Extremist Narrative Materiality Development and Use in Mombasa, Kwale, Lamu and Nairobi Counties.

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Executive Summary

Early initiation into violent extremist engagement ensures a higher level of narrative development, sharing and socialization. The four Counties of Mombasa, Kwale, Lamu and Nairobi, have witnessed the wrath of violent extremism (VE) and terrorism. Most of the feedback from the respondents in the four Counties mention a mix of previous stories associated with narrative development, with some current activities.

For example, the individuals mentioned as agents of recruitment have either disappeared or have lost their lives in various attacks. The narratives and engagement in these Counties have criss-crossing information depending on its presentation. There are numerous commonalities to the activities happening in Majengo, Nairobi and Mombasa, Bongwe in Kwale, and Mpeketoni in Lamu.

The narratives focus more on the religious cover to anchor the actions and influence engagement. For instance, the motivation for the youth engagement and formulation of the messages includes examples of the entry into Masjid Musa in Mombasa, and the Usalama Watch in Nairobi as the anchor point. While these are wrongs against the communities, they remain relatable at the religious level rather than the resonance-factor level.

This County brief provides insights from a ten-county study funded by the Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi and carried out by Scofield Associates. The study, conducted between June and December 2021, sought to understand the vulnerabilities that link the offline and online narrative pushing individuals into violent extremism (VE). This County brief covers the summary from four Counties of Mombasa, Kwale, Lamu and Nairobi.

The overall findings from the ten-county study developed a vulnerability targeting framework that provided a categorization of Counties based on the narratives developed, the resonance factors, the level of socialization in the VE spectra, and the possibility of specific medium use to encourage their uptake.

It makes the case that while the narratives are important in the processes leading to VE and terrorism, the socialization levels to specific conflict determine their development, and utility by the target populations in the three Counties. The findings from the four counties show the following:

1. The narrative's development and framing are highly dependent on the religious cover, with limited inclusion of resonance factors. This points to higher socialization, and an allowance for grouping for vulnerability targeting.

2. There is an increased use of narrative materiality in the four Counties. It may be argued that these Counties form the originators and editors of the narratives used in Kenya. This starts with the development of the Gaidi Mtaani, videos of Ahmed Iman in Nairobi, to the sharing of videos of Aboud Rogo from the Coastal Regions.

3. The use of other mediums like television and other adverts is widespread practice in these Counties. The respondents mention various calls for help to the Muslim Ummah through messaging that includes big screens in Nairobi.

4. Like other counties with Medium Socialization, non-achievement of the promises in the narratives, results in seizing of engagement by the vulnerable participants from the Counties. However, not all who seek a way out successfully leave the violent extremist organizations (VEOs) or survive the suspicion from government agents.

5. The communicator influences narrative uptake. Across the four Counties, there are mentions of the communicators being known individuals from within the community. This makes it easy for the youth to engage, as these individuals serve as trust and reference partners for the VEO's.

6. The stigma extended to remaining families also makes them opt for engagement and further travel to Somalia. Such stigma makes them to be outcasts within the community and in some instances, the narratives they try to avoid, serve as their solace.

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By Muliru Yoni, Fathima Azmiya and Halkano Wario

Nairobi, being the capital city of Kenya, is a huge city with diverse residents. Nairobi is also a city of contrasts that is since colonial period segregated along class lines with leafy estates in its western side settled in by wealthier individuals, key business enterprises, office complexes, high-end hotels, government offices, international organizations, and foreign embassies. The eastern side of the city is dense residential areas for middle- and lower-income dwellers, with also numerous informal settlements with high crime rate and unemployment.

Kwale County is in South-Eastern Kenya and borders the Republic of Tanzania to the Southwest, Taita Taveta to the West and northwest; Kilifi to the North and Northeast; and Mombasa to the East. The county borders the Indian Ocean to the East and Southeast. The County has 4 constituencies: Msambweni, Lunga Lungu, Matuga and Kinango. Kwale is administratively divided to 20 wards comprising 4 sub counties, 9 divisions, 37 locations and 84 sub locations.

The County is a hotspot for recruitment, aiding the planning of attacks, as well as a base for violent extremist networks. In Kwale, convergence of extremist religious ideology, political marginalization, unemployment, and poverty have served as catalysts for recruitment into violent extremist groups like Al-Shabaab and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Syria (ISIS).

Mombasa is a region in the Kenya's Coast, located in the east of the country, bordered on one side by the Indian Ocean. Mombasa has a diverse ethnic and religious population. Mijikenda communities live throughout the Coast and are the Indigenous coastal population. Historical, migration of upcountry Kenyans has affected the economic and social lives of the coastal population, often triggering ethnic tensions. Tensions often erupt when newcomers from the outside are buying up property in the coast, displacing Mombasa's Indigenous families.

Lamu County is on the Northern Coast of Kenya and borders Tana River County to the southwest, Garissa County to the North, and Somalia to the Northeast. The South of the county borders the Indian Ocean. The County comprises the mainland and Lamu Archipelago.

Administratively, the county has two constituencies – Lamu West and Lamu East with ten wards, 23 locations and 38 sub-locations. The majority of Lamu’s population are Muslims, while Christian and other religions shape the socio-cultural lives of the people.¹ Fishing and tourism, mining and crop production are the major economic activities of the Lamu people. Landlessness, poverty, underdeveloped infrastructure, poor social service provisions affect the county.²

Nairobi has been a preferred site for execution of violent extremist attacks. It has seen a series of small scale as well high-end terror attacks targeting key infrastructure such as shopping malls, embassies, and hotels. Prominent among these attacks were 08 August 1998 US embassy bombing, 21 September 2013 Westgate Mall attack, 15 January 2019 Dusit D2 Complex attack. Nairobi doubles both as the spaces in which countering violent extremism and counterterrorism interventions are conceptualized, planned, and rolled out, as well as spaces in which violent extremist operatives also radicalize, recruit, and circulate their propaganda.

Kwale County, like the rest of Kenya, is confronted by the security, social and political challenge of violent extremism (VE). Distinct kinds of violent extremism exist in Kwale County such as secession, as put forward by the Mombasa Republican Council or Jihadism as misused by Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda and ISIS.³ The county’s proximity to Mombasa, Kilifi and borders close to Tanzania has made the county more cosmopolitan, with opportunities for interactions and flows of information.

Mkutu and Opondo (2021) discussed in their article ‘The complexity of Radicalization and Recruitment in Kwale County’ on the importance of understanding the role of poverty, in a variety of ways, which increase the vulnerability to radicalization or recruitment. According to their study, relative deprivation can result in alienation and dissatisfaction that recruiters can exploit.⁴ Mkutu, et al. (2021) highlights the aspect of police brutality on suspected youth in the region, as an aggravating factor on pre-existing grievances of discrimination among the youth by the state agencies. Accordingly, this can further lead to radicalization of the youth into extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab.

In Kwale there are specific locations with extensive radicalization of individuals, families and communities, recruitment to Al-Shabaab. These VE hotspots are Diani, Ukunda, Kona Ya Musa, Bongwe, Mbuwani, Tiwi, Ngombeni, Kombani, Mwapala, Matuga and Lunga Lunga. In these locations’ violence is either associated with the activities of MRC or returnee extremists who have travelled to Somalia, learned to use weapons, and have returned to continue propagation, recruitment, and radicalizing others.

Nairobi doubles both as the spaces in which countering violent extremism and counterterrorism interventions are conceptualized, planned, and rolled out, as well as spaces in which violent extremist operatives also radicalize, recruit, and circulate their propaganda.

1. Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience (Kenya). (2020). Lamu County. Retrieved from: <http://www.resilience.go.ke/lamu/>.
2. Lamu County Government (2018). County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.cog.go.ke/media-multimedia/reports/category/106-county-integrated-development-plans-2018-2022?download=341:lamu-county-integrated-development-plan-2018-2022>.
3. Botha, A. (2012). Radicalization in Kenya: Recruitment to Al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.
4. Mkutu, K. and Opondo, V. (2021). The Complexity of Radicalization and Recruitment in Kwale, Kenya. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 33(1): 26-48.

Kwale County faces the challenge of violent extremism as evidenced from the following incidents: On 27 November 2020, there were details of an active terror cell in the Bongwe area and details of an Al-Shabaab commander, Ramadhan Kufugwa.⁵ On 25 November 2020 it was reported of an ongoing recruitment for extremist networks in Bogwe.⁶

On 30 May 2020, there was a reported incident of a killing of three family members suspected of terrorism during a security operation.⁷ On 31 August 2020, police killed an Al-Shabaab suspect, a recruiter identified as Juma Athman Mwengo in Matuga.⁸ On 08 August 2019, Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) conducted an operation at an alleged training centre for the Al-Shabaab.⁹

Mombasa County marks its security challenges in gang related violence, drug abuse, radicalization, and recruitment for extremist networks such as Al-Shabaab, and ISIS.¹⁰ Macro-level grievances tied to land rights and unresolved historical settlements during the post-colonial periods fuel these security challenges. Secessionist movements such as the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) as well as the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) has expressed these sentiments in their mandates.

Electoral conflicts, such as the Kaya Bombo in Likoni, are marked with ethnic identity politics which often targets non-coastal populace. The County has marked its presence in radicalization recruitment for extremist networks for the Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab and the ISIS. The County has been vulnerable to terrorist attacks such as the Kikambala bombing, Bella Vista Club attack, church attacks in Likoni and the Central Police Station attack. Many youths have disappeared to join these extremist networks in Somalia and Syria.

Lamu County is not spared from attacks by violent extremist actors. Kidnappings in 2011 in Lamu marks one of the main triggers for the KDF to intervene in Somalia. This was based on the case of a British couple on a holiday in Lamu, who were kidnapped from a hotel near Lamu Island by Al-Shabaab in August 2011. This was followed by the kidnappings of a French woman in Lamu.¹¹ This bolstered the need for Kenya's intervention in Somalia. These and other kidnappings along Kenya's border with Somalia proved to be the trigger for the launch of Operation Linda Nchi (protect the country) by Kenya's Defence Forces (KDF) in October 2011.

In 2014, the dreadful Mpeketoni attack killed 47 people in one night – a town in the mainland of Lamu. A group of armed men suspected to be Al-Shabaab launched the attack targeting male non-Muslims in Mpeketoni. This was followed by the next day of attacks where 15 people lost their lives in a nearby village, followed by another attack in a nearby village on 23 June 2014.

5. Daily Nation (2020a). Kwale hamlet where terrorism commanders grew up. [Online] Kwale hamlet where terrorism commanders grew up | Nation

6. Daily Nation (2020b). Al-Shabaab recruiter with iron grip on Kwale villages. [Online] Shabaab recruiter iron grip Kwale villages | Nation

7. Muraya, J. (2020). Police kill a terror suspect and his two children during a night raid in Kwale. [Online] Police kill terror suspect and his 2 children during night raid in Kwale » Capital News (capitalfm.co.ke)

8. Daily Nation (2020c). Police kill terror suspect Juma Athman Mwengo after two-year search. [Online] Police kill terror suspect Juma Athman Mwengo after two-year search | Nation

9. Daily Nation (2019) Al-Shabaab suspects flee as police raid hideout in Kwale. [Online] Al-Shabaab suspects flee as police raid hideout in Kwale | Nation

10. Lind, J., Mutahi, P. and Oosterom, M. (2015). Tangled Ties: Al-Shabaab and Political Volatility in Kenya. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies; Chitembwe, S. J., Okoth, P. G. and Matanga, F. K. (2021). The Nature, Extent, and Impact of Youth Radicalization in Mombasa and Kwale Counties, Kenya. Open Access Library Journal, 8(6): 1-21; Botha, A. (2014a). Political Socialization and Terrorist Radicalization among Individuals Who Joined Al-Shabaab in Kenya. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 37 (11): 895-919; Botha, A. (2014b). Radicalization in Kenya. Recruitment to Al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council. Institute for Security Studies Papers, 265:1-28.

11. Nyagah, T., Mwangi, J. and Attree, L. (2018). Inside Kenya's war on Terror: the case of Lamu. London: Saferworld.

On 19 July, a bus traveling on the road between Malindi and Lamu was attacked, killing 30 passengers. In a span of five weeks, Lamu and nearby areas witnessed over 100 killings. This prompted many residents to flee from their houses. Propaganda by the Al-Shabaab media messages revealed the attacks being celebrated and based on revenge attacks for the Kenyan government's action in Somalia.¹²

Many killed were non-Muslims and from the Kikuyu tribe. The attacks revealed the use of ethnicity and religion, where propaganda messages included lands in Mpeketoni as belonging to the Muslims, with the Kikuyu's painted as land grabbers and robbers.¹³

Residents blamed the government's response to the Mpeketoni attacks in 2014 as sluggish due to insufficient coordination and the lack of equipment. However, the increasing attacks necessitated Operation Linda Nchi. Mixed responses shaped the Operation Linda Nchi discourse in Lamu. Few felt safe with the KDF presence as it strengthened security in the area. These responses were from the Tourism Industry personnel and Kikuyu's, the non-Muslims. This was understandable as most of the KDF personnel were non-Muslims, as it felt easier to relate with them.

The imposed curfew affected many residents in terms of livelihood and cultural activities. The weakening economy depending on fishing came to a standstill after a ban on night fishing. Applying for fishing permits from the Kenyan Navy, carrying identity cards, and constant security checkpoints affected the simple way of life of the residents. Muslims, especially women, raised concerns about the discriminatory checks on them. Arrests, detentions and, constant checks, residents raised serious concerns regarding arrests, detentions, and constant checks.¹⁴

This County brief provides findings from a study that sought to understand the process of narrative formation, spread, and linkages to violent extremist organizations in ten counties. The respondent selection was representative, with conscious efforts to include gender and diversity considerations. The respondents included 25 individuals from Nairobi, 24 individuals from Kwale, 24 individuals from Mombasa and 18 individuals from Lamu. Altogether, the fieldwork in the three counties included 91 participants: representing fifty-four males and thirty-seven female respondents across the three counties. Religious demographic grouping included, seventy-four Muslims, and seventeen Christians.

The study in the three counties used purely qualitative, using a purposive sample and a snowballing technique, to target respondents that included individuals from the Maskanis (Bazes, Youth hangout), Returnees, those directly affected, mothers of those that traveled to Somalia, university students, religious leaders, and those incarcerated over VE related incidences.

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12. Nyagah, T., Mwangi, J. and Attree, L. (2018). Inside Kenya's war on Terror: the case of Lamu. London: Saferworld.

13. McGregor, A. (2017). How Kenya's Failure to contain an Islamist Insurgency is threatening regional prosperity. *Terrorism Monitor*, 15(20). <https://jamestown.org/program/kenyas-failure-contain-islamist-insurgency-threatening-regional-prosperity/>

14. Human Rights Watch (2015). *Insult to Injury: The 2014 Lamu and Tana River attacks and Kenya's abusive response*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch.

The study also borrowed a lot from a desktop review of existing research materials on narrative development and spread from the global space to the local communities in Kenya. The guiding questions that also serve as the summary for the policy brief include the following:

I. What are the messages available in the counties, and how are these messages assessed?

Violent extremism messages in Nairobi were previously shared openly through magazines such as al Misbah. With the current surveillance and awareness about VE within the community, it is now circulated in a highly secretive and selective manner. The narratives at times took the offline format in terms of shura (consultative meetings done in mosque) and darsas (religious learning circles). Respondents in across the three counties attribute VE messaging to followers of ultraconservative Muslim sect which they Wahabi who engage as per their discussion in otherization of other Muslims as not truly Muslim and delegitimization through Takfiri discourses and in-group solidarity.

Kill all the Kaffirs (Non-Muslims) as they have invaded the Muslims lands and suppressing the rights of the Muslims – Respondents Kwale.

This country is led by Kafirs. Khilafa ndio suluhisho – Respondent Kwale.

In mosques and madrasas affiliated to the sect, children are taught jihadi ideologies and hatred to other faiths. It is also observed that they identify and pray for ‘mujahideen’ across the global jihadi theatres.

Kukaa kwa nchi ya makafiri na kutoa kodi kwa makafiri hairuhusiwi (living in a non-believer country and paying them tax is not allowed in Islam – Respondent Nairobi.

The respondents reported being attracted to the VE narratives by their conservative prescriptions on modesty. For instance, some female respondents mentioned being attracted by instructed to wear Jilbab and other conservative dressings for Muslim women not common in Majengo Nairobi and Mombasa, which denoted a growing Wahabi influence. Many were enticed by the desire to die as a martyr and go to heaven without judgment. However, personal benefits still play a significant role. Whether in form of cash transfers, payment of foods, fees, medical bills, clothes, promise of high salaries as VE operatives, money plays a critical role.

In Nairobi, the actual spaces in where messages are circulated and consumed included: Shaurimoyo grounds; Angola hangouts; Water points in Angola; hangout point (baze) called Manyatta in a sub-village called Bash; public toilets; during events like burials and weddings; some unidentified training venue in Eastleigh; Chelsea mosque; Pumwani Riyadhha Mosque; Maratib Mosque in Mashimoni sub village (before and after dawn prayers) and Tahfeed school (Quran memorization) then exposure to radicalization teachings.

Jihad is a duty towards God. Jihad is necessary if you are a Muslims [Jihad equated to fight the non-Muslims] – Respondent Mombasa.

An interesting venue for mode of circulation of these materials in the past was TV screening on the roadside along Digo road outside Chelsea Mosque which its main contents was jihad and the need to help the suffering Muslim infants in Syria, Palestine, and the need to start offering support to our brothers in Somalia.

It was also noted that most of the recruits are taken to Dar ul Irshaad in Nguluni in Ukambani to be trained on combat and shooting. Similarly, there was also training in Mashimoni's Mama Anan's place on jihad for women. However, there are no indication if these spaces are still active jihadi messaging and circulation spaces.

“Attacks in Kenya are justified retribution for the KDF's alleged atrocities in Somalia and the government's treatment of Kenyan Muslims.”

— Respondent Lamu.

The respondents point out that there are new spaces of recruitment in the area. Particularly mentioned was Kiambiu area and Kiamaiko in Kariobangi. Furthermore, vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment are Bodaboda riders around Mumbai mall in Majengo, Number Tatu base, Pumwani car wash and Uprising Group members and some clients of Kwa Abdi fruit base.

In Lamu the narratives have resonance to local issues in of Hindi, Kiunga, Mpeketoni town, as it reflects the local community issues. There was no mention of specific areas where such messages occur in Kwale and Mombasa Counties.

II. What influences a decision to continue as an engagement or to seize the engagement?

The respondents in Nairobi mentioned the desire to die as a martyr in Somalia as some reason for engagement. Some were influenced by deceased jihadi spouses, peers, recruiters and radical family members, who had no option but to follow the cause due to stigmatization by communities in Kwale. Recruits especially felt the need to 'to do something for Islam after watching many videos from sheikh Aboud Rogo. The call to action included messaging asking action since Islam is under attack by the Kafir (non-believers), and there is a need to stand up and defend it. Some respondents recall that people were called to come to Somalia by Al-Shabaab operatives who are their friends who originate from their residential areas.

“In Somalia, recruits exposed to texts that glorified violence such as Ibn Kathir's al Bidaya wal Nihaya, those that condemn Sufi practices, entrenched Wahhabism, books found on websites and in Al-Shabaab”

—a returnee.

Individuals known in the community acted as transmitters of messaging related to VE. Their influence in the community made it easy for engagement. The respondents identified that most of the transmitters of VE messages were people known to them. Some were their friends and relatives with whom they 'hang out' in Bazes.

It was also noted that most of the recruits are taken to Dar ul Irshaad in Nguluni in Ukambani to be trained on combat and shooting. Similarly, there was also training in Mashimoni's Mama Anan's place on jihad for women.

Former mosque officials who later were forcefully disappeared were particularly noted to have been active in radicalizing and recruiting youth. Wahabi sect adherents who are ultraconservative and entrenched strict adherence to public morality and outward display of religiosity were observed to have fuelled Takfiri discourses across the counties.

Chief among radicalizers and transmitters of VE messaging was Ahmed Iman, who was observed to use multiple social media accounts with numerous aliases. Though from Nairobi, Ahmed Iman had an elaborate VE messaging distribution network through their website such as the Al-ahli media. In Majengo, Nairobi, he had a social welfare support system for radicalization and recruitment into VE.

Other notable recruiters pointed out by the respondents in Nairobi included Mama Totti, Owen, Belarus, Mama Ogada, Kamami (Zena) and Blacky (wife ya zuberi) Bamee, Ali aka Don, Asha wa Maratib, Blacky, Salim Kipofu, Mzee Mwai, Duda Brown, Taz, and Sheikh Abubakr Lum-basi. The truthfulness of their VE related activities cannot be ascertained and hence should be taken with caution.

*“A 12years old son was taken to Darul Irshad in Nguluni and came back to Majengo then disappeared to Somalia and died as a suicide bomber. Individuals who are 30 years to 40 years are the key radicalizers then due to fear of information leakage they radicalized youths of 20 to 30 years so that they can now reach out to even younger youths for easy communication and language, and its mostly youth to youth talk. The best example is the case of makaburini/ Samir Khan, who was tortured, killed, and thrown into a national park. They were in their 30s, 40s and 50s and were feeding Ahmad Iman with radical teachings who was in his 30s to come and reach out to us”- Quote * incarcerated, released.*

Promises shared via narratives remain as debts even to the targeted population. It is interesting that the promise of a good life, righting a wrong and eternal placement motivate the engagement into Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO's). However, when the said promise is not kept by the VEOs, most of the individuals also seek to opt-out from the organizations. Not all succeed!

In Kwale, the respondents mentioned that the extremists did not keep their promise, and this motivated most of them to seek options of leaving the organization. Specifically for the respondents, they mentioned that once the extremist stated that they will take care of the parents /relatives after you die. This was not the case for those of his friends who had died in battle, and in most cases the parents were left suffering and ostracized from the community.

III. What and how are they linked to online platforms, if any?

The online space was noted to be characterized to be highly secretive and selective. The narratives are also hidden in the other religious messages and are no longer as open as they used to be. Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp calls from Somalia, contents from those in Al-Shabaab in Somalia directly to youth in the Counties.

However, Messaging is also done through encrypted social media calls and texting platforms like Telegram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. The use of telegram as medium of communication from Somalia to Majengo, i.e., on sending money to and from Somalia. Al-Shabaab operatives from the study area still reach out to their friends using these platforms and share with them videos, texts, and other digital contents in attempts to radicalize and recruit. An interesting phenomenon regarding the use of the internet is observed to be the use of one account by multiple persons, with emails shared and access allowing for faster and undetected transfer of information and VE instructions.

Due to heightened censorship and online moderation, VE operatives cannot post on YouTube because they know the videos will be removed by the government and IT tech companies. There are also online books that glorified jihadism, e.g., *al Bidaya wal nihaya* available on jihadi affiliated websites.

As noted earlier, the use of multiple accounts by single VE operatives and single email or social media accounts by multiple users are some ways in which the jihadists have eluded surveillance. ISIL and ISIS sites are commonly used for radical narratives. Some respondents call for a greater focus on individual websites rather than on YouTube, terrorists aware of online surveillances.

In Kwale, the platforms used by the extremists in the community in the following of a staged process that starts with offline introduction at a public place or a religious event space, basic information sharing via messages and linkage to a specific site to gauge your interest, offline meeting with a focus of linking contextual issues to religious teachings and finally a network of peers who then engage in peer-to-peer sharing of specific information to solidify the new group bond.

Within the peer engagement in Kwale, the recruiters then initiate the sharing of recorded videos showing beheading of non-Muslims (as an example) to strengthen the group loyalty and show the expectations from the group in case one leaves the fold. They also give summons that speak to the heart of vulnerable communities. They also prepare posters shared online with very disturbing messages. They use holy Quran misinterpretation advocating on Jihad that calls for killings and destroying of properties belonging to non-Muslims.

In Lamu, most online messages reflect similar messages which are promoted offline. Issues such as lack of title deeds, marginalization, issues of employment and land associated with the LAPPSET project and police brutality becomes main themes discussed in Lamu. It was evident that most online discussions on radicalization centre with educated youth, while youth in low literacy confine to discussions at their local bases.

There are also instances where the VE group will instruct their followers to open specific websites via Gmail inbox messages for certain action or communication. Many respondents recall being called from Somalia by friends who were recruited and following such calls they will destroy their mobile lines rather than risk subsequent communication from their VE friends. The VE group was also observed to open new websites if the operational sites are taken down by internet companies.

There are also instances where the VE group will instruct their followers to open specific websites via Gmail inbox messages for certain action or communication.

IV. How are the vulnerable individuals targeted or involved, and what influences them at an individual or even county level?

Due The target audience are of the messaging remain mainly the poor, uneducated and unemployed youth who frequent are water vendors, public toilet attendants, second-hand-clothe-bale off loaders, baze dwellers and those who are withdrawn from the public due to personality type and those who are frustrated to obtain identity cards and passports hence have legitimate grievances against the government.

The most targeted category of individuals in the study areas targeted by the VE messaging are the youth who are from poor backgrounds, frustrated by bureaucracy of identity document acquisition, with low religious literacy and limited employment options. Mostly target the youths and especially the ones who do not have basic literacy to enable them to counter the narratives. They are often between the ages of 14 to 30. New converts were particularly susceptible to VE narratives due to their urge to learn the new religion and fit in. Recruiters were drawn from those within the age range of 25-60, representing respected religious and youth leaders in the community.

In Kwale, the targeting is based on specific categories that include school dropouts, most of the unemployed youth with job offers, the youth from low-income families needing ways to sustain themselves, the victims of police brutality and the youth who are angry and wants revenge on law enforcement officials.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- PCVE policies should be able to address terrorist content online by understanding the various themes promoted online. This entails evidence-based programming in designing counter narratives or alternative narratives. The County Action Plans (for example) can be strengthened by an evidence-based assessment on the online means of radicalization and recruitment, where awareness on specific digital platforms used should be the key focus in PCVE efforts.
- While these county findings provide some insights on the narrative development and categorization, there is little evidence of policy-oriented review of the narratives to address the VE phenomenon, therefore, a review of policy to understand policy directives on policies can be of particular interest if credible responses are to be developed. The main report provides a presentation that can be adopted in narrative development, categorization, and grouping. When utilized with the vulnerability targeted framework, the responses may have quick gains for PCVE.
- Periodic reviews need to be conducted on the online and offline extremist messaging to strengthen policies by the government on cyber laws and other prevention and countering related laws in Mombasa County Action Plans.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the Netherlands Embassy in Kenya for their support for this study.

- However, this should not impede attempts to uphold rights such as privacy and the right to free speech. The donor community should facilitate opportunities for local development partners in the counties to build capacities of community-based organizations and relevant community members to carry credible messages online to counter extremist narratives.
- Less is known about online VE materials circulation, there is an urgent need to study online trends and its implications on CVE programming. This is constantly changing, and a Real-time analysis of what is happening online may support the progression of VE materiality in current circulation.
- Additionally, while this study provided a brief analysis from Twitter as a social media site, more analysis is required for other sites including WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook. These sites are also mentioned as favourable spaces for VE sympathizers are the conduit for circulation of VE messaging need to be studied more.