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**Youth Evaluations of CVE/PVE Programming in Kenya in Context**

**By: Melissa Finn<sup>1</sup>**  
**Bessma Momani<sup>2</sup>**  
**Michael Opatowski<sup>3</sup>**  
**Michael Opondo<sup>4</sup>**

**Abstract**

Despite the military efforts of the Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Somali Federal governments, the collaboration of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces with US and coalition forces, and despite the enormous tactical and strategic set-backs that al-Shabaab has faced over the last five years, its insurgency in the Horn of Africa (HoA) remains resilient. The Kenyan government's approach to stemming domestic recruitment to al-Shabaab remains fixated on law enforcement control and surveillance. As a result, many Somali communities are subject to daily crackdowns, interrogations, and discriminatory profiling practices whose negative effects are only heightened by current tribal and clan-based tensions in the country. Current scholarly evaluations of Kenya's 'Countering Violent Extremism' (CVE) & 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) policies tend to adhere to three major approaches: top-down evaluations by elites repeatedly locating the protection of national security in inter-agency cooperation; bottom-up CVE/PVE evaluations placing primacy on the voices of Muslim community elders, such as imams, social workers, parents, and community leaders for interventions with at-risk youth; and social scientific evaluations of CVE/PVE policy through empirical exploration of the push and pull factors of youth recruitment into militancy. To date, there is a dearth of studies asking what Kenyan youth leaders think about CVE/PVE policies especially in light of the fact that they are often the main targets of al-Shabaab attacks. This study has one key objective: to use input from Kenyan youth to evaluate the effectiveness, suitability, and appropriateness of Kenya's current CVE/PVE policies in order to dissect their utility, inefficiencies, and possible harms, and contribute to the academic and policy discussions on the best CVE/PVE policy mix.

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<sup>1</sup> Balsillie School of International Affairs/ University of Waterloo

<sup>2</sup> Balsillie School of International Affairs/ University of Waterloo & Senior Fellow Brookings Institute

<sup>3</sup> Balsillie School of International Affairs/ University of Waterloo

<sup>4</sup> International Youth Action Against Terrorism (IYAAT)

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**Introduction**

The Kenyan government, mainly at the behest of US pressure, has crafted large-scale multi-agency partnerships for their ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ (CVE) strategies. The government also provides soft/tacit support for ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ (PVE) and community-based approaches often implemented by non-governmental/civil society agencies. Although there are academic and government studies that critically evaluate CVE/PVE frameworks, there is a paucity of research that critically evaluates the presumed efficacy and ethics of the predominately top-down approaches taken in CVE/PVE. Those studies that do explore the potential of bottom-up CVE/PVE tend to privilege the voices of elders in the Muslim community, such as imams, social workers, parents, and community leaders. This paper addresses this lacunae by taking a bottom-up approach to CVE/PVE analysis that specifically asks Kenyan youth, an important demographic of concern targeted by militant groups. To date, there is a dearth of studies asking what Kenyan youth leaders think about CVE/PVE policies and recommendations (Hope 2012). This study thus has one key objective: to use input from Kenyan youth to evaluate the effectiveness, suitability, and appropriateness of Kenya’s current CVE/PVE policies in order to dissect their utility, inefficiencies, and possible harms, and contribute to the academic and policy discussions on the best CVE/PVE policy mix.

In this paper, we will intentionally bracket the *significance* of the Somali insurgent group Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, aka al-Shabaab’s activities for the larger global struggle against non-state terrorism, and the sustained or ‘tit-for-tat’ militaristic (counter-terrorism) responses of the state and/or regional/international coalitions. The main focus and purpose of this paper is to determine how Kenyan youth evaluate counter-terrorism and anti-radicalization programming in Kenya. Kenyan youth evaluations of War on Terrorism priorities, the tactics of foreign players, or western strategic security concerns only matter in this paper to the extent that they matter to Kenyan youth. The tendency to contextualize African groups like al-Shabaab and Boko Haram in Nigeria within the discourse and objectives of the War on Terror immediately expands their significance for (western) elite interests and effaces the (daily) struggles of local youth in confronting and managing the fears of threats from state and non-state actors that often directly target them. Focusing on al-Shabaab in the War on Terror also props up why non-state militancy is a problem for states,

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but in the process, effaces how the historic and contemporary actions of states can create the conditions for non-state militancy. What we have found is that the role of state hard power and military counter-terrorism responses in further perpetuating non-state political violence is frequently identified, discussed, and critically evaluated among many university educated Kenyan youth.

Global war on terrorism framing vis-à-vis al-Shabaab is also problematic because it has shifted western engagement with African states from the ‘developmentalization of security’ for conflict prevention and peace-building, to the ‘securitization of development’ where welfare agendas are made subservient to security agendas and often through the co-opting of local labor, energy, and passion (Bachmann and Hönke 2010: 100 – 101). The academic inclination, additionally, to frame al-Shabaab as a transnational terrorist threat because of its affiliation with al-Qaeda or its potential to export fighters to attack western sites or interests problematically glosses over the fact that Somalis and Kenyans are, by a wide margin, most vulnerable to al-Shabaab’s political violence and are by a far majority, among the insurgency’s civilian casualties. This academic inclination to over-emphasize al-Shabaab’s threat to the west also obfuscates a running dilemma within al-Shabaab’s allegiance to al-Qaeda (which is currently being held in abeyance) insofar as the group feigns the capacity to reconcile its apparent ethno-nationalist and global jhadi mandates, despite the fact that the main *raison d’être* of its insurgency is the local struggle (Chonka, 2016).

The threat posed by al-Shabab is a complex one. On the one hand, al-Shabaab is a regional state security concern because it undermines the capacities of the Somali Federal Government to control and govern Somalia, and creates the conditions for the Kenyan government to justify securitizing, from discourse to extraordinary action (Buzan and Waever 1998), the Northern and Coastal provinces and parts of the interior. It is also the case that al-Shabaab has a history of executing extremely bold military attacks against government and armed forces personnel. For example, in January of 2016, more than 65 AMISOM and Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) personnel were slaughtered in an attack inside Somalia in El-Adde. The suicide bombs used in that attack had an impact three times more powerful than the bomb that struck the US Embassy in Nairobi in 1998 and other bombs deployed were previously stolen from the looting of Ugandan and Burundi contingents. The attack garnered al-Shabaab a cache of new weapons, munitions, and armed personnel carriers (Daily Nation

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2016). Al-Shabaab's chief Kenyan leader, Ahmad Iman Ali, justified the strikes as retribution for attacks against Kenyan Muslims including those in the Somali suburb of Eastleigh in Nairobi, an area subject to extensive security crackdowns and financial extortion (Anzalone 2016). Additionally, in 2015 alone, al-Shabaab attacked AMISOM more than 50 times and staged numerous attacks against civilians and personnel inside Kenyan territory itself (Anderson & McKnight, 2015).

On the other hand, al-Shabaab's militancy has a negative impact upon human security of refugees and civilians in Northeastern Kenya and Southwestern Somalia, the normal operations of formal and informal trade routes and pastoralist migrations across the Kenyan-Somali border, Kenya's ethnic relations, youth (in)security, and the appeal of the Kenyan tourism industry. One of the most recent Kenyan civilian tragedies was the mass murder of 148 university students and teachers at Garissa University by al-Shabaab in April 2015. Prior to that, al-Shabaab militants attacked the Westgate Mall in September 2013 causing 67 deaths and nearly 200 casualties.

Tragic events in Nairobi, Mombasa, Mpeketoni, Mandera, Garissa, and beyond over the past twenty years have highlighted that it is very difficult to stop radicalized individuals armed with resources and determination from carrying out acts of violence against civilian and government targets. The Horn of Africa (HoA)<sup>5</sup> region is not afflicted with lone-wolf or small-cell attacks like those afflicting cities in the Global North, but rather with a large-scale and highly adaptive insurgency guided by an uncompromising, historically aggrieved, religiously nativist, and fascist survivalist mandate predicated on member sacrifices which bears some similarities to the mandate of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Al-Shabaab's methods of 'governance' in their areas of control, its competitive relationship with the Somali government, and its cross-border attacks against the African Union, the Burundi armed forces, the Ethiopian armed forces, the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF), and local citizens in these countries continue to erode human and state security in the region. According to the Eastern African Development Agency (EADA), hundreds of thousands of Kenyan youth are vulnerable to the recruitment drives of al-Shabaab and other regional militias including

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<sup>5</sup> The 'Horn of Africa' is a region positioned on the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and contains the headwaters of the Nile River. According to de Waal and Ibreck, locals of the regional states and unrecognized state of the Republic of Somaliland do not see themselves as citizens of the 'Horn', rather it is an external label to demarcate the region's importance for geopolitical-economic considerations (de Waal and Ibreck 2016).

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disenfranchised and unemployed youth in rural Kenya at-risk to financial incentives and other 'pull' factors, and more educated and mobile youth of urban Kenya vulnerable to extremist messaging and ideology (EADA personal communications).

Anzalone (2016) notes that al-Shabaab has been concerted in recruiting Swahili speaking foreign fighters, and that after 2013, the number of Swahili speaking East Africans featured in its media operations campaigns dramatically increased. He writes that, "This recruitment effort includes media operations messaging that highlights discrimination and claims that Kenyan Muslims are being persecuted by their own government, such as extrajudicial killings allegedly carried out by Kenya's anti-terrorism police. Al-Shabaab, despite its claim that it places its 'Islamic' identity over any other form of identity, has even made appeals in some of its media releases to Somali nationalism and pride, for example by highlighting the persecution of ethnic Somalis inside Kenya and the inclusion of the British colonial rulers of large, historically Somali regions inside the new Kenyan nation-state" (Anzalone 2016, 15).

Despite al-Shabaab's complex recruitment efforts, Kenyan youth have proven resilient to extremist recruitment, and often despite the widespread structural inequities that burden their lives, rob them of opportunities, and paint them as threats, and the national media's portrayal of the Northern and Coastal Kenya provinces as bastions of insecurity and instability. Although the North has a "reputation for being a conflict-ridden and ungoverned borderland," the Northern provinces have some of the lowest crime rates in the country and "neither North Eastern province nor northern Coast province were affected by post-election violence" in 2007 (Bradbury and Kleinman 2010: 50). One of the authors of this paper was given access to a monthly report by a private security firm in Kenya that consolidated incidents of crime in November 2015, April 2016, and May 2016. Consistently, criminal incidents in the country during these months were clustered prominently in the Nairobi province and western provinces and with less severity along the lower coastal provinces. In the Northeastern region, several events classified as 'terrorism' occurred, but the region was otherwise largely absent of other forms of criminality. Political violence in the Northern and coastal provinces has a significant profile because, among other things, it affects the national tourism sector extremely negatively and is perceived by the Government to erode Kenya's economic prosperity and security (UNDP 2013).

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The people we interviewed for this study expressed concern that radicalization into violent extremism among Kenyan youth is more significant for national unity than for societal security. Kenya is nearing an election in August 2017 and ethnic tensions are currently intensifying. The concern is that radicalized youth might be moved to violent action in the intervening year to capitalize on the tensions, and/or, that politicians may use the election period as a pre-text in 2017 to incite ethnic or sectarian violence for political gain. There is a possibility that the post-2017 election situation could unfold much like the post-2007 election campaign in which high levels of sectarian and ethnic political violence nearly broke apart civil society in Kenya. These rising ethnic tensions, including the systematic profiling of and fear-mongering about ethnic Somalis, are both cause and consequence of the actions of security and law enforcement personnel cracking down violently on peaceful democratic protests with impunity, and conducting extra-judicial raids and executions of young people on the pretext of curbing lawlessness. The stark political divides of the election campaign were poignantly and sensationally captured in the alleged assassination of a vocal political opponent to Uhuru Kenyatta's Administration, businessman Jacob Juma on 5 May 2016. Such divides might be capitalized upon by youth to stir up more unrest.

The policy of the Kenyan government and the African Union, to date, has been to lean very heavily on hard-power responses in an attempt to crush the al-Shabaab insurgency and erode its territorial control over parts of South-western and Central Somalia, and to crackdown punitively on Kenyan neighborhoods deemed hotbeds for al-Shabaab recruitment and materiel support. The end result of many of these counter-terrorism approaches is disproportionate and arbitrary responses from law enforcement, and the use of the law as a pretext to persecute minority and opposition groups. Those who support such hard-power and law enforcement centered initiatives cite militant deaths or arrests of high-risk youth as indicators of progress, but al-Shabaab recruitment continues despite these apparent tactical gains (Anzalone 2016; Stratfor 2015). In fact, the perpetuation of permissive structural conditions, including the Kenyan government's systematic targeting of people on the basis of race and religion most notably young Kenyan-Somali and Somali refugee men are fuelling this recruitment. A deficit of trust exists between civilians and security forces in Kenya and East Africa that further erodes Kenyan national and regional security (Global Center on Cooperative Security 2015).



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In an attempt to re-examine the efficacy and legitimacy of military and police-led, as well as community-driven approaches to the problem, this paper examines Kenyan youth evaluations of official government and non-government CVE/PVE approaches, and provides a number of novel suggestions for more soft-power and grass-roots community-based approaches to counter/prevent violent extremism and promote anti-radicalization. Countering and preventing violent extremism, or even deradicalization, or what Khalil and Zeuthen (2016), following Horgan and Braddock (2010), call ‘risk reduction’ programs,<sup>6</sup> for individuals previously involved in the production of political violence (including defectors and those serving sentences), are not necessarily counter-terrorism, in our view. As Dr. Mustafa Ali, chair of the Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) Muslim community initiative puts it, “there is a difference between counter terrorism and countering violent extremism. Counter terrorism is very security [oriented], but countering violent extremism was an attempt to move towards communities...Everything needs to be anchored on the communities. Not security. And people should not really [re]think [the idea] that when you are doing counter terrorism you are preventing violent extremism” (Ali 2015). Although it is beyond the scope of the present paper, it is worth noting that Khalil and Zeuthen (2016) provide a substantive defense for why ‘risk reduction’ is conceptually preferable over ‘disengagement’ or ‘deradicalization’; the former concept excludes efforts to prevent former militants from returning in any way to violent activism, and the latter concept assumes that all individuals that contribute to violence harbor radical views or that an attitude change is necessary to adapt behavior.

Social science evidence indicates that military counter-attacks, structural disenfranchisement such as exclusions from the provisions of formal citizenship, police crackdowns, racial profiling, and un-addressed historical injustices fuel Kenyan youth recruitment into al-Shabaab and other militias. The evidence reveals that development and employment are crucial components of effective CVE/PVE programming. The literature on the best CVE/PVE practices suggests, for example, that sensitive development programming

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<sup>6</sup> According to Khalil and Zeuthen (2016), “Risk reduction programs involve a wide range of non-coercive activities (such as vocational training, counseling, exposure to counter-ideologies, assistance with social networking, livelihood support and so on) applied with the aim of ensuring that individuals who previously contributed to violent extremism (for instance, through perpetrating attacks, manufacturing explosives, planning, financing, collecting intelligence, recruiting, and so on) do not return to such activities.”

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that helps advance job opportunities for idle youth can help mitigate their descent into militarism (Global Center on Cooperative Security 2015). According to this same literature, soft-power and grassroots community initiatives, especially those that involve Muslim women and mothers, have the greatest potential to produce tangible results for the reduction of radicalization to violent extremism in Kenya. Soft-power approaches not only challenge the narratives of extremist groups, but they also mitigate the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ (or structural, individual incentive-based, and enabling) factors (Khalil and Zeuthen 2016) that bring otherwise disenfranchised youth into their fold. Kenyan youth are keenly aware of the kinds of policies and programming that will help mitigate terrorism in their society, and additionally, what is going awry in the status quo approaches; this paper explores their ideas. We think that Kenyan youth opinions matter because they are a frequently untapped source of insights and angles, and because youth are targets of militancy and thus have much to offer in expressing how their vulnerabilities might be mitigated.

### **Contextualizing al-Shabaab’s Violent Activism in Kenya**

Insecurity in Kenya is caused by a host of factors including cattle rustling among pastoralist communities to the North, border disputes, pronounced levels of lawlessness and crime especially in Central and Western Kenya, resource conflict, inter-clan wars, widespread political corruption (Patterson 2015), ethnic divisiveness, Islamophobia, harsh law enforcement practices, poverty, drought, extensive unemployment, insufficient and arbitrary public service provisions, and the insurgency of the Somali group Harakat Al Shabab Al al-Shabaab Al Mujahideen, or al-Shabaab (HSM) for short. Al-Shabaab is a militant Islamist organization whose members adhere to the Salafist school of thought in Islam.

Distinct from other militant actors in the Horn of Africa (HoA), including those it has bought off, killed off, or absorbed, Al-Shabaab struggles, but still manages to maintain a broad territorial and operational presence and, due to its religious rather than explicitly tribal orientation, enjoys diversity among clan identifications in its senior leadership and among its ideologue supporters (Chonka 2016; Mueller 2016). In addition to military tactics and practical governance strategies attentive to ‘hearts and minds’ priorities, al-Shabaab actively pursues a propaganda war promoting “an all-encompassing *lebenswelt/lifeworld* narrative legitimating their armed struggle against the ‘infidels/believers’ (*gaal*) and their ‘apostate



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stooges' (*murtad/dabdhilif*). This operates both in terms of the global jihad of transnational Islamist militancy and also through vocabularies of Somali nationalism and anti-colonialism, drawing on assumptions of shared cultural, religious and political identity" (Chonka 2016: 248).

Al-Shabaab is an off-shoot of the Islamic Courts Union that was formed in Somalia following state collapse in the 1990s (Mueller 2016). The splinter group gained nationalist 'street credibility', so to speak, in its resistance against the Ethiopian invasion of Somali in 2006. This is significant because al-Shabaab often presents itself as the savior of the Somali people on both religious and nationalist grounds while simultaneously eschewing, to a large extent, the relevancy of tribal affiliation that is otherwise very prominent in Somalia and Kenya, and propping itself up as an inter-clan mediator following local norms (Chonka 2016; Mueller 2016). Al-Shabaab's resilience over time, despite battlefield setbacks and lost territory, is attributable to its continued ability to tap mainstream Somali public sphere criticism about the subservience of local political leaders to foreign security agendas and the 'neo-colonial' division of the Somali *ummah* (community) in the historic demarcation of the Somali-Kenyan border that, among other things, undermined the migration routes of Somali pastoralist farmers and thus a key aspect of the Somali culture and economic security (Anzalone 2016; Chonka 2016; Mueller 2016).

The ideological and operational animus of al-Shabaab has been energized for more than a decade by the actions of external players in the region including the governments and militaries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya. Al-Shabaab's personnel and sympathizers point out that the Kenyan and Ethiopian militaries enjoy a *carte blanche* to invade and occupy Somali national territory, they are aware of the US' role in sustaining successions of corrupt and inept Somali federal leaders, and are sensitive to the terrorism of US drone strikes. Al-Shabaab targets Kenya state and society in response to a number of real and perceived acts of aggression and intervention orchestrated by the Kenyan government. Reports suggest that al-Shabaab was planning attacks in Kenya in 2009 as retribution for the harsh security and counter-terrorism practices perpetrated against Kenyan-Somalis. In 2011, the government of Kenya launched a military operation (Operation Linda Nchi which is Swahili for 'Protect the Country') designed to invade and occupy Southern Somalia. Operation Linda Nchi was justified as retaliation for kidnappings undertaken by al-Shabaab in Kenya. In fact, al-Shabaab

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was quick to see through this narrative whose economic pretexts later emerged from the words of government officials. Removing al-Shabaab from the port at Kismayo was deemed by the Kenyan government to be critical for Kenya's economic power in the region, and its standing as a site for foreign investment, oil imports and exploration, and trade (Mueller 2016).

According to the International Crisis Group (2012; cited in Mueller 2016), Operation Linda Nchi was a historic security gamble. It ultimately provided the recruitment fodder for al-Shabaab to drive its operations into Kenyan territory. The operation was seen as an act of conquest that spurred local Somalis, Kenyan-Somalis, and diasporic Somalis into allegiance and action (Mueller 2016). Mueller argues that the execution of Operation Linda Nchi into Southern Somalia happened precisely when the region was facing a severe drought-induced famine, high food prices, and the movement of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons. Kenya clamped down on its border, and significantly reduced the number of refugees permitted entry and engaged in indiscriminate bombardment to secure the Kismayo port (Mueller 2016).

Drawing upon the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), Mueller (2016) shows that al-Shabaab's attacks have moved in an upward trajectory from 2007 – 2013. During its height from 2006 – 2012, al-Shabaab engaged in a number of tactics including assassinations, armed assaults, bombings/sacrificial bombings, hijackings, hostage takings, and attacks on facilities/infrastructure. According to Chris Anzalone (2016), al-Shabaab currently seeks to bleed and destabilize the SFG, AMISOM, and allied militia forces that are preventing its reconquest of territory through tactics such as grenade throwing, mortar fire on checkpoints, the use of snipers, and political assassinations. Al-Shabaab's targeting of Kenyan civilians is designed to force the Kenyatta government to withdraw completely from Somalia. External pressure from AMISOM and Somali Federal Government (SFG) troops since 2013 have forced the group to shift from traditional military warfare to more guerrilla 'hit-and-run' style tactics; tactics which Anzalone describes as a return to its 2007-2008 guerrilla roots (Anzalone 2016; Mueller 2016). The most prominent targets of al-Shabaab's attacks are government officials from Somalia, military personnel, civilians, and journalists. As Anzalone (2016) notes, "Attacks on soft targets are usually justified through claims that SFG, African Union, or international officials frequent the attacked locations. In some cases, such as the

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Sahafi Hotel in central Mogadishu, the targeted location was known as a popular gathering place for SFG, AMISOM, and foreign government personnel and contractors” (14). Direct targeting of non-Muslims has also always been within the repertoire of al-Shabaab’s violent action. Mainly targeting non-Muslims, the Westgate and Garissa University attacks were used to “increase domestic pressure on the Kenyan government to withdraw its troops from Somalia by inflicting a high number of casualties and creating domestic instability” (Anzalone 2016, 14).

Structural issues such as those listed above including state repression, limited economic opportunities, and historic tensions are enabling factors for al-Shabaab’s militancy, but are not the only drivers of al-Shabaab’s recruitment. Youth who pursue militancy in al-Shabaab also often seek improved status, material incentives for involvement, revenge, avoidance of repercussions for non-involvement, and can be ideationally supported by mentors and peers online and off-line (Khalil and Zeuthen 2016). Whenever al-Shabaab executes attacks inside Kenyan territory, many of the already existing structural problems supporting violent extremism recruitment are further exacerbated by civilian, government, and security personnel responses.

## **Methodology**

In the sections that follow, we first review the literature on CVE/PVE program evaluation, investigate the initiatives that have been taken, and then turn to examine what Kenyan university youth leaders think about current CVE/PVE policies, and the suggestions they offer to any identified problems or limitations to those policies and approaches. We have gathered data on youth evaluations from three main sources including: 1) surveys distributed to youth populations via youth activists and through requests made to youth participants at the International Youth Action Against Terrorism (IYAAT) conference held in Nairobi in February 2016 (71 completed surveys were received); 2) statements made by youth and non-youth attendees at the IYAAT conference; and 3) in-depth interviews with prominent youth stakeholders. There is selection bias in our own survey sample insofar as our respondents are primarily, although not exclusively, composed of non-Somali Kenyan university and college students. All participants in our study are between the ages of 18 and 29 years. Kenyan-Somalis are among the survey respondents and make up the vast majority of our interviewees.

The data from these sources provides multi-instrument and multi-stakeholder CVE/PVE policy evaluation. What follows is not an experimental monitoring and evaluation design for a CVE/PVE program. It is an evaluation process of youth perceptions and experiences of, and recommendations for improved CVE/PVE programming. Youth in Kenya are the targets and perpetrators of political violence against civilians and military personnel in Kenya. As our findings uncover, many Kenyan youths feel that they have been systematically excluded from the CVE/PVE review process. By privileging their voices, this study develops a novel way to evaluate not only the impact of CVE/PVE policies, but also contribute to the evaluation literature that seeks to overcome and mitigate some of the unintended consequences of program evaluation including alienating and marginalizing the very demographic that is, at once, potential program participant, stakeholder, and victim, and garnering youth buy-in as active evaluators of programs that impact their lives directly. We find, in our study, that Kenyan youth leaders are hungry to have their voices heard and many say that merely filling out our survey caused them to re-evaluate their own prejudices and misconceptions, while giving them a platform to speak on a topic perceived to be an existential threat to their daily movement and well-being.

### **Evaluating Kenya's CVE/PVE Policies and their Effects: Review of the Literature**

#### **Timeline of Important Events in Kenya**

<b>1996</b>	The Youth Agenda (YAA) is formed by student leaders from Kenya's universities
<b>March 1997</b>	YAA led National Youth Convention in Limuru (first time a large group of young people meet to deliberate the role of youth in Kenya)
<b>1997</b>	Jua Kali Voucher Programme is initiated. It intends to improve youths' employability by providing them with skills through general training or more specific vocational training
<b>August 7, 1998</b>	Dual bombings take place outside the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (213 dead, 5,000 injured)
<b>2002</b>	Kenya National Youth Policy is developed (revised in 2006)
<b>November 28, 2002</b>	Car bomb detonates at an Israeli-owned hotel (18 dead)

<b>November, 2003</b>	Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance is founded
<b>2005</b>	Ministry of State and Youth Affairs is created (disbanded in 2013)
<b>2006</b>	Kenya National Youth Policy and the Strategic Plan is enacted (2007-2012)
<b>December 8, 2006</b>	Youth Enterprise Development Fund is established
<b>June 11, 2007</b>	A suicide bomber is the only fatality in an attack in Nairobi (41 injured)
<b>December 27, 2007</b>	Kenya general elections are held, violence ensues
<b>February 28, 2008</b>	National Accord Reconciliation Agreement (NARA) is signed following the constitutional and political crisis of the general elections. It is mediated by former UN secretary General Kofi Annan as a measure of restoring sustainable peace in the country. Agenda item 4 of the NARA pertains to addressing youth unemployment
<b>September 18 – September 20, 2008</b>	National Youth Convention (NYC IV) is held
<b>2009</b>	National Youth Council Act establishes National Youth Council
<b>August 11, 2009</b>	International Youth Day is held and Nairobi forum: “Harnessing Responsive Youth Development Initiatives for a Sustainable Kenyan Economy” takes place.
<b>June 13, 2010</b>	Two explosions at a religious gathering of Christian evangelists (6 dead, 80 wounded)
<b>August 4, 2010</b>	A constitutional referendum is held in lieu of violence during the 2007 elections, a new constitution is enacted
<b>December 20, 2010</b>	Grenade attack on a bus in Nairobi (3 dead)
<b>October 16, 2011</b>	Kenyan invasion of South Somalia (Operation Linda Nchi)
<b>October 24, 2011</b>	Attack on Mwaura’s bar in Nairobi (1 death, 30 injured); attack at the Machakos bus terminal (5 dead, 64 injured)
<b>October 27, 2011</b>	Rocket attack kills Kenyan officials (4 dead)
<b>November 24, 2011</b>	Two grenade attacks in Garissa (3 dead, 27 injured)
<b>January 1, 2012</b>	A grenade attack and shootout at a bar in Garissa (5 dead)
<b>January 12, 2012</b>	Attack on a police post in northeast Kenya (6 dead)
<b>March 10, 2012</b>	Attack on a Nairobi bus terminal (9 dead, 60 injured)
<b>June 24, 2012</b>	Attack on a bar in Mombasa (3 dead, dozens injured)
<b>June 29, 2012</b>	Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) is launched at KICC by the Public Procurement Directorate

	under the Ministry of Finance
<b>July 1, 2012</b>	Attack on a Garissa church (18 dead, 40 injured)
<b>November 18, 2012</b>	Bomb attack on a bus (9 dead)
<b>December 7, 2012</b>	Grenade attack at the Al-Hidaya mosque in Eastleigh (5 dead)
<b>January 16, 2013</b>	Attack on a hotel in Garissa (4 dead, 6 injured)
<b>January 31 – February 1, 2013</b>	Brand Kenya Board holds National Youth Summit at Kenyatta Conference Centre (KICC)
<b>March 3, 2013</b>	Attacks against security forces on the Kenyan coast (12 dead)
<b>March 4, 2013</b>	Kenya general elections
<b>April 2013</b>	Ministry of State and Youth Affairs is disbanded
<b>September 8, 2013</b>	President Uhuru Kenyatta launches the Uwezo Fund
<b>September 21, 2013</b>	Westgate Mall massacre (67 dead, 170 injured)
<b>February 12, 2014</b>	Attack on a stone quarry in Mandera (36 dead)
<b>March 23, 2014</b>	Gunmen attack Kenyan church in Mombasa (6 dead)
<b>March 31, 2014</b>	Explosion in Nairobi (6 dead, 12 injured)
<b>April 1, 2014 – mid April</b>	Operation Usalama Watch, a government initiative to curtail extremist violence, targets Somali communities (in Eastleigh neighbourhood & Likoni area). Security forces raid homes, buildings and shops, and detain 4,000 people without charge. Corruption and abuse are rampant
<b>June 6, 2014</b>	National Youth Convention is held (YAA plays a major role in its facilitation)
<b>June 15, 2014</b>	Gunmen attack three hotels, a petrol station and police station in Mpeketoni (65 dead)
<b>June 17, 2014</b>	Fighters attack villages near Mpeketoni (15 dead)
<b>June 26, 2014</b>	Governor Issa Timami arrested on charges related to Mpeketoni attacks
<b>July 6, 2014</b>	Gunmen assault Kenyan coast (Lamu County) in two separate attacks (29 dead)
<b>July 8, 2014</b>	YAA and KYPA hold an open forum between youth and young parliamentarians
<b>July 18, 2014</b>	Gunmen attack a bus in Lamu County (7 dead)
<b>September 3, 2014</b>	YAA facilitates the convening of 47 Youth County Executives and the Youth Officers in the Ministry of Devolution and Planning
<b>November 22, 2014</b>	Extremists hijack a bus near Mandera and kill non-Muslims (28 dead)
<b>December 2, 2014</b>	Gunmen attack quarry in Mandera (36 dead)



<b>April 2, 2015</b>	Attack on Garissa University College (148 dead, 79 injured)
<b>June 25, 2015</b>	Kenya Summit to Counter Violent Extremism
<b>August 29, 2015</b>	IGAD two-day Experts workshop on CVE
<b>September 18 – September 21, 2015</b>	International Day of Peace organized by the National Youth Council

### Literature Review of CVE/PVE Policy Evaluation

This paper presents an alternative way of evaluating CVE/PVE policies and their impact by probing youth opinions on the issues related to terrorism and counter-terrorism. We contextualize this analysis with a short review of the metrics of CVE/PVE evaluation and any problems that are highlighted by the literature.

In a comprehensive report guiding CVE/PVE program design and evaluation, Khalil and Zeuthen (2016) note that the commonly used categories for VE drivers, “push” and “pull” factors, would be improved by new categories focusing on structural motivators, individual incentives, and enabling factors. CVE/PVE practitioners are also encouraged to clarify programme logic(s), identify questionable assumptions, pin-point potentially problematic areas of interventions, and enhance pre/mid-program critical thinking by applying evaluation methods such as ‘results frameworks’ and ‘theories of change’ to maximize the desired impact(s) of programming (Khalil and Zeuthen 2016). Feddes and Gallucci (2015) found that most evaluative studies of CVE/PVE policies do not include ‘theory of change’ methodologies despite the evidence of their effectiveness in systematically ensuring anticipated outcomes are achieved in an intervention.

Encouraging the development of holistic prevention and attentiveness to local contextual factors, Khalil and Zeuthen emphasize that CVE/PVE are not development programming by another name. While they note that structural issues such as poverty and unemployment are important drivers, they argue that these conditions are not sufficient, absent the presence of other issues such as social networks, radicalizing mentorship, the pursuit of revenge, and status-seeking behavior, etc. They add further that initiatives and interventions are most effectively implemented when they target at-risk individuals for such activities such as mentorship and career training, instead of conducting blanket programming (USAID CVE programming is singled out by the authors as a prime example of the latter tendency). The authors also suggest that the desire to mitigate the potentially negative effects

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of CVE/PVE programming such as stigmatization or causing implementing partners in the field to be vulnerable to attack should not cause developers to be risk-adverse. And as a final recommendation, Khalil and Zeuthen outline the importance of experimental or quasi-experimental methods that use pre- and post-program testing with a control group to evaluate the performance of CVE/PVE programmes (Khalil and Zeuthen 2016).

Feddes and Gallucci (2015) found in a literature review on the methodologies used in evaluating CVE/PVE programming that despite the plethora of different initiatives across the world, the impact, underlying mechanisms, and economic costs of the programs were often not evaluated or measured. They found that systematic reviews tended to focus on the effects of government strategies and investigations of PVE and de-radicalization initiatives. Provocatively, the authors note, citing Lum, Kennedy, and Sherley (2008), that evaluation research on counter-terrorism interventions are almost completely absent. This view was supported more recently by Christmann (2012). It has been difficult for researchers to reach consensus on indicators of progress in anti-radicalization because, as Martine Zeuthen noted at the International Youth Action Against Terrorism (IYAAT) conference in February 2016 in Nairobi, the absence of acts of political violence is not necessarily confirmation that the programs instituted are working. To a large extent, this is the premise upon which many governments across the world seem to be operating for their CVE/PVE programming.

Overall, Feddes and Gallucci (2015) found that the interventions in the literature that contained an experimental or quasi-experimental approach included educational initiatives on democracy, raising awareness about radicalization in among communities containing at-risk youth, or finding ways to evaluate the effectiveness of family members and frontline professionals to protectively enhance resilience to violent extremism. The authors found that already radicalized individuals were the targets of the majority of interventions, followed by non-radical groups, non-radical individuals, and radicalized violent groups. In terms of prevention, this finding reveals that evaluative studies are more concerned with anti-radicalization and de-radicalization than PVE. The goals of most evaluations was to determine if CVE/PVE programming supported prevention (assuage), suppression (disengage), or restoration (de-radicalize) of particular behaviors over a short or long period of time. Some studies included control groups, but most did not. From their review, not a single evaluative study in their list was conducted in Kenya, or Somalia for that matter.

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Caitlin Mastroe (2016) reviewed efforts taken by the UK government to monitor, measure, and evaluate the effectiveness of its *Prevent* strategy which seeks to build educational infrastructure and knowledge to help educators and community leaders intervene in an individual's descent into VE. Like Zeuthen, Mastroe (2016) notes that pin-pointing the outcomes variable on a counter-factual, "observing the individuals that did not radicalize (as a direct result of the CVE initiatives), but would have radicalized otherwise" is an impossible proposition and task. Quantitatively counting instances of terrorism (or their lack) and charting recidivism rates of participants in prison-based CVE programs are also problematic; the former gives no indication of the reasons for any increase or decrease of terrorist events and the latter can show improvement due to conformity and a willingness on the part of the participant to impress evaluators more than an objective measure of the effectiveness of the program. Other issues raised by Mastroe include attempting to evaluate short-term programs dealing with a long-term problem, the fact that governments classify or keep unpublished data on their CVE/PVE programs, the difficulty of comparing different CVE/PVE programs trying to address terrorism in distinct ways. The indicators of effectiveness of the *Prevent* strategy included: evaluation of local authorities on community engagement, knowledge and understanding of violent extremism; development of an action plan; and effective oversight, implementation, and evaluation of the action plan. The Prevent intervention has been criticized for stigmatizing the Muslim community, policing ideas, lacking community buy-in, lacking mechanisms for community members to offer inputs, producing distorted outcomes from educators reporting on their own students, taking a one-method-fits all communities approach, and treating community cohesion as a necessary condition for counter-terrorism agendas (Mastroe 2016).

### **Epistemological Priorities Affect Angles of Emphasis**

There are several predominate epistemological tendencies in the literature critically evaluating Kenya's CVE/PVE policies. Regarding the question of whose knowledge gets privileged as the reference point for evaluation, the vast majority of studies privilege the voices and/or interests of western elites as key informants or take a top-down approach to evaluate programs without discussing in a substantive way the worldviews and experiences of civilians caught between state and non-state violence. A number of studies tackle CVE/PVE

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policies in Kenya by epistemologically privileging local development agencies, Muslim community leaders, local politicians, or academics in universities or think-tanks, but mainly do so to critically evaluate elite positions, decision-making, initiatives, or approaches (e.g., asking whether the war on terror is or is not a pretext to broaden neo-colonial control of East Africa; asking whether western militaries and combatant forces can legitimately launch a viable ‘hearts and minds’ campaign, such as via a civilian branch proxy). This tendency is also prevalent in studies offering an important side-argument that problematizes western framing of the issue (e.g., whether the ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns of western players in fact efface the massive structural issues that feed and sustain insurgent groups in East Africa; whether aid can legitimately support the ‘securitization of development’) (Bachmann and Hönke 2010).

Studies citing local voices also help to pin-point the western academic tendency to privilege its own epistemological and discursive framework (e.g., whether western theoretical premises such as the Westphalian model of states, or nationalism for that matter help advance the conversation on anti-radicalization in a context where East African peoples have a myriad of floating and changing identity markers) (Bachmann and Hönke 2010). A few studies privilege the local voice to explicitly evaluate the impact of anti-radicalization programming for local populations. Even fewer studies examine how Kenyan youth evaluate and measure the impact of CVE/PVE policies on their lives, opportunities, and futures (Mogire and Agade 2011; Aldrich 2014; Bradbury and Kleinman 2010). Here, we conduct a short review of the most significant themes, arguments, and findings of the literature on this topic in order to ultimately explain, in the section that follows, how the privileging of the Kenyan youth voice fills important contours to the discussion of the efficacy and impact of CVE/PVE policies on Kenyan society.

### **Kenyan CVE/PVE Policies in the Context of International Human Rights Law**

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is part of the International Bill of Human Rights, makes provision for the following rights that all people are entitled to: the right to life, freedom from torture, freedom from slavery, the right to liberty and security, the right when detained to be treated humanely, freedom of movement, the right to a free trial, freedom from retrospective penalties, the right to be recognized as a

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person before the law, the right to private and family life, the right to protection of reputation, freedom from thought/conscience/religion/belief, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom from prohibition on incitement to discrimination, hatred, or violence, freedom of assembly and association, equal protection of the law, the right to participate in public affairs, the right to ethnic/linguistic or religious minorities to enjoy their culture and to profess their religion and use their own language, and, finally, the right to effective remedy when rights and freedoms have been violated (International Council on Human Rights 2008).

The ICCPR makes provisions that certain rights can be suspended during certain circumstances (Hoffman 2004), however, the following rights may not be suspended under any circumstances: the right to life, prohibition on torture/cruel/inhumane or degrading torture or punishment, prohibition on slavery, prohibition on imprisonment for contractual obligation, prohibition on retrospective criminal punishments, the right to recognition as a person before the law, and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. A state must respect its obligations under international law, including those of any person suspected or known for violent extremism (Jawad 2015).

CVE/PVE activities face several challenges in the balance between human rights protection and security assurances vis-à-vis the prescriptions of the ICCPR. The right to life, prohibition on torture/cruel/inhumane or degrading torture or punishment, prohibition on imprisonment for contractual obligation, and the right to recognition as a person before the law are often violated in the name of CVE/PVE. People in Kenya have been executed with impunity in successive governments' particular wars on terror. According to International Law, forces must give suspects opportunities to surrender before employing the use of force. Shoot-to-kill policies in Kenya (and elsewhere) have also led to 'shoot first, ask question later' actions. Such policies are justified in the era of sacrificial bombings where shoot-to-kill is perceived as the only-option when everyone is a potential suspect of disclosed bombs (Boon 2012).

### **States, Inter-Agency Collaboration, and Regional Regimes**

The Kenyan Government's anti-terrorism drive became concerted after the 1998 US Embassy bombing in Nairobi. After the attacks in the US on September 11, 2001, Kenya was designated an 'anchor state' by the Bush Administration and the frontline in the War on

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Terrorism. Kenya was listed by name in the National Security Strategy of the US Government in 2002. These designations raised Kenya's profile, made Kenya a key locale for combating terrorism, and its institutional weaknesses key areas for foreign intervention (Mogire and Agade 2011; Bachmann and Hönke 2010). Officially speaking, since that time, Kenya has invested significant personnel, state funds, and proxy support to local allies to shore up its struggle against the al-Shabaab insurgency and the criminal activities of organized syndicates. There is no doubt that divergent foreign approaches seeking to support Kenyan security for regional and international security drive the Kenyan government into many difficult positions. For example, the approaches of the British, Danish, and American governments are themselves respectively driven by radicalization prevention, fighting terrorism through development, and leveraging military instruments in the fight against terrorism with a marginal side-interest in democratizing the political sphere. Thus, it is the case that Kenyan CVE/PVE policy development cannot be extracted or divorced from a context where the following conflicting strategies are imposed upon the state: 1) granting hard security assistance to state security forces; 2) providing legal advice on anti-terrorism legislation, and 3) engaging with crucial parts of the population on soft security issues" (Bachmann and Hönke 2010: 104 – 107).

Kenya partners with regional and international actors in a bid to shore up and fortify its counter-terrorism infrastructure. Kenya's participation in regional economic communities (RECs) has left an indelible mark on the direction that successive government administrations have taken in developing CVE/PVE approaches including establishing and implementing travel and financial bans (and the freezing of assets) for people suspected of planning or executing terrorism attacks. REC input has also influenced how regional governments have dealt with Somali warlords, interdicted the transfer of arms, ammunition, supplies, and personnel from foreign sources for al-Shabaab at Somali airports via calls on international supporters to impose no-fly zones, and used state navies to block seaports. Demeke and Gebru (2014: 225) analyze the role of the REC, Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the struggle against terrorism. Kenya is a member state in IGAD. According to the authors, "The ultimate objective of IGAD is to achieve economic cooperation and integration by averting the destructive energies of conflict into regional cooperation and development" (Demeke and Gebru 2014: 219). The US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998



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prompted the emergence of regional security regimes. The Organization for African Union (OAU) adopted a convention for the prevention and combating of terrorism in 1999 and in 2002, guidance was given on how regional economic communities like IGAD could begin implementing counter-terrorism measures and implement UN Security Council Resolution 1373. Resolution 1373 was designed to empower regional regimes as viable sources of counter-terrorism and counter-transnational organized crime policy-making and programming. CVE/PVE capacity-building for IGAD started on these premises. Seeking to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in its regional sphere of concern, IGAD adopted two new conventions on extradition and mutual legal assistance, and adopted their Security Strategy in 2010. The newly rebranded IGAD Peace and Security Strategy (IPSS) developed four pillars in counter-terrorism, transnational organized crime, maritime security, and security institutions capacity-building. Demeke and Gebru add that in “addition to acceding to global, regional, and sub-regional treaties...member states have been introducing legal codes that help them in fighting terrorism and other transnational crimes at national level” (2014: 222)

IGAD’s Security Sector Program unit (ISSP) has the mandate to develop security sector reform. Part of this work involves collaborating with the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) and the US-coalition Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF- HOA), including the allied armed forces of Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Djibouti, and the navies of Kenya and Djibouti, to undermine ‘terrorist’ mobilization in the Horn of Africa (Demeke and Gebru 2014). Beyond security sector reform, IGAD has been instrumental in leading prominent and controversial interventions in member states. IGAD states such as Kenya are the main contributors to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) which intervenes in Somalia, and had staged an intervention in Ethiopia in 2006 and Kenya in 2011 in collaboration with troops from the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG). AMISOM’s predecessor, deployed a “peacekeeping” force to fight the Union of Islamic Court in Somalia; the US military ran counter-terrorism operations against the Islamic Courts from the island of Lamu, Kenya (Demeke and Gebru 2014; Bachmann and Hönke 2010).

IGAD has sought to mitigate structural sources of insecurity including poverty, drought turning into famine, and poor governance by using trade and infrastructure

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development as a pretext to develop interconnectedness and collaboration between member states. Kenya was given the responsibility of dealing with drought resilience and resource management in the region. Counter-terrorism training programs for member states were developed by IGAD to enhance the knowledge and skills of the security sector including the Kenyan Defense Forces, police forces, border personnel, intelligence, and judiciary (Demeke and Gebru 2014). In attendance at these training seminars are representatives and personnel from agencies in Kenya that are expressly created to deal with terrorism including: the National Security Intelligence Service (NSIS), the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), the Maritime Interdiction Unit, the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), and the Special Prosecution Unit (SPU) (Mogire and Agade, 2011).

IGAD workshops have focused on enhancing border security, community policing, coordinating counter-terrorism effects among various agencies, advanced interrogation skills, “strengthening of cross-border cooperation networks amongst law enforcement officials,” open source analysis and sharing of information, community engagement, strengthening regional financial infrastructure, effective counter-terrorism in the criminal justice sector, “[w]itness and victim protection, interagency cooperation, [creating] incentives to terrorist suspects to cooperate and investigating and prosecuting preparatory offences” (Demeke and Gebru 2014: 224).

These US-supported agencies have engaged in an ad hoc and often inconsistent approach to terrorism including not taking action against domestic militias that perpetrated the post-election violence in 2007 because of their close connections to Kenyan political elites. Attempts to mitigate al-Shabaab’s Kenyan recruitment have led these agencies to construct policies, approaches, and activities around the presumption that Muslims, and specifically Somalis, support terrorism activities (Mogire and Agade 2011). The Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, in concert with the FBI, has been accused of torturing suspects, conducting arbitrary arrests, detaining without charge, disappearing people, detaining suspects’ relatives, and conducting rendition (Mogire and Agade 2011).

The British government’s training of Kenyan special counter-terrorism forces ceased in 2008 after human rights violations were perpetrated against Mt. Elgon locals (Bachmann and Hönke 2010). This team shared information and intelligence for prevention purposes and

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collaborated for the extradition of the 2010 Kampala attackers from Kenyan and Tanzania to Uganda for prosecution which was widely criticized for being guided by political expediency and international line-toeing that created a permissive atmosphere for the abuse of the bombing suspects' human rights (Demeke and Gebru 2014; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2013).

A paper written by Alex de Waal and Rachel Ibreck (2016) and commissioned by the Human Security Study Group outlines the multifarious challenges for human security expansion, protection, and development in the Horn of Africa. To support their analysis, the authors engaged policy-makers, civil society actors, and academics. Regarding Kenya's counter-terrorism infrastructure and polices, de Waal and Ibreck point out that the central concern of government is to politically survive and that many of the HoA regional leaders are experts in 'political marketplace' management (de Waal 2015; de Waal and Ibreck 2016). The authors argue that a common Janus-faced political strategy is to politically broker and sometimes capitalize upon turbulence and unpredictability by, among other methods, externally presenting an image of principled governance while governing internally on the basis of alternative principles. They also mention that the Kenyan Defense Force contingent in Somalia has been accused of violating international humanitarian law, attacking civilians, and engaging in profit smuggling operations with al-Shabaab (de Waal and Ibreck 2016).

In January 2016, the Republic of Kenya and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP – Kenya) produced a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) programme document outlining the strategies the Government, supported by several governmental and non-governmental agencies, would adopt in a one-year project to help achieve security and development in Kenya over the next 15 years. Kenya is not an enormously wealthy country, however its in-kind contributions to the project were 20,000 USD supported by 430,000 USD delivered by the Government of Japan. This capacity-building project was designed to enhance the abilities of the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) to develop and implement CVE/PVE strategies and PVE engagement, raise community awareness through the development of informational, educational, and communication material, provide training to leaders who interact directly with women and youth, support interfaith dialogue, and help increase inter-group tolerance and co-existence (UNDP – Kenya 2015).

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In the report, the Republic of Kenya government identified several structural and situational drivers of conflict in the country including political power struggles among various ethnic groups, poverty, youth unemployment, trans-national criminality, terrorism, the recruitment of vulnerable young people into militarism and criminality, and the trafficking of small arms across “porous arid and semi-arid border lands” (UNDP – Kenya 2015). The report also attributed insecurity to the influx of unscreened refugees into Kenya.

### **Development Agencies, Soft-Power, and Local Concerns**

There is a sustained literature on soft-power programming produced by international organizations, government development agencies, and non-governmental organizations that evaluates the outcomes of the CVE/PVE programs they have implemented with or without government support. Supporting this literature is academic and think-tank research that evaluates, for example, the United States’ ‘Hearts and Minds’ programs in Eastern or Western Africa (Mogire and Agade 2011; Aldrich 2014; Bradbury and Kleinman 2010) or studies that cite government officials to explain the reasons or implications for why, despite significant foreign pressure, the Kenyan government values and pursues autonomy and self-determination over the direction of CVE/PVE programs (Whitaker 2008). Although this literature does engage opinions and insights at the grassroots level, such works tend to privilege the voices of political elites, academics, development agencies and community elders.

Whereas British-Kenyan soft-power counter-terrorism collaboration has supported Muslim community engagement, community policing, and a prisons reform program, aside from USAID development programs which have little strategic policy influence, the American-Kenyan soft-power approach is to use military resources to develop infrastructure on the Somali-Kenyan border including the construction of schools and wells in Northern Kenya in a bid to win ‘hearts and minds’ (Bachmann and Hönke 2010). Bachmann and Hönke (2010) problematize the assumptions of western anti-terror ‘peace and security’ agendas arguing that the effects of such programming, for locals, remain decidedly in abeyance. These authors ask how western interventions affect, appropriate, and are reciprocally appropriated by local politics. Primary information collected for the Bachmann and Hönke (2010) study was derived from 40 semi-structured interviews with representatives of foreign countries

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including diplomats, development workers, and armed forces personnel, representatives of Kenyan human rights organizations, representatives of Muslim organizations, and local politicians and lawyers conducted in 2007 and 2008. Bachmann and Hönke argue that contemporary liberal engagement with African states often involves selling War on Terror (often hard power programming) security assistance qua development assistance facilitated through local networks. Security technologies of western governance over Kenya are made possible through hard power programming that seek to empower, increase the participation of, and give care to populations deemed ‘at-risk’ to recruitment into violent extremism (strategically dubbed ‘campaigns for winning hearts and minds’). The authors suggest that this is an effort that disaggregates global peace and conflict management with the burden of implementation placed upon the Global South, in this case, Kenya (Bachmann and Hönke 2010).

The International Crisis Group (2014) provided a number of recommendations to the Kenyan government on CVE/PVE policies. First, it recommended acknowledging the threat posed by al-Shabaab in Kenya without conflating it with political opposition groups, illegal organizations, and/or specific communities. Second, it requested the implementation of the new county government structures and agencies that leverage grassroots input on issues of socio-economic marginalization. Third, it suggested that the government consider the impact of official operations such as Operation Usalama Watch and paramilitary operations of the Anti-Terrorism Policy Unit (ATPU) because they are perceived to be targeting whole communities. They also recommend that the government facilitate transparent investigations and pursue redress when operations are found to have exceeded rule of law/constitutional rights and safeguards. And fourth, the ICG suggests that the government implement the recommendations of the 2008 (“Sharawe”) Presidential Action Committee (tabled with the 2013 Truth, Justice and Reconciliation report) to address institutional discrimination against Muslims (e.g. issuance of identity cards and passports) and better representation of Muslims in senior public service appointments.

Some small-N qualitative studies have drawn upon, for example, grassroots informants such as community outreach workers, teachers, Muslim community leaders to give more colorful nuance to local efforts to build resilience in young people, or that rely upon pre- and post-testing of youth opinions to evaluate programs like the ‘Being Kenyan, Being Muslim

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(BKBM)’ program funded by USAID that was modeled on the empowerment program in the UK ‘Being British, Being Muslim (BBBM)’ (Savage, et al., 2014). BKBM was an intervention that sought to counter violent extremism and other forms of intergroup conflict through the promotion of value complexity. BKBM was trialed in Eastleigh, Nairobi with a group of twenty-four participants of Kenyan and Somali ethnicities; eight participants were identified as vulnerable to extremism, six of these were former Al-Shabaab members. Group activities explored all value positions on issues central to extremist discourse and relevant to events in Kenya, free from criticism or social pressure (Salvage, et al., 2024).

The intervention involved a sixteen-hour course that used films and group activities to enable participants to problem solve on extremism-related topics according to a broad array of their own values. The program was driven by the assumption that groups radicalize when they feel that their values are threatened by globalization. As a result, they engage in defensive retrenchment to value monism and associated lowered complexity of thinking. A period of sequestration from family and friends and total commitment to the extremist group is the step that usually precedes involvement in violent strikes. The program supported the idea that increasing the complexity with which people think about the issues that radicalizers exploit reduces vulnerability to extremist messages, as a broad-based form primary prevention. BKBM operationalized relevant value conflicts while providing the resources for people to apply their own values, which in turn was deemed to advance thinking complexity. A UK government prevention initiatives assessment report found that programs work best when they support open questioning in a peer group context and are focused on the harder skills such as critical thinking, appreciating different perspectives, developing a person’s own worldview, learning to work well with others and appreciating tensions between different viewpoints. It is thought that long-term resilience is built by affirming complex social identities and developing conflict management skills (Salvage, et al., 2024).

The explicit aim of BKBM is to increase thinking complexity promoted by value pluralism, measured by integrative complexity (IC). The BKBM course results showed overall significant gains in IC. The change in the structure of participants’ arguments (measured by IC) represented the last stage of a series of deeper changes that involve embodied enactment, interpersonal episodic learning, linking these stages into a narrative, and reflecting upon them conceptually. Altogether, the changes visible through are the tip of a



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deeper iceberg of change needed. Overall, a positive participant response, in conjunction with empirical data, indicates that BKBM was a success in Kenya. The changes seen in participants predict pro-social rather than violent means to resolve conflict.

To our knowledge there has been no outside evaluation of the Kenyan Muslim community-led BRAVE (Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism) program, though in internal report was compiled in 2016. This deradicalization program trains imams to work with at-risk Muslim youth through, what BRAVE committee chair, Dr. Mustafa Ali, calls an “ideological counter offensive” (Ali 2015); incidentally this term is supported by Peter Chonka’s argument that in the absence of state structures in South-Central Somalia, al-Shabaab heavily deploys discursive contestation over the political legitimacy and ideology pre-eminence of its governance in this area (2016). For Choka (2016), the centrality of ideology for al-Shabaab is of theoretical importance. For Ali, in terms of on-the-ground interventions, he argues that ideology is 90% of the problem in violent extremism among Muslim youth. The BRAVE program’s ideological counter offensive involves, among other things, developing religious, ethical, ideological, strategic, and tactical counter-narratives. BRAVE leaders have developed a training manual that includes a tool called ‘EWARVE’ (Early Warning Against Radicalization and Violent Extremism) that tries to identify early warning signs on radicalization and violent extremism:

What are the signs that you can see in a child, in a young person that you can tell that this child is not on the right direction? We work with psychologists who identify about 16 – 17 different types of early warning signs. We talk about the meta-narratives and counter-narratives and the areas that are misused by Muslims... [The manual has] a module that would train the imams and teachers on how to communicate effectively...young people do not listen to 2 hour sermons they have no time for that. And this is why, sometimes, the violent extremists are very advanced in their communication strategy. They come with very crisp 45 second – 5 minute videos that attract the attention of the youth.

In January 2016, the BRAVE program organizers launched an anti-radicalization campaign wherein 100 at-risk youth underwent training on the drivers of radicalization and

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how to counter them (2016). The BRAVE initiative is complimented by the community activism of Ayub Mohamud, a Kenyan teacher from Eastleigh, a marginalized suburb in Nairobi. Mohamud was recently awarded 1 million USD by the Varkey Foundation for giving anti-extremism classes, demystifying the benefits of militancy, and develop confidence and critical thinking skills (AFP 2016).

The Kenyan government and its citizens have competing and often incommensurate opinions about how to produce security in the country (Bradbury and Kleinman 2010). The Kenyan government has a hit-and-miss strategy of engaging its own citizens on its CVE/PVE policies and showcasing a real willingness to address and mitigate inefficiencies and harms produced by such policies. The story told by local and government officials is that insecurity is due to resource scarcity, failed development initiatives, and proximity to Somali and by extension, the al-Shabaab insurgency. For local peoples, and especially Muslim youth, insecurity is the result of a host of diverse causes including state policies that have the effect of isolating them as significant threats to national security (Bradbury and Kleinman 2010: 47).

The Kenyan Muslim community and leadership have long been vocal critics of the arbitrary and/or ineffective CVE/PVE policies and practices adopted by Kenyan government departments and agencies. The US – Kenyan state-to-state relationship is particularly contentious. At best, Muslim communities especially in the Northern and Coastal regions of the country see no “discernible improvement to the overall security of their communities” from US-Kenyan military and humanitarian-development collaboration (Bradbury and Kleinman 2010: 47). At worst, state-to-state collaboration has led to numerous tragically counter-productive events that have precipitated an erosion of real security for local populations.

Real and perceived insecurity for local Muslim communities has to be locally contextualized and because of this fact, the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors that draw at-risk youth into violent extremism must also be context specific. Within many of the Northern provinces, insecurity is the result of inter-ethnic disputes and secessionist drives (e.g., Shifta war) (Ratemo 2015), proximity of communities to the Somali border (keeping in mind that many people in Kenya at this border do not see themselves as qualitatively distinct from Somalis on the other side of the border), distribution and accessibility of resource provisions, and historic and contemporary interactions with state agencies and personnel. In the Northeastern region,

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many people feel that the Kenyan army is not only a bigger cause of insecurity than violence stemming from Somalia, but perceive it as an occupying force which feeds separatist perceptions and discourse among some segments of this society. Fresh in their memories, for example, is the Wangala Massacre and the resulting passing of martial/emergency laws in the region, the 2008 El Wak suppression, and post-9/11 rendition activities spurred by US pressure. For coastal regions, insecurity is the result of historic and contemporary land disputes (between ethnic groups and between locals and political elites), interactions with state agencies and personnel which have produced visceral and vocal reactions (the government is seen as not just self-serving, and greedy, but also predatory of local environments), drug abuse that is seen as eroding local culture, and criminality such as banditry (Bradbury and Kleinman 2010).

Drawing upon the perspectives of Kenyan citizens, Ratemo (2015) notes in her study on countering radicalization that the Government's military operations are criticized for supporting authoritarian practices and eroding democratic governance mechanisms in the country. For these critics, mitigating poverty, authoritarianism, discrimination, and weak statehood should be the focus of counter-terrorism efforts because they create the conditions for the rise of violent extremism. Respondents in Ratemo's study, of varying age and educational levels, noted that non-state terrorism has an enormous impact upon Kenya's tourism industry and causes significant loss of employment for workers in that industry. The Garissa University attacks, in particular, were cited as the reason participants feared spontaneous attacks of a similar nature. When asked if they thought the government was doing enough to fight terrorism, a majority of respondents felt that the government's efforts were insufficient. Focus group discussions revealed that people were dissatisfied with appointments in the security sector, noting that several high ranking ministers and heads of security had recently been forced to step down from their positions due to alleged incompetency which made Garissa vulnerable to attack. Regarding Kenya's military operations in Somalia, which were perceived as a critical factor producing insecurity in Kenya, Ratemo notes further that, "It was raised in the discussion that the government of Kenya was fighting an extended war of United States in Somalia and should review its operation there" (Ratemo 2015: 53).

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### **The Youth Voice on Kenyan CVE/PVE Policies**

Although CVE/PVE has made positive developments globally, many youth do not appreciate that the term ‘extremism’ is associated with them and as a result, they harbor a palpable negativity towards CVE/PVE efforts. One manifestation of this distrust is the dissociation of youth from organizations that promote CVE/PVE (Khalil and Zeuthen 2014). As a result of these perceptions, extremist groups have targeted CVE/PVE stakeholders and perceive aid to such stakeholders as a quid pro quo between Kenya and the US which helps privilege an American foreign policy agenda (Aly 2015). The lack of clear and agreed upon definition, means, and goals of CVE/PVE in Kenya, moreover, has led to conflicting approaches which have negatively affected the Government’s credibility.

At present, the youth demographic most at-risk is suffering from moderate-to-severe trauma and psychological dislocation, is frequently subject to cross-border communal conflicts, and/or is weighed down by real and perceived marginalization, neglect, and disenfranchisement due to systematic exclusions. Statistics show that unemployment rates for youth are three to six times the rate for adults, and when youth do work, informal, low-wage and insecure work are the norm (Soi 2015; Munga and Onsumu 2014; UNDP 2013). For at-risk youth, the Kenyan government has in many cases, to date, failed to recognize their mobility and education rights, their need for career opportunities, and their basic needs due to poor implementation of core public service delivery in their locales by both foreign development agencies whose implementation period is frequently short-term and by local agencies that lack resources for deep programming. Addressing the needs and human rights of at-risk youth is an important, yet often highly overlooked way to mitigate the growing global threat of Islamic militancy.

The Hanns Seidel Foundation and the Well Told Story (WTS) convened a dialogue forum in Nairobi on April 29, 2016 called: “Youth Voice on Radicalization and Violent Extremism” that presented the findings of a report called: “Exploring Religious Tolerance among Young Kenyans in Nairobi and Mombasa.” The event was attended by 43 representatives of more than 25 government and non-government CVE/PVE stakeholders including the World Bank, the United Nations Development Fund (UNDF), the German embassy, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National

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Government, and Programme for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA). Using a ‘World Café’ model for cumulative dialogical exchange, focusing on multiple scales at the national, local, global, and personal levels, the dialogue sessions identified a number of causes of radicalization and solutions. The section that follows will only focus on the identified causes of, and solutions to radicalization that pertain to the scope of what the national government of Kenya can implement or address.

The attendees pointed to specific issues including inconsistencies in the promotion and presentation of state ideology and national values, the difficulty of translating youth empowerment as a principle into concrete action, inefficient and ineffective communication channels to the target group, state double-speak on youth in calling them the ‘leaders of tomorrow’ but sidelining or isolating them today, collectively criminalizing Muslim youth, police harassment of the youth population which disrupts their sense of belonging in society, state fighting terror with terror, disjointed and uncoordinated work between state and non-state stakeholders on counter-radicalization initiatives, a paucity of scientific knowledge guiding policy-making, young people losing faith in political processes due to corruption and injustices, not addressing the historic injustices that fuel rebellion, and the challenge of creating mentorship and role model opportunities for young people (Hanns Seidel Foundation 2016). Ratemo’s study (2015) adds to this list noting that youth unemployment and political disenchantment are extremely high, and that an estimated 75% of high school graduates are unemployed.

To address these problems, the attendees recommended that the highest ranks of political leadership promote nationhood, develop civic (national) education to mitigate apathy, improve information exchange, and teach community leadership and security personnel to avoid equating youth with criminality. The attendees also argued that Kenyan leadership should conduct a review of political training curriculum; develop an amnesty policy and integration process that gives amnesty to people returning back from militarism; create an inter-ethnic and inter-religious awareness campaign; use dialogue to bridge the gap between security agencies and communities; improve infrastructure so that parents have more time with children; invest in initiatives that mitigate global warming that produces deplorable (drought) conditions; create mechanisms for military accountability to counter the

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indiscriminate use of force and arrest those who violate the law; and produce tangible positive results in the fight against corruption (Hanns Seidel Foundation 2016).

### **Kenyan Youth Evaluations of the CVE/PVE Policy Framework**

To date, there is a dearth of studies asking what Kenyan youth leaders think about CVE/PVE policies despite the fact that they are often the main targets of al-Shabaab attacks. In our interview with BRAVE chair, Mustafa Ali, we got a window into why Kenyan youth evaluations are important. When asked whether he thought that Kenyan Muslim and non-Muslim youth have the capacities to evaluate CVE policies and offer alternatives, Ali replied:

Yes, I think they can. They feel the effects of these policies...[] the young population [is] under the age of 35 [in Kenya and numbers at] about 60 to 65% and most of the policies are geared towards them. And they feel its effects even quicker than the others. And therefore if we are to [have] evidence [about] whether [the policies] worked...we need to go back to the young people and talk to them. They should also be part of the policy making, not just finding that policies have been done after the fact” (Ali 2015).

Relying upon survey and interview data, this study addresses this lacuna by investigating how young Kenyan leaders evaluate current CVE/PVE and anti-radicalization programming, assess areas for improvement, and contribute to the debate about the best policy mix. From this study, it is clear that the motivation among Kenyan youth to evaluate CVE/PVE policies is prompted not only from the threat of terrorism from non-state actors, but also from the threats upon their lives, well-being, and security due to the Government’s current hard power and law enforcement driven counter-terrorism approaches. Many Kenyan youths are aware that terrorism and CVE are two-sides of the same outcome coin for them. Here, we explore how Kenyan youth would like to chart the way forward.



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## **Context of Perceptions and Experiences: Impact of CVE/PVE Strategies on Kenyan Youth**

In this section, we provide a brief window into the impact of current CVE/PVE strategies on Kenyan youth. Terrorism and counter-terrorism are issues at the forefront of the thinking and planning of Kenyan youth as they go about their daily travels, educational pursuits, navigate their sense of belonging in Kenyan society, and evaluate political constraints in their lives. For example, Kenyan youth provided some important commentary on terrorism's effects on their lives saying comments like: "CVE/PVE always arouse my mind whenever I fear of national politics/ election outcomes and masses, and I pray [post-election violence] doesn't happen again," or "I am scared of staying in high risk areas like churches, buses, and the mall," and "I tend to be scared to be in malls after what happened in Westgate." The information in this section was derived from a question on the survey that asked about the impact of Kenyan CVE/PVE policies on various aspects of their lives.

### *Impact of CVE/PVE on Mobility*

Regarding the perceived impact of the Kenyan government CVE/PVE policy decisions, youth indicated a variety positions. When asked if the strategies had an impact on their daily movement or mobility for where they live, work, or travel, several respondents indicated that higher security measures did not have an impact upon their mobility and a few respondents said that heightened security patrols or presence made them feel safer. Proponents of security said that "It is safer to move around because law enforcement is within reach," and "[although] security limits/allows movement, I feel safe moving around." Another proponent offered the insight that security bolstered by strong religious faith calms her fears during travel: "Every move I make is haunted by the thought "what if." I have seen security measures fail. I am anxious, but put my trust in God for protection."

The vast majority of respondents suggested that security and law enforcement in particular had a profound impact upon their mobility. One woman said that she intentionally stays away from areas that have special forces or battalions. Other people said that they careful about where they visit during alerts, and that security has increased and is present in many forms including roadblocks, police patrols, and searches in perceived terrorism hotspots. Fearing the securitization of the Somali suburb of Nairobi, Eastleigh, one man noted

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that he can never travel or move about in that suburb in peace, and two other people mentioned that their work with youths in Lamu and Mombassa, and travel in Thika are affected, notably, by the presence of security personnel. Many respondents drew a mainly pragmatic focus to the searches they have to undergo, and that restrict their mobility moving from A to B or engaging in activities in multiple locales of their lives from offices to school to university residences (“there are checks everywhere, [where I] work, travel, and live”).

Some describe the securitization of society in more personal terms because of heightened and perceived targeted impact on their lives. One argued that “Muslims are not free to move because of police disturbance,” and many others noted that they diligently carry their national IDs to every locale they visit for fear that they will be denied entry to different buildings and venues. The securitization of society had the effect, for many, of heightening their perception of risk from other people. One person said, for example, that, “Yes [the impact of CVE/PVE policies are felt], security wise I am more aware of my neighbor.” We discuss these sentiments in more detail below.

#### *Impact of CVE/PVE on Future Short and Long-Term Job Prospects*

When asked whether the CVE/PVE approaches in Kenya affected their short or long-term job prospects, respondents indicated a variety of positions. Some people felt that CVE/PVE policies had no impact or created no restrictions on their future job prospects arguing, for example, that they felt “No impact really as people are free to work anywhere they are comfortable.” Other people said that they “would not want to be involved in a CVE/PVE parallel job,” and that “Yes, [CVE/PVE policies affect my] long term job [prospects], I want to be a vocal lawyer and sometimes my ideas may be constructed as a terrorist sympathizer.”

#### *Impact of CVE/PVE on Interactions with Police and Security Personnel*

For the question about whether the CVE/PVE policies of the Government affected their interactions with police, border, or security personnel, a wide variety of opinions were stated that spanned the spectrum. Some people stated that they did not perceive any impact of policy implementation on their interactions with security personnel and other people perceived significant impact. For example, several male respondents said that they “freely interact with above named personnel particularly on security forces while providing them

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with information,” that there is a “need for close working with police and security personnel,” and that interaction “with campus security officers [is necessary] whenever [he is] not satisfied owing to the standard security and laxity at time.” A woman suggested that: that “security measures have really improved.” One man said that “The Nyumba Kumi initiative<sup>7</sup> has increased my awareness of the Kenyan police, and with frequent interactions with security personnel, I have come to appreciate their role in securing Kenya,” and another said that that he was happy with community policing efforts, whereas a female respondent said, “Yes, I feel the need to cooperate more because of the threat.” One person saw interactions with police in a positive and negative light, arguing that “No [the impact is of CVE/PVE policy on security personnel interactions is minimal] because racial profiling, though wrong, is very helpful at times of need and the police and security are securing me, [and] yes [the impact is more significant because the] brutality in the police is unbiased, and without a national identification card I am at risk of harassment.”

Many other respondents had particularly poignant and critical opinions about the effects of CVE/PVE policies for their interactions with security personnel. These interactions were described as “brutal,” “unfriendly,” and “difficult.” A respondent argued that “There is no good relationship between the youth and police, border, or security [personnel].” Some people focused on corruption in the police force. One person said that the police are not trusted because there are so many cases of mass corruption and therefore interactions with them are personally avoided. Additional people affirmed that sentiment saying, “Yes, I will tend to avoid the police because most are corrupt and capable of setting you up,” or that corrupt pretexts for extortion are prevalent on the streets because police officers “are underpaid and hence want to make more money [on the] pretence that you have committed a crime.”

Other people pointed out that police harass people and that is a reason to avoid them. One woman said that she avoids the police “like a plague because they tend to be very sexist

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<sup>7</sup> This initiative was organized by the Government of Kenya. ‘Nyumba Kumi’ means ‘ten households’ in Swahili. The initiative was spurred by the idea that community policing can supplement the existing work of government police forces and that people are more secure when they do know their neighbors. In an attempt to encourage Kenyans to get to know the people around them and thus expand their security, the Government encourages people in this initiative to get to know ten households in their immediate vicinity. The program has had mixed reviews among Kenyan citizens, and critics argue that crime rates in Kenya continue to soar while persistent mistrust of the police forces affects how community policing efforts are received (Mukinda 2015).

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most of the time,” and a male respondent said that he does “not interact with police officers due to personal reasons.” Another common theme prevalent in the survey responses was discrimination and harshness by security or police personnel and their effects. One person said that security, border, and police personnel are themselves engaging in terrorism and discriminating against fellow citizens on the basis of their looks. Another person said that “Nowadays police, many, but not all, have become extra harsh with Muslims in general, which personally I find unfair as not all are extremists and some happen to be my friends who are good people.” Another respondent affirmed this sentiment saying, “Police are always terrorizing Muslims and infringing their human rights.” There was also the perception expressed that the police and security forces are arbitrary when they conduct raids, and that fear and unease increase around them because if the police doubt a person’s intentions, they can take “rigorous action” against that person.

#### *Impact of CVE/PVE on Free Expression*

Kenyan youth also indicated that political speech or expression is curtailed or challenged on the pretext that it incites people into violent extremism, is inflammatory, or that it constitutes terrorism. For example, when asked if Kenya’s CVE/PVE policies affect political expression, people made comments such as: political expression is under a lot of “scrutiny” and that “bloggers have been arrested for some political comments,” speech in Kenya is “definitely limited because words can be twisted or construed to mean other things,” “there is that fear that any post on the internet maybe constructed as pro-terrorism,” “yes, [a] few people have been arrested in the past for giving their political opinions about how the government is responding to terrorist activities,” “I have to be careful on what I post especially on the topic [of terrorism or CVE/PVE],” “I am quite cautious about what I say or not say online [and] I also sensitize my peers on the same,” that the “Kenyan government can prosecute you for spreading hate messages [and thus you had] Better watch what you type,” and “yes, the measures taken by the government have limited the freedom of expression.” Some people justified measures to curtail freedom of expression by arguing that: “I still believe that political expressions in social media should be curtailed in Kenya for fear of it being labeled as hate speech, ethnic biased, or inflammatory,” and “Kenya does not allow online political expression [because] there is a lot of racism in political expression online.”

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One respondent was in favor of limits for online political expression because the post-election terror attacks in 2007 were fueled, in part, by online political speech.

### **Critical Analysis of CVE/PVE Measures: Kenyan Youth Perspectives**

#### *Use of Force Counter-Productive*

The first prominent theme identified by Kenyan youth participants, in their CVE/PVE policy evaluations, is that government counter-terrorism policies using force and repression are ineffective, counter-productive, and ethically problematic. Kenyan youth consistently cite widespread systems of corruption and bribery, military “revenge” responses, and police crackdowns as major instigators of non-state political violence in the country. One survey respondent summed up widespread sentiments succinctly: “Some of these measures taken to counter terrorism are counter-productive. They promote the abuse of human rights instead of their reaffirmation.” One participant argued that a key driver of violent extremism recruitment is the excessive use of force by law enforcement and that youth need to have more conversations with police personnel on this issue. Another critiqued the attitude among police officers that, in order for counter-terrorism to be effective, they must “take human rights out of play” or that “terrorists don’t understand human rights so why should we”. This particular individual added that Kenyan society, youth included, need to start a discussion on the fact that “this [sic] is what organizations like Al Shabab or other would like you to say and we see elsewhere it doesn’t work. If you don’t believe in the values that you are trying to promote when it gets difficult then what are you? You are a hypocrite like everyone else.”

One criticism that is frequently voiced among Kenyan youth is that the protection and maintenance of civic freedoms and the pursuit of preventative strategies are far preferred to reactive military shows of force in the wake of a tragic event. As one conference attendee put it:

I hope that in trying to do some interventions we can move the conversation about prevention forward. In the conversation between freedom and security, the state prioritizes security of the country. Whenever there is an attack, it is often that we move down the security route. But if we can have this conversation about the

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value of prevention activities and how social change happens...So that the immediate response is not just, let's buy bigger guns, but also build bigger schools and buy bigger guns. It is naïve, but I would really like that prevention get considered in those bigger policy discussions particularly after an attack.

### *Foreign Policy Decisions Affect Domestic Security*

It is not just domestic policy that is criticized; youth feel that the state foreign policy decisions affect their security. As one person argued: "When things are put in motion like invading Iraq or Afghanistan it is very hard to recover from that. And I think that is incentive for vast recruitment of young extremists and that is hugely unfortunate. And we are still feeling the effects of that." Another Kenyan youth argued against 'countering violent extremism' following a reactive model attributed to the US approach, and instead advocated a 'preventing violent extremism' strategy leveraged via networked and coordinated decision-making: "Certainly there is a lot of money being pumped into preventing counter extremism programs right now. It would be helpful to have some government policies and strategic frameworks in place but also have them linked so that there is a broader way to respond more effectively. Speaking on what I see coming from the US, the US government is often one step too slow in responding to some of the ISIS messaging. They are always a step behind, they are always reacting, and that is not going to be effective. So linking some of these strategic efforts and policy decisions is going to be important."

Another participant drew connections between the "revenge" nature of the extra-judicial violence of the state and hard power counter-terrorism with the "revenge" responses of militant groups.

We have many journals mostly printed in the Middle East showing how Muslims, or people are treated. So there is a journal that is talking about Guantanamo prison and how people are punished. So someone who reads that and say one day I will get revenge for how they are treating my people and one day I will get revenge because I know if I revenge I will die as a *mujahideen*. He does not know that Islam has its roots and that you cannot just attack someone just like that. Also, with magazines and journals we also have the issue of extra judicial killings that



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have been happening in Kenya. People have disappeared according to [a] report...So someone who sees this may see that they must kill to have revenge for that person.

### *The Problem of State Terrorism*

In addition to recognizing that actions taken by the state and militants alike are increasingly vengeful and retributive, other respondents noted that the designation of the ‘terrorist’ label need not be confined to non-state actors alone. One respondent drew attention to the aggressive behavior of police vis-à-vis Kenyan youth noting, “I think police are also terrorists, as youth they terrorize us...it is not only ISIL and Al-Shabaab that are terrorists. The police are terrorists.” Another youth echoed similar sentiments arguing that the government can be both terrorists and police “because terrorism comes in different ways.”

While police harassment remains a serious concern among many Kenyan youth, it is especially intrusive for Somali Kenyans who routinely confront bureaucratic inefficiencies and police profiling as subjects of heightened suspicion when tending to the demands of daily life. Many participants must demonstrate proof of their national identity through a government-issued ID card as a prerequisite for being able to partake in Kenyan society. Without it, “you cannot open a bank account, can’t be employed, or walk down the street.” However, obtaining a national ID card can be cumbersome and have lasting consequences for those unable to secure one in a timely fashion. One Kenyan youth respondent noted that people over the age of 18 in Kenya are “supposed to have a national identity card”, she was not given one at her school because she was not “from this area.” After being told to return home and apply, she complied, but complained saying that “I am waiting for this ID for almost a year.” While waiting for her ID card, this participant recalled being stopped by a police officer en-route and needing to bribe the officer because she did not have proof to demonstrate she was Kenyan: “I removed my birth certificate and he refused to accept it. So basically I bribed him 200 [Kenyan shillings] because if I don’t, I will be left there with hungry men in a deserted place.” The national ID card carries a currency above all other identity proofs of ‘Kenyan identity’, and the punishment for not carrying one can be quite severe: as one Somali Kenyan youth recalled, she was “jailed for two hours in detention simply because I did not have the national ID card but I had the University student ID card.”

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A Somali Kenyan participant told a similar story about police interaction which points to a broader pattern of racial profiling that negatively affects the reception of CVE/PVE initiatives among Kenyan youth. This person noted that he was particularly singled out for being Somali: “I am a Kenyan Somali and every day I get to experience really horrible experiences out there. For instance, I was in a car and the police stopped the car and they asked for our identifications. And they did not ask the driver for his ID and when I asked them why it was just my ID they wanted, the police said that he is Kenyan.” On this differential treatment he remarked, “as a youth, when I see that kind of justice I feel like people do not consider me like one of them.” This feeling of alienation and marginalization was also expressed by another Kenyan Somali respondent, who spoke of estrangement from Somalis and Kenyans alike in ways that seemed to dislocate the person from Kenya as a place of belonging and from inclusion in Kenyan nationhood: “Somalis are Kenyan. When the Somalis see me they say that I am Kenyan. They don’t see me as being Somali. And when I talk to Kenyans, they see me and they say that I am Somali. So where do you want me to go? So that is the feeling we have.”

#### *Insufficient Focus on Root Causes of Violent Extremism*

In acknowledgement of these grievances, some youth pressed for the need for CVE/PVE stakeholders to understand the root causes of terrorism and focus attention on how government responses to particular marginalized communities themselves may be fueling the problem they are attempting to resolve. As one argued:

We have to appreciate the challenges that the youth go through. Once we know the challenges then it is easy to know the roots of the problem. We can all agree the nobody is born a terrorist. There are things that we go through that make us become terrorists and that is the root of the problem and that is what we should address. And looking at the challenges, some of these people, especially the areas that have been affected by terrorism activities, it is because our government has treated these areas. These areas have been marginalized and radicalized because of what the government does to them. Because of the way they are perceived [youth react] and this goes into the core of terrorism, because if you are treated differently when you are very small

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from the other kids, this person will grow with some enmity inside. Such treatment links to people joining the terrorism activities.

Poverty, as an instigator of violent extremism, was a structural issue raised by Kenyan youth discussants that felt they have a role to play in mitigating its effects: “The issue of poverty is used by these terrorist groups. I think the youth needs to be mentored for them to be able to develop themselves and not associate with these terrorist groups to get money. The people need to understand that money is not everything. We should struggle to live a good life so that when we reach the hereafter we become successful.”

#### *Mixed Reactions to Effectiveness of Hard and Soft Power Approaches*

On the question about their opinion about current state hard and soft-power practices, there were mixed responses. Some indicated that above all, they do not feel that security has increased. Along this vein, one stated that “the government has not done enough”, whereas another felt that the government more “reactive than active”, undermining its effectiveness in preventing another terrorist incident. Whereas for others, “even more should be done to security” or that through security initiatives, “personal safety and well-being is reduced.” Other participants observed that state security practices involved targeting of particular communities: “there is a tendency of society, especially the Government, to target certain groups of persons like the Muslims who live in Eastleigh in Nairobi County.” Some were more critical of religious profiling but nevertheless stated the need for security measures: “some of these practices although they may appear harsh and far fetched are warranted because of the current situation on the security of the country. However, the government shouldn’t target certain groups unfairly like the Kenyan Muslim community.”

#### *Structural Disenfranchisement Matters*

Kenyan youth are perceived to be vulnerable to violent extremism because of readily identifiable structural issues. The participants of our study pinpointed many reasons that youth in the country are made vulnerable to violent extremism recruitment and many of those reasons are structural in nature, for example, state and family neglect, lack of income and opportunity, profiling, and online recruitment. One non-Kenyan participant argued that

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widespread unemployment and a “lack of economic activities among the youth” in many African countries is a form of “economic terrorism”. A particularly prominent and sustained discussion during the IYAAT Conference centered on the irresponsibility of the news media in properly and fairly reporting on political violence and related issues in the country. Much of this analysis focused on the sense of widespread helplessness and desperation felt by youth across the country to the output of mainstream and jihadi media outlets. “Several Somali activists noted that much jihadi literature including media, magazines, and journals incite youth to develop negative feelings towards the state and/or the west. “The major thing is those newly promoted Internet scholars who they get from the Internet who say, ‘God said you should kill so and so’. So those are the people that have more impact on our youth rather than an old man [old scholar of the community]. Most of our scholars are very old, are above 40. [A scholar] who is almost 45 telling a 20-year-old boy [] that what he is doing is very wrong, [he] will not listen.”

In one interview, a CVE/PVE stakeholder indicated that clanism is a significant structural issue:

When we are talking about recruitment in Somalia and in South Central Somalia we have to analyze the clan dynamics because very often the youth are the [protectors] of the community and they have to secure the clan and the community they live in. Clan elders will negotiate with whoever is able to provide security in that area. The youth are a militia for the clan and sometimes it is in their advantage to gang up with Al Shabab to secure access to water, roads, and markets. It is pragmatic. When it is minority recruitment who comes from a minority clan it is individuals who make the decisions to join for so many reasons because their mother has been raped or because they have been inspired by Sunni [fighters]...there are so many reasons. But then it is an individual case and again those dynamics are different again.

This interviewee provocatively noted that al-Shabaab often does not give people a choice to join, that “choice” is against ultimatum: “It isn’t necessarily a voluntary conversation, it is like you join or we shoot you”. In terms of getting out of al-Shabaab,

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Mustafa Ali, a leader in the BRAVE program [sic] argued that many youth want out, but struggle to figure out how: “Many of these young people, now men who have been duped into joining militant groups, a lot of them are actually innocent. So we need to reach out to them to get them out of that situation. A lot of them are calling to be rescued out of that situation and we have to do that” (Ali 2015). Ali notes moreover that these situations have to be approached in a sensitive manner because most the youth who leave for violent extremist groups lack a father-figure in their lives (Ali 2015) and thus that many homes are led by mothers who have a leveraging power over their children, but are insufficiently regarded as stakeholders in individual cases and for societal-level dialogue. Ali argued that many radicalized youths involved in militancy might even prefer for their mothers to come to Somalia to take them home and that although mothers are highly courageous and adept, they are frequently sidelined (Ali 2015).

Youth recruitment into groups like al-Shabaab is effective not only because of deep-rooted grievances, but also because al-Shabaab offers them something meaningful in forms of material and/or ideological fulfillment. That is to say, socio-economic opportunities, financial incentives, religious affiliation, and/or community development projects are positively associated, according to our research, with violent extremism when coupled with experiences of government sanctioned discrimination, poverty and societal neglect. One youth respondent cited how financial compensation by a terrorist group may be persuasive to youth routinely harassed by police: “So imagine he is a kid that is going through this [harassment for lack of national ID] and you get a text that says ‘hi’ there is a job at ISIS, can you join? We are going to pay you 500,000 shillings, and you do not need an ID to be there. And they will just join because they feel that we are frustrated by the way the government treats us.” This point was clarified in an interview with a non-youth stakeholder: marginalization and opportunity work hand-in-hand in terms of youth recruitment into extremist groups: “...they may feel neglected by the community or by the government. They may feel like they are not part of this people. And so these terror groups use such opportunities to try and win [over] the youth.” Or, as Martine Zeuthen of RUSI noted in an interview, it is not enough to examine ‘push’ factors like socio-economic desperation, but one must also look at how al-Shabaab offers “access to material resources and a sense of belonging. Many of those under al-Shabaab control, [...]

they organize things [sic], the hospitals are working, the schools are working, the roads are working, you have access to market.” (Zeuthen, 2016)

Another respondent was more circumspect and noted that youth recruitment stemmed from a combination of lack of government presence, good community relations with al-Shabaab, inattentiveness to minority areas and an overall lack of protection. He argued that minority youth do not join al-Shabaab because the latter is:

“influencing all of them with money, or because of ideological or religious reasons to join, but because they have no one to stand for them for their rights and to help them and to disengage them and bring them back to integrate them into society...minority youth do not have someone to come to their rescue. Al-Shabaab has gotten on very good terms with people who are not connected them...[and sometimes]...they will hassle them and force them to join them. And when we try to approach the union in different times to help those youths who were working from al-Shabaab there was nothing coming from the union to help in that particular sector...the union does not want to give any kind of solution or support...you will never see somebody talking about this because they do not want to do research.”

Martine Zeuthen (2016) proposed that one should always examine the connections between local politics and recruitment processes as a first step to grasping how grievances unfold in particular ways. “In Mombasa, it is about land combined with marginalization. In northeastern (areas) it is more clan issues and in Nairobi, it is more often communal violence that intermixes with recruitment. In each location, the guys that are being recruited from the universities is different than those being recruited from the slums. They all have their own grievances, so we have to address all of them from a different perspective” (Zeuthen, 2016). She argues against generalizing or universalizing notions of youth discontent, and instead situating recruitment processes in their particular social, political, religious and economic milieu: “so to engage in these issues you always have to understand the local politics” (Zeuthen, 2016)).



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*Involve Youth in CVE/PVE Programming*

A third theme from our research is Kenyan youth think that alternative CVE/PVE strategies are possible and that youth input is central for those strategies to reach and realize their objectives. Kenyan youth want a bigger stake and role in national communication and dialogue about counter-terrorism. They want their views, perspectives, and opinions to matter and influence government policy-making. Many expressed the view that youth input may in fact be a crucial resource that can help turn around other youth vulnerability to violent extremism. Participants focused on prevention in their articulation of the best counter-terrorism practices and policies. Core themes of this vision include a focus on: entrepreneurship/ finance training, counseling and mentorship, dialogue and communication, re-directing youth, re-framing the relationship of youth to the state, advocacy programs, local ownership of initiatives, building pan-African and pan-Kenyan connections, teaching life skills and personal development capacities, addressing historic experiences of terrorism in Africa (e.g., from colonization forward), engaging the Muslim community, involving international institutions, and enhancing democracy.

This vision is supported by the best CVE/PVE practices literature which recommends specific actions for institutional and community capacity-building against violent extremism. These recommendations include enhancing official and frontline practitioner training for better community engagement, improving public service delivery, reforming the practises of the security and criminal justice sectors, ensuring that stakeholders can discuss contentious issues in a safe environment, evaluating and implementing security sector reform, raising access to justice, evaluating the applicability, proportionality, and effectiveness of CVE/PVE legislation, improving detention and prison conditions, supporting community-oriented policing, and developing risk assessment, disengagement, and reintegration programs for radicalized individuals (Global Center for Cooperative Security, 2014).

A participant at the IYAAT conference noted that one key to solving the radicalization program is having more youth working directly with the government which is a key part of solving the “puzzle” that violent extremism poses for the country. One participant hoped that policies would be adopted that are more youth friendly and which seek to empower youth. Another mentioned that, in terms of traineeship programs, youth need to be including in policy-making decisions. This same person also made a linkage between excluding and

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sidelining youth and the involvement of youth in militant activities. Addressed and framed in a variety of ways, Kenyan youth repeatedly cited the importance of their input and this inclusion in CVE/PVE conversations that matter: “And then our work with government is a key part of the puzzle, which is also very different with normal development programs. The key driver is excessive use of force by law enforcement and if we don’t address that [we] might not contribute to the full equation. So we need to have those conversations.”

Another interesting parallel was the observation that just as women’s empowerment programs have a quota for women’s involvement, violent extremism is largely a problem involving youth and therefore a quota for the involvement of youth in CVE/PVE programming must also be in place: “We should also include youth who [] are more than 60% of the world’s population. And in Africa these are the working class. So if you sideline this group, I am sure that [] we find the disgruntled subjects who take up arms or will be involved in terroristic activities.” A related theme involved focusing on the fact that youth need to have a grounded understanding of religious teachings and understand them well to avoid being lured by groups committed to violence.

### *Opinions of Counter-Narratives*

Addressing counter-narratives through social media engagement was another topic discussed. According to Mustafa Ali, “governments should not orchestrate counter narratives. They can enable counter narratives to address, but let it be orchestrated by religious leaders themselves. Or the youth themselves. By the way, there are many religious leaders who are youth in this country. It is just that they are not given the platform” (Ali 2015) What, however, do Kenyan youth leaders think about counter-narratives? One person suggested that: “The main issues come from the online content. There is the main problem. And I think we need to come up with a solution because we have Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media instigate the youth to extreme violence?” Another conference attendee recognized that “the media, or the magazines or the journals...the information [jihadis] have [incites] the youths to have that feeling against the government or the west.” One participant added that: “Countering extremist violence through social media can always be reactive and too slow, but I think that part of the solution lies in presenting alternative and inclusive narratives. There is always some other content or communication channel that can be turned

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to as opposed to the extremist content. There needs to be more of it and better quality content and channels available so that everyone can have other options to turn to. So flooding the media and social media marketplace with better inclusive content is part of the solution.”

Youth also highlighted the important role of religion as being both a source of education, as well as a means for positive community engagement to combat recruitment into extremist groups. One respondent noted that whereas “all of the youth understand the religious teachings”, current knowledge may be insufficient to challenge some of the more radical messages being channeled by religious teachers: “we need to understand these teachings very well or be lured.” Others mentioned that current efforts in Kenya to bring together communities of different faiths (Christians, Hindus, Muslims) through conferences was a positive step forward and ought to continue.

#### *Importance of Grassroots CVE/PVE Efforts*

Significantly, participants at the IYAAT Conference advocated a youth-led, country-wide, bottom-up, grassroots, community-oriented approaches. One participant showcased their own mentorship program as being effective in particular areas, and expressed intentions to expand the program to other areas in Kenya to “see if it has the capabilities.” Another youth recommended establishing linkages with communities in order to cultivate dialogue with disaffected youth in order to “use these forums to integrate, and have a conversation with these guys, see their challenges and try to help them.” This respondent stressed the importance of grassroots outreach on issues of peace “because some of these things start within the community.” Above all, youth saw themselves as agents of positive change and responsible for developing solutions to address terrorism-related issues. A survey respondent summed this view well: “It is up to us as the youth to educate our peers in other forms of activities besides terrorism.”

#### **Solutions to Problem of Political Violence: Kenyan Youth Evaluations**

One of the only youth-led organizations in Kenya that specifically focuses on terrorism and counter-terrorism is the International Youth Action Against Terrorism (IYAAT). IYAAT has identified twelve key ways that soft-power and community-based programming can help counter the radicalization of youth into movements supporting political

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violence. Survey respondents were asked to comment on the strengths and/or weaknesses of each IYAAT identified initiative and we review their input here in detail.

#### *Develop Student CVE/PVE Consultancy*

The first suggestion is the development of student CVE/PVE consultancy. This initiative would involve students consulting on the best methods of countering extremism, and asking students to evaluate methods for counter-radicalization or de-radicalization. Participants noted that empowering students as consultants to generate knowledge and formulate methods for CVE/PVE was an overwhelmingly “good measure”, “good strategy” with many “strengths” such as “getting to know the grassroots and root causes”, “creating awareness of how to early identify a radicalized youth,” and producing an atmosphere where “students and the youth generally feel involved in nation-building.”

One youth linked this strategy to demographic realities, education and outreach: “75% of our population is the youth. Starting with the most knowledgeable and experienced of them is a good move, gearing toward sensitizing the rest of the youth against radicalization.” Others noted that youth represent an important epistemic community because they already have first-hand experience with both radicalization and generating research on counter-terrorism approaches. Illustratively, one argued that consulting students was “valuable” because “the status quo is that most people recruited to terrorism in North Kenya are youth/students.” Similarly, youth added that “there has been good contributions from consultation of the students since some of them have encountered radicalization.” Another reflected that she was “asked to write research papers on counter-terrorism measures” and derived confidence from the knowledge gained from the research. Significantly, IYAAT conference participants viewed young people “who are mostly the perpetrators of violence” not as foes, but as members of their community that can still be “instilled with good ideas.”

Discussions also revolved around which social spaces should be selected for producing student consultants on CVE/PVE measures. One argued that this strategy “should be focus on students in universities and middle level colleges...high schools in urban areas...due to proximity to potential terrorist attacks e.g. malls.” Another thought student CVE/PVE consultancy should begin with “community schools and polytechnics and surveys with unemployed individuals on their outlooks.” Overall, there was consensus that youth ought to

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be involved not only because it will “give them an avenue for expression”, but also because “youth are the leaders of tomorrow and are the ones on the ground--- so empowering them will really have a positive effect.”

### *Engage Youth in Activities Supported by Research Evidence*

A second IYAAT sponsored idea is youth engagement through research. With this idea, youth would develop inter-active programs of engagement that encourage free debate and collaboration among other youth (helping them to gain skills, values, a sense of belonging, and inclusion, and helping to motivate them to be participants in political processes). Active, informed, youth-led and ongoing engagement with young people in marginalized communities was proposed as a potential solution to preventing radicalization. Some participants pointed out that youth engagement addressed a crucial void in current CVE/PVE measures both because “debates are not held in terrorist prone areas” and “the government is hardly doing anything of the kind.” Others enumerated the positive aspects and outcomes of interactive youth engagement. Youth respondents underscored how this strategy endowed young people with a sense of purpose that may “reduce their involvement in terrorism.” Many highlighted how engagement would serve an educative and advisory function “on the causes of radicalization and also how to avoid it”. Youth could use this knowledge as a transformative source of power so that “they can prevent the issues from happening.” Other members discussed how engagement would foster feelings of personal and national inclusivity and belonging whereby youth feel like their voices matter and “through the engagements they [may] become more patriotic.”

Beyond the positive normative benefits that may come from youth engagement, participants also discussed how these interactions could take place. One argued that celebrity and popular Kenyan social media personalities like Yah Boi Selfie and XtianDela should “spearhead these debates since their target is the over 2 million Kenyans on Twitter, [the] majority of whom are youths.” Another mentioned that multiple approaches “involving the youth through media, social functions, and even day to day life situations” should be utilized to increase young people’s purpose, inclusivity, engagement, knowledge, self-expression and ability to fight against recruitment ploys. One participant shared his own personal experience about the positive merits to youth engagement after his university organized a partnership that

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brought together staff and students on collective issues. Similarly, another reflected that: “I recently was involved in a youth empowerment training with AEWIT, which was great.” Importantly, another focused attention on the linguistic, cultural, and religious particularities that would need to be part of any localized interaction: “The expert trainers should be well versed with local culture in order to make an impact upon the population.”

Youth were also attentive to the potential challenges that came with pursuing youth engagement strategies. One noted that more outreach was needed “to make the youth more aware of this initiative.” Another pointed out that this programme’s effectiveness would not be accomplished through one-off events and would be “quite limiting unless you keep organizing consultative conferences.” Others stressed that the primary challenge will be generating political will and government enforcement, especially if it is expensive to pursue. Nevertheless, if implemented, one respondent concluded that the experts and professionals who engage on these matters can advise government agencies and “implement favorable policies that enable awareness of PVE strategies.”

#### *Involve Expert Trainers for Development of Culturally Sensitive Programming*

A third IYAAT suggestion involves bringing expert trainers on board to help train PVE stakeholder organizations, individuals, and government agencies to develop more culturally sensitive programming and awareness for their PVE strategies. Youth were asked their opinions about this idea. The idea of incorporating experts into programs to train actors taking part in PVE measures was overwhelmingly viewed by youth as a pertinent prerequisite to effective communicative strategies. On the one hand, some youth participants emphasized the importance of enhancing more informed processes by noting that “information is vital when it comes to communication” and that “it can be beneficial to creating awareness on CVE/PVE”, others cited potentially positive outcomes whereby effective communication could result in “some extreme situations” being avoided. Another youth drew connections between culturally sensitive programming/information to ease the enforcement of CVE/PVE protocol.



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*Create Reporting Network on CVE/PVE Safety Concerns*

A fourth argument favors the creation of a network system among stakeholders for the reporting of PVE safety concerns. Kenyan youth participants stressed how a networked system of reporting on PVE safety concerns would be a beneficial structure linking stakeholders in academia, government and community outreach organizations. As an example, one youth cited the IYAAT Conference itself as “one such effort” at building a reporting network. Others highlighted the strengths that would come from the construction and maintenance of this kind of network. Notably, such a system would foster dialogue and free exchange through the “openness of reporting that creates a platform for discussion.” Another commented that the knowledge generated through a reporting system would help “prevent terrorist propaganda since through the network one can get information on how to combat and thus goes a long way in preventing terrorist propaganda.”

Issue and policy coherence was also mentioned as a beneficial product because “this will help in discussions so all parties are on one page.” Lastly, youth discussed how such a network would serve an important feedback loop that would “increase and improve government action in countering CVE/PVE by directly being involved with PVE.”

*Develop Workshops to Train Community Stakeholders*

A fifth area of IYAAT’s recommended CVE/PVE focuses involves providing focused workshops and professional development opportunities to school administrators, community/faith-based organizations, youth workers, mentors, and law enforcement. This approach would involve training such stakeholders on how to assess and work with young people experiencing conflict, isolation, and alienation.

IYAAT participants identified community workshops as an effective strategy to inform stakeholders who will be engaging with disaffected young people in areas vulnerable to conflict and alienation. A couple of people applauded the ‘grassroots level’ of engaging the problem, while stressing how ‘various stakeholders, especially law enforcement’ would benefit from the education provided by community and professional development trainings. Another respondent identified the strength of prevention/preemption approaches as these workshops would handle a problem “before it blows out of proportion.’ Some underscored how collaboration and inclusivity would be additional by-products of this approach as it

would “help in sensitizing and bringing stakeholders together” to work for a “common cause.”

Alternatively, youth participants also noted that community workshops may be effective, but similar previous strategies have been limited because there was “no follow through mostly.” Another pointed out that “Muslims are neglected” in many of these workshops. However, one member argued that this can be mitigated and made “effective especially with faith based organizations...because most Kenyans are deeply religious.”

#### *Construct PVE Curriculum for All Education Levels*

School curriculum development is the sixth IYAAT recommendation that involves assisting in the development of PVE-focused school curriculum that conforms with various educational levels. The project of creating and mainstreaming PVE-oriented school curriculum was recommended by Kenyan youth participants as a necessary, yet perhaps insufficient educational strategy. Many acknowledged the formative role that education plays in people’s lives as being places of moral instruction, spaces of “second foundation” after the home, and in their experience of being “majorly shaped by their schools.” Another argued that terrorism is a relevant contemporary issues taking place nationally and globally, and should therefore be incorporated in school curriculum. Above all, respondents were in favor of a PVE-focused curriculum commencing “from the very beginner level to the senior most curriculum” to “instill good morals”, give authoritative voice and instruction to teach young children that “terrorism is indeed bad...teach a child good morals,” and to “understand and unlearn stereotyping views on terrorism.”

Having said that, others recommended that PVE educational strategies should be expanded to incorporate other areas like “traineeships, and youth development” and “cater for other co-curriculum activities.” One noted that government ought to take a deeper interest advocating that the Minister of Education should work on this issue more.

### *Leverage and Market Partnerships via Cultural Engagement Initiatives*

Cultural engagement initiatives are a seventh suggested or recommended area of CVE/PVE development and would involve leveraging partnerships and cultural engagement initiatives to enhance understanding between groups. These partnerships would market their activities within and across the African region.

The proposal of building connections and bridging divides across cultures produced a mix of responses. Some youth stressed how cultural engagement enhanced feelings of unity “making it hard to convince one to harm another” and “hence avoid community conflicts”; whereas another observed that “inter-cultural engagement” is limited in Kenya to “showcasing cultural initiatives” and therefore has not “been well conceptualized.” Another critiqued this strategy, arguing it would be ineffective: “this cannot counter terrorism, not all Africans are affected.” Despite the mixed reviews, many respondents admitted that association among and between different cultural groups would have positive effects, and might even be transformative for counter-terrorism in Kenya.

### *Use Social Media Platforms to Challenge Jihadi Narratives*

An eighth suggested area of CVE/PVE development is using social media platforms to counter jihadi narratives and war framing. Utilizing social media as an instrument to support PVE initiatives and counter war-based jihadi narratives resonated with a majority of the Kenyan youth respondents. Many argued that the strength of social media activism could be found in its already ubiquitous use and appeal among young people in Kenya. One participant emphasized social media’s speed and connection to youth (“it is the fastest way to reach the youth nowadays”), whereas another highlighted how this platform appealed to the skills of young people (“the youth are very tech savvy”), and therefore would “do good in the spread of PVE strategies and awareness.”

As a caveat, a few youths nuanced their opinions by arguing that while social media activism may be an effective strategy, a positive outcome was not guaranteed. One participant succinctly differentiated between virtual and offline activism: “Yes, but we see social media clicktivism doesn’t always mean offline actions.” Another raised the concern that just as social media could be used to spread messages of PVE awareness, it could also be wielded as a tool to spread violent, extremist messages: “Yes, it is active, but it can be counteractive

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where misquoted opinions may trigger terrorism”; or as another put it, “they use the platform to fuel the jihadi rather than preventing it.”

#### *Ensure Youth Input Contributes to CVE/PVE Policies*

On the suggestion of conducting consultations with youth and distributing surveys to youth stakeholders to ensure that PVE policies are transparent, and participation and input from youth contributes to PVE policy development, responses were mixed. Kenyan youth participants were in disagreement about whether positive prospects would result from the consultation and surveying of young people. Some stated that they believed it was a “good initiative” and that these actions would “enable monitoring of different areas, especially those prone to be affected.” Another linked the importance of this strategy to engendering an atmosphere of inclusivity.

Other participants either questioned its efficacy or remained skeptical about whether the collection of personal information would be used for discriminatory purposes. To the former, one youth commented that he thought surveying youth may be helpful but did not immediately see the merits: “I think so, does it really help though?” In terms of the latter, this respondent noted that “survey[ing] is never done, and if it is done, it is to capture innocent Muslims.” Notably, this demonstrates that while surveying youth is viewed as potentially beneficial by youth, there may not be many examples ethically and culturally sensitive examples of doing so.

#### *Establish Online Radio and Television PVE Programming*

Another CVE/PVE idea involves creating online radio and television programming that supports resilience to violent extremism, and showcases productive and ethical PVE practices that are known to have an impact. This idea had widespread appeal among the youth participants. Many emphasized optimistically that using media and communication as a strategy to reach a wide audience would “enhance PVE practices”, “inculcate good morals”, and “improve unity and knowledge.”

Some youth drew attention to the fact that many Kenyans living in rural areas are limited in their television programming due to shortages or absence of electricity. Hence, one argued that “radio would work better in such areas.” Others also particularly singled out radio above

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television because “it is known that radio is the most effective way to reach the masses” or “especially in stricken areas in Kenyan, radio is the only media.”

#### *Disseminate Academic Journal on PVE*

Regarding the usefulness of academic scholarly output for CVE/PVE, IYAAT recommended the crafting of a magazine and counter-terrorism studies journal for the publication of news-related analysis or academic work on PVE policies and approaches. Kenyan youth were less enthusiastic in terms of the utility that an academic scholarly magazine or journal would have on increasing public awareness on PVE policies, or influencing state behavior. Lack of accessibility was mentioned as a concern. One lamented that academic journals “are not easily accessible”, whereas others suggested that “if these journals are shared through social media platforms” or “if there were weekly publications in the daily newspaper”, then this would improve accessibility. The influence that academic research publications would have on policy and government approaches was doubted. One claimed that even though “academic research is [currently] done, the government doesn’t accept it.” Overall, whereas youth were open to the idea, many expressed skepticism or remained tepid.

#### *Promote Counter-Heroes*

Drawing upon the best practices literature on PVE, IYAAT also recommended developing counter-heroes. Counter-hero initiatives involve working with Muslim groups to create hero alternatives to the ones promoted in jihadi propaganda and working with Muslims to create frameworks that show how to be heroic and create positive change without resorting to political violence.

The idea of creating alternative heroes to counter those promoted in jihadi propaganda received a variety of responses from Kenyan youth. Whereas some commented that it would be a “good strategy” or that it would “curb the issue of radicalization”, another questioned whether these of heroism would resonate with Muslims: “Muslims do not want to be heroes, but to defend the religion of Allah.” This comment may help inform the content of what is meant by the counter-heroism. At the same time, one pointed out that examples may already exist in Kenya as “there have been youths of Muslim origin trying to sensitize society.”

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Involving multiple communities of faith to work together on such a project was recommended by one: “I think it will be a good measure to accommodate both religious Christian and Muslims as equals because, in most cases, Muslims tend to be sidelined.”

### **The Way Forward**

This unique study has inquired into the views, perspectives, and experiences of Kenyan youth in order to explore the varied effectiveness, suitability, and appropriateness of current CVE/PVE policies in Kenya. What we have found in this research is that Kenyan youth overwhelmingly in favor of soft-power and community-based PVE initiatives that address structural inequities and identify core problems with the systematic profiling of Kenyan Muslims. Many do this while navigating cues they receive from media outlets and popular discourse about the problematic loyalties of ethnic Somalis. For some, they have resolved the competing drives of integration and separation; for others, they locate security in the securitization of society and attribute personal security to separation from particular identities associated with jihadism and terrorism.

We have also found in this study that many of the current best known practices of CVE/PVE are supported and reinforced by Kenyan youth. Through their own particular and personal framing of terrorism and counter-terrorism, Kenyan youth provide guideposts and ideas for how to promote and enhance state and civil society partnerships through collaborative mechanisms, supplement existing state-sponsored education programs, advocate for vulnerable people and amplify their stories through youth engagement, raise awareness among media practitioners about having sensitivity on CVE/PVE issues, inspire communities to adopt alternative narratives and programming, foster youth leadership and training, emphasize the importance of engagement with traditional leaders, and strengthen the capacity of community organizations to access and manage resources for CVE/PVE programming.

Taken as a whole, Kenyan youth support a CVE/PVE policy mix that promotes an empowered and accountable security and law enforcement sectors, including improved security-citizen relations, with multiple grassroots and youth-supported initiatives that can help mitigate structural injustices and the appeal of jihadi groups. In the process of giving voice to their perspectives, Kenyan youth reveal a highly multiform presentation,



heterogeneity of concerns, and a collective sensitivity to the idiosyncratic nature of the threats to their personal, societal, and national security.

IYAAT has identified a number of questions about youth and counter-terrorism that need to be asked in the Kenyan context in order to chart the way forward. It asks, for example,

- How can we work with members in our community on youth counter-radicalization and deradicalization efforts?
- How do we ensure that youth-focused programs are developed with youth input?
- How can youth ensure that their voices are heard?
- What avenues exist to regularly solicit youth opinions, grievances, or solutions?
- How can youths play a role in helping deradicalize and reintegrate their peers?
- How do we ensure the safety of youth during their participation in CVE/PVE programming?
- How do we make sure they are free from intimidation, threats, or violence?

It is our hope as researchers that a future study will explore these questions in more detail among multiple segments of Kenyan youth society. We argue that youth must be highly incorporated and engaged as significant stakeholders if PVE in Kenya is to have real, on the ground impact and effect.

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