Life & Peace INSTITUTE

Local definitions and experiences of insecurity, including violent extremism, perceptions and relationships

Thematic Brief

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Executive Summary

Life & Peace Institute (LPI) has been implementing a 24-month project from January 2018, entitled '*Connecting Across Divides: Youth as Drivers of Peace*', financed by the European Union's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, co-financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through the Swedish Mission Council, and in partnership with Mandera Peace and Development Committee and Wajir Peace and Development Agency. This project, implemented in Nairobi, Mandera and Wajir counties, aims to strengthen local capacities for inclusive and sustainable peace and security, with a specific focus on the role of youth and security actors. The project aims to develop an evolving evidence base on local perceptions and experiences of insecurity, enhance the capacity of young people to articulate their peace and security needs, build trust and promote collaboration between youth and security providers, and work towards more locally-driven policy-making around peacebuilding and governance. This is with the understanding that diverse views by young people on peace and security evidence the heterogeneity of the youth. Youth engagement needs to take into consideration this factor to inform programming, being cognizant that there is no one-size-fits-all approach and that experiences shape young people's opinions and decisions on peace and security. In view of the generational gap in society, the youth are often seen as perpetrators than decision makers when it comes to peace and security issues. This creates an imbalance when it comes to programming for peace because those in the room may be those that fuel violence and not those that execute it. There needs to be a point of convergence where these two actors meet.

In terms of numbers in the Kenyan population, young people form a majority, with three-quarters of the population being below 30 years of age.[1] It is therefore important that they be harnessed for peace. This will result in peace processes benefitting from the creative and tech-savvy nature of young people that enables them to reach out to broader audiences and the wider community. They are also noted to be influencers amongst their peers both on and off social media, which is, in addition, an active space for interaction and an invaluable and affordable resource for peace.

Change in approach, particularly on the question of violent extremism is needed. Concerns during the research were raised on high levels of fear attributed to the violent manner in which the response to violent extremism has been handled. This also deprives the government of enjoying a relationship of trust with young people that would lead to more reciprocal information sharing. A conducive approach, will, in addition, provide opportunities for other structural, social and identity factors to be considered when determining securitised responses to violent extremism.

Coordination, synergy, incentives and sustainability are key – the desire of young people to contribute to peace and security was evident. However, they noted that several civil society and governance actors within this space lack coordination and have short-term projects that are often neither sustainable nor responsive to the needs of the community.

[1] http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/kenya-population/.

Young people are keen on more synergised, cross-sector approaches that also provide incentives taking into consideration the needs of female and male youth.

Area of study

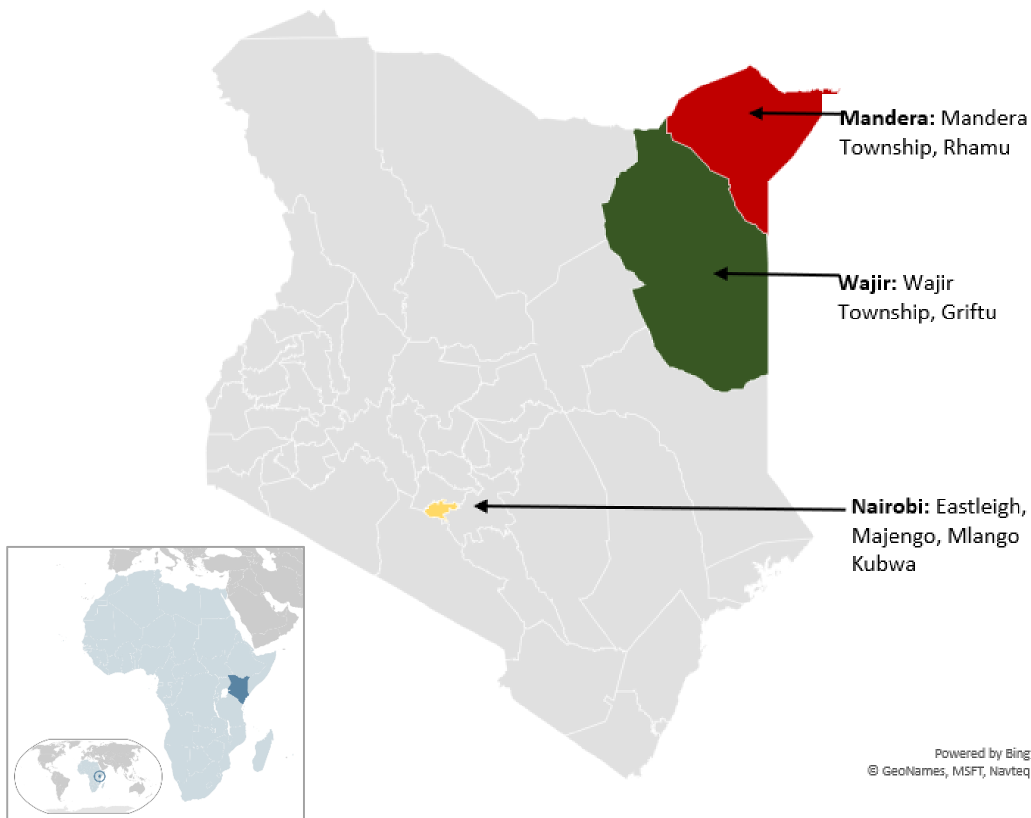

Figure 1 Map of Kenya; indicates the three counties in Kenya in which the data was collected including Mandera, Nairobi, and Wajir.

As part of the project's inception, initial research was undertaken in the three counties that outlines the ways in which local community members define security, how they understand the drivers of insecurity and violence and changes that they believe might create conditions for positive peace in their area. This Thematic Brief represents a preliminary exploration of the findings of this research and is intended to provoke

Research Questions

1. How do communities (in particular young people) define and experience security in their day-to-day lives?
2. What do communities believe drives people towards violence (and crime)?
3. What changes might reduce insecurity? How do women and men (in public and private spheres) work towards countering insecurity in the community?
4. How coordinated and effective are current interventions targeting insecurity?
5. To what extent are female and male youth involved in addressing insecurity?
6. How do community members define and experience violent extremism?

discussion, providing key considerations for others seeking to engage young people in peacebuilding in Kenya. Six key research questions are investigated through the Brief.

In 2019, an iterative update will be made to this analysis by returning to the communities that provided the data. In this way, changes in the security environment in the three counties will be tracked over the year, and young people within communities living in Nairobi, Mandera, and Wajir will have the opportunity to contribute to a growing, living body of evidence.

Methodology

This research was conducted using a participatory, qualitative methodology that combined focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) taking place in three areas in Nairobi, and two areas in Mandera and Wajir, respectively. The methodology looked to gather data from both urban and rural areas in order to generate an understanding of the ways in which insecurity interacted with demographic and economic dynamics. KIIs sought perspectives from representatives from the local administration, women's group representatives, civil society actors, national and county government officials, elders, prominent members of the community, and religious leaders.

Research Sites

- Nairobi – Eastleigh, Majengo, Mlango Kubwa
- Mandera – Rhamu Sub-County and Mandera Town
- Wajir – Griftu Sub-County and Wajir Town

In Nairobi, two FGDs took place in each area (Eastleigh, Majengo & Mlango Kubwa), with 10-to-12 participants per group. FGD groups were based on key sub-identities – female youth, male youth, and adult mixed gender. A total of 15 KIIs took place.

In Mandera, three FGDs were conducted in each target area, one comprising of youth, another for women and one for adult male. A total of 17 KIIs took place.

In Wajir, three FGDs were conducted in each target area, one comprising of youth, another for women and one for adult male. A total of eight KIIs took place.

Following data collection and analysis, a validation process took place, in which respondents were presented with the consolidated findings and provided the opportunity to confirm their accuracy and representativeness, or to elaborate further.

Challenges and Limitations

The research also faced a few challenges and limitations. With 18 FGDs, 40 KIIs and 360 respondents in total in the baseline survey questionnaire, the sample size remains relatively small. Further, participation by female respondents during data collection is comparatively low at 37%, in particular in Mandera (33%) and Wajir (38%). This is attributable to a variety of contextual, historico-cultural and personal factors that work in concert to reduce the ability of researchers to mobilise women and men in equal numbers. However, the research methodology aimed to mitigate this through the deliberate inclusion of female respondents in KIIs and composing one FGD in each location entirely of women.[2]

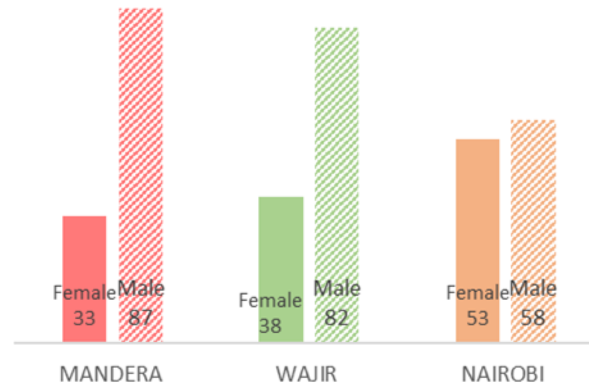

Figure 2 - Total respondents (nine chose not to note their gender)

In addition, certain critical themes remain sensitive in the three counties, and in some cases, respondents may have exercised caution or self-censorship when asked, for instance, to discuss violent extremism (although this issue was not frequently prioritised by respondents). Likely due to fear of reprisals or targeting by either formal security actors or armed groups, respondents frequently denied knowledge of violent extremism, or efforts to prevent or counter it. This may also be linked to respondent fatigue from the various previous research pieces in which little or no feedback had been given or action taken based on the information they provided to researchers. Specific sessions during validation were conducted as part of efforts to address this limitation.

The data collection took place in April to June 2018, following the August (and October) 2017 national elections that were marred by accusations of malpractice and had polarised communities along partisan and ideological lines. Inter-group mistrust and tension remained high, and it is possible that this influenced responses from research participants. However, all individuals that took part in the data collection were, as standard, provided appropriate guarantees of anonymity and informed consent.

Language and translation remain a challenge. Across LPI's research, validation and collaborative thinking around peace and conflict, language, translation and interpretation of particular terms has emerged as an obstacle to mutual understanding. Translating concepts such as 'reconciliation', 'dialogue', 'identity' or 'belonging' from English into Kiswahili, Somali or other languages or dialects, inevitably sacrificing some clarity of meaning in the process, has the potential to compromise the validity of the data, and has frequently extended definitional and introductory discussions with research respondents. The way in which a conflict, its key actors and its history, is described and communicated will have an impact on the ways in which individuals find meaning in solutions and understand the messages and narratives used to mobilise and

[2] Due to the cultural context and low levels of education, it was difficult for some of the females to attend the FGD or fill-up the survey

commit people to do so. Therefore, language challenges require significant consideration. What do youth mean, precisely, when they argue for greater 'inclusion'? How do different generations define 'participation'? A small number of questions, in addition, were misunderstood by respondents based on differing interpretations of words in Kiswahili and Somali; these were, however, clarified during validation. The findings included in this Brief should be seen through this lens – additional, and more precise, consideration of linguistics and understanding would add value to the analysis.

Key Findings

The research generated a variety of qualitative insights, based on the accounts of individuals living in the three counties. The following section presents the main findings, structured around the research questions and divided by county.

1. How do communities (in particular young people) define and experience security in their day-to-day lives?

Nairobi

> *"Security is protecting yourself, Kujichunga [self-protection]."* – Respondent in Mlango Kubwa

Respondents in Nairobi talked of security in terms of the presence of certain conditions, and the absence of fear. Horizontally within society, **peaceful coexistence** emerged as a key consideration – as harmony and a sense of comfort among those from different ethnic groups. Security in numbers and unity among neighbours was associated with the presence of family and friends. This reflects a recognition of community interdependence – reinforced by participants (in response to subsequent research questions) highlighting insecurity 'spill over' from adjacent insecure areas, and subsequent increases in violence (for instance, conflict issues from Mathare spreading into Eastleigh). Respondents, in the context of a need for peaceful coexistence, also identified the movement of people as linked to insecurity, where a larger number of residents in a given area strains housing and resources and creates tension around the notion of 'original' inhabitants. A dense population, shrinking residential space and poor street lighting was, equally, connected to insecurity – proximate factors influencing a sense of safety.

Security was also linked directly to a set of **freedoms**. The ability to express oneself freely was stated as a determinant, in particular by youth respondents. This may be associated with a fear of reprisals for speaking out (by either formal security actors or non-state violent groups). Freedom of expression and its nature as a precondition for security, then, is linked to a lack of trust in governing institutions and poor relationships security providers. Freedom of movement, in addition, was raised by respondents, without the danger of being targeted, mugged, or being required to abide by a curfew.[3]

> *"Somalis are profiled as 'ATMs'. If they refuse, the police falsify a report on them."* – Respondent in Eastleigh

Transparency in the operations and protocols of the police and other (formal) security actors was a key theme throughout the research. Linked to this, respondents stated the absence of **harassment** and the presence of banal, ordinary safety and individual protection as conditions of security. This reflects that day-to-day lived realities of a sense of victimisation by (official) powerholders. Police harassment, intimidation, physical threats to citizens, and broader accusations of corruption were common themes. In particular, respondents identified ethnic

[3] See Life & Peace Institute's earlier publication, '*Exploring Peaceful Co-existence in Nairobi's Urban Settlements: Eastleigh, Majengo, Mlango Kubwa*' (2016) for additional detail, and similar responses – emphasising these are enduring issues.

profiling – directed, for instance, at Somalis seen as second-class citizens – as functions of insecurity. However, respondents did not reserve their criticisms for state institutions alone – al-Shabaab was also described as extorting money from the Somali community, placing them in a precarious position between a feared security apparatus and a violent, concealed network.

Everyday violence was singled out as a common experience, and symptom of structural insecurity. Stabbings, muggings and terrorist attacks were among the events noted – compounded by community members that are both unaware of their rights and hesitant to report incidents to the police, instead bribing security providers in the first instance. A vicious cycle takes place, where individuals do not claim their rights, and police have no incentives to uphold them. A trust deficit on both sides sustains insecurity. In this environment, petty, opportunistic and individualist criminal activity becomes increasingly normalised.

> *"The presence of security men gives a sense of security. The patrols make me feel safe but are very disturbing for the young men as they think kuna probox [a low-cost vehicle] that has men in uniform that will arrest them*." – Older respondent in Mlango Kubwa

Another finding that emerged in almost all FGDs and KIIs was a **generational divide** in both the drivers and visible manifestations of insecurity. Older respondents saw large groups of youth, and indeed young people themselves, as a cause of insecurity, with threats and intimidation from police prioritised to a much lesser extent. Young people, conversely, linked insecurity to daily experiences of fear, and a lack of avenues for changing their situation and prospects, for instance through education or employment. Nevertheless, in broad terms, a generational commonality of experience and consensus of position emerged – a dual threat, from violent criminal actors, and the police that are purposed to provide security and immediate protection. Exacerbating this dynamic, those that report criminal activities to the police may be branded 'traitors' by other community members, and subsequently targeted themselves.[4] In this way, perversely, those that commit crimes may be considered 'allies' by local communities, yet simultaneously perpetuating the very insecurity that respondents claim to resist.[5]

Mandera

In Mandera, the research produced similar responses when defining security – the **absence of fear**. Security was described by participants in perceptual terms and linked more practically and visibly to development (in infrastructure and services). Unlike Nairobi, respondents linked political processes and **political participation** to security – highlighting a reduction in alleged nepotism in (county) government and equal representation for all groups as contributing factors. Further, greater access to the political sphere and political decision-making was identified as linked to an increased feeling of security. This likely reflects a view on the part of respondents that political power in the county remains linked to clan affiliation, with appointments and decisions playing out along clan lines.

[4] This was noted, specifically, in Mlango Kubwa.

[5] Further, informal leaders were stated by some respondents to have "*neglected*" community members, instead referring them to a flawed formal security architecture that is unable or unwilling to perform its function effectively. The justice system, in addition, is generally not perceived as a viable method for redress of grievances, with few charges being dispensed.

Insecurity, in Mandera, was **defined tangibly** – individuals being unable to reach or benefit from medical facilities, or to enrol their children in education. Being blocked from carrying out farming activities and developing one's livelihood were also common responses. Insecurity emerges as a product of violence itself, substantiated through individual violent episodes, including land disputes, violence around elections, or intra and inter-clan clashes. "*Terror groups*" were also mentioned, although with no further detail, as part of a definition of insecurity that can be seen, in which one can participate, and which has material consequences. This is distinct from explanations in Nairobi which emphasised a sense of marginalisation and persistent anxiety.

Mandera team launching the project during kick-off event

Wajir

Research in Wajir, as with Nairobi and Mandera, established that security was experienced as the absence of danger and a sense of safety. Respondents were clear that security was central to daily life and personal development, linking it specifically to **peace and harmony**. However, as with Mandera, security and insecurity were articulated in practical terms – intra and inter-clan violence and "*terrorist attacks*".

The notion of '**spill over**' was again highlighted, with insecurity in surrounding areas including Wajir North and Eldas sub-counties being perceived as leading to increased violence in research sites and the wider community.

Across all counties in which research took place, concepts such as coexistence and inter-communal connectedness indicate both a recognition that individual groups do not operate in a vacuum, but also a tendency to associate insecurity with external influence, and those outside one's 'in-group'. Findings demonstrate that efforts to increase security should explore broader systems, rather than individual communities or geographically-contained 'high-risk' areas.

Group discussion between youth and security in relationship building in Wajir

2. What do communities believe drives people towards violence (and crime)?

Nairobi

> *"[Young people are] idle, hopeless, and poor, under the influence of drugs and substance abuse*." – Respondent in Majengo

Several **proximate** drivers of violence, catalysts or surface-level factors were common responses in Nairobi. Three groups, specifically, were identified as susceptible to using violence – individuals addicted to illicit drugs, school dropouts, and those that do not follow any religion. Drug use, for instance, was believed to contribute to violence in a variety of inter-linked ways – through the psychological impact of the substance itself and the behaviours that accompany it, the connection between addiction and criminality used to maintain access to the drug, and in the trade associated with the buying and selling itself. There are also a number of cultural elements that the older generation, in particular, believed to encourage violence among youth – for instance, clothing, particular hair styles and shaving trends, and new vocabulary among young people, as well as particular music genres, with rap music being mentioned specifically. This perception was generally attributable to a claim that youth were seeking to emulate practices and styles from elsewhere – the United States, for instance – a very typical associative blame. These responses evidence a lack of spaces for discussion and engagement across generations, and resultant mistrust and misunderstanding between the two groups. Young people are assumed to be involved in criminal activities by virtue of their being young, and there is a further belief indicated here that receptivity to criminal activity and engagement in violence can be judged by physical characteristics. Finally, **police harassment** was mentioned, in all sites in Nairobi (and by the majority of respondent groups), as a contributing factor towards the use of

> *"[Young people's way of] dressing, shaving styles and even their way of talking [makes me feel unsafe]"* – Adult respondent in Eastleigh

violence – the abuse of power by security actors was considered by respondents to be a more significant driver of criminal activity than gang violence itself.

Respondents in research sites in Nairobi also identified a set of structural, **systemic issues** that create conditions in which the cost of violence is reduced, and criminal activity can grow. **Poverty**, linked to survival and a requirement to turn to criminal activity in order to sustain oneself was identified as a critical issue – as well as an associated sense that resources and capital were distributed unfairly, and in some cases intentionally to maintain the poverty of certain groups. **Education and a lack of opportunity**, as well as a dearth of livelihood options, was also connected to violence and criminal activity. Perspectives by respondents on the links between economic advancement and violence displayed a deep understanding of the complexity of these issues – for instance, while the older generation tended to associate 'idleness' with insecurity, even young people themselves noted being idle as a key point of connection between unemployment and insecurity. However, there was also a recognition across respondents that youth were being profiled as potential criminals, in particular those that are unemployed, and this itself may reinforce insecurity and violence. Further research is necessary in order to more substantively unearth the ways in which unemployment and violence are tied to one another, and if this link is indeed anything more than incidental.

A red thread – perceptions of government: profiling, patrols, curfews, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings, extorting bribes, enforced disappearances and the use of excessive force. In other cases, lack of response to criminality by government is interpreted as the administration using "*these situations to settle scores with members of the community that they had quarrelled with*." – Youth respondent in Mlango Kubwa

Identity and belonging are crucial keystones around which choices to engage in violence and criminality revolve, according to respondents in Nairobi. A profound desire to find a place in society and to know oneself, and associated peer pressure to conform to certain in-group characteristics were identified as strong motivators for violent behaviour. Individual disconnection from a set of identity characteristics, social norms and practices, and the associated susceptibility to peer pressure, was a common response among research participants. The findings describe a situation in which, during a critical and transitional time, young people are searching for a means to carve out and hold onto beliefs and behaviours by which to define themselves, and this pursuit takes place in the context of a state apparatus and older generation that does not place trust in them or provide them with foundations upon which to grow – instead fearing and victimising them. This compulsion is further worsened, in marginalised areas, by a lack of connection with the notion of what it is to be 'Kenyan' and the various institutions and organs of the state by which Kenya is constituted – to be accountable to the advancement of society as a whole.

A number of respondents identified **gender** and the norms and roles associated with it as a factor in violence. For instance, girls face social exclusion that is compounded by a lack of access to education. A small group of respondents made the observation that these structural barriers may foment a will to rebel against those that impose them. Separately, a limited number of respondents (particularly male) considered a desire

"*[The individuals that cause insecurity are those that] believe systems are against them and through violence they can alter the system*." – Respondent in Mandera

to impress male counterparts as a factor driving young women to engage in crime. This response also assumes the criminality of males. Responses linked to gender-based factors were provided only for women, with no statements on gendered expectations placed on men and the ways in which these might drive violence. This may highlight that male behaviour is seen as the 'neutral' point of departure from which women deviate, and in addition, that further scrutiny is given to women when stepping outside traditionally prescribed notions of femininity than men breaking normative masculinity. Further, women doing so are allegedly incentivised by men, rather than acting in their own, independent interest. Responses continue to place gender firmly within the domain of issues affecting women, rather than as a social issue affecting all aspects of individual and inter-group experience, organisation and interaction.

Mandera

> "*[A] lack of local representation in the local security leadership and the general unaccountability of security agents, have been identified as key impediments to peace in respect to security and the rule of law*." – Respondent in Mandera

In Mandera, as with Nairobi, **economic drivers** of violence were described in reference to unemployment and a lack of access to opportunity. The impact of drug abuse on economic activity and as a contributing factor to violence associated with the trade and dependence on illicit substances was highlighted, in similar fashion to respondents in Nairobi. With increased intensity, survival in the most basic terms was noted as a reason for decisions to take up violence and crime, with respondents concerned that youth were particularly vulnerable to this fundamental motivation. A connection was made in Mandera between economic disempowerment, survival and recruitment to al-Shabaab, again with young people among the most susceptible. Across responses in the county, there appears to be a perception that the context is unpredictable and insecure, with shadowy, clandestine activities being carried out by subversive groups leading to unknown and potentially dangerous developments.

Identity was also a key element in explaining violent behaviour in Mandera, yet with a framing that differs from findings in Nairobi. The loss of a previously-held community identity was highlighted by respondents, with security and safety linked to a sense of belonging through one's community, family and friends, and the collective activities through which these relationships are maintained (for instance, dialogues or other events that bring communities together). In a broader cluster of factors that are associated with psycho-social well-being, respondents also explained that parental guidance was absent, with young people growing up in "*broken homes*", and without clear role models in an environment of social fragility. **Memory** was also identified as a pervasive motivator for violence – the Shifta War,[6] in particular, has embedded itself as a reference point for a persistent view of formal security agents as a threat, rather than a source of protection.

[6] The Shifta War took place from 1963 to 1967, fought around the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, with ethnic Somalis seeking to join the area with a Greater Somalia, and the Kenyan Government mounting a counter-insurgency effort that has been criticised as overly heavy-handed, and damaging the long-term relationship between the Kenyan state and ethnic Somalis living in Kenya. The term 'Shifta' itself is political – meaning 'bandit' in Somali, the term was adopted by the national government as a propaganda effort aimed at discrediting the agitators.

This appears to be still deeply felt, with the increased presence of police in Mandera seen as leading to a deteriorating security situation.

A **sense of self and freedom of thought** was linked to violence. Peer pressure, ideological influence, perceived and real marginalisation and a belief in the continued dehumanisation of inhabitants in Mandera (primarily through harassment by security providers) was a common feature of responses in the County that may drive an individual toward violence. Interestingly, when asked to consider the reasons why an individual might pursue violence, or turn to criminality, research participants in Mandera prioritised the effects of 'sense', 'feeling' and 'dignity' – a battle for one's mind and the freedom to be yourself – to a much greater degree than those in Nairobi.

Wajir

> "*[Violent gangs are composed mainly of] youth who are either on drugs, unemployed or have lost direction along the way.*" – Respondent in Wajir

Research in Wajir revealed, as with Nairobi and Mandera, the impact of **economic deprivation** on the prevalence of violence – unemployment and education were stated, with illiteracy mentioned specifically. This was identified in the context of **limited resources** and competition for access to scarce water and pasture, as well as contested boundaries and claims to ownership over these resources. Violence is, as with Mandera, linked to survival. It is taken up in the absence of other options – by some, it is seen as the sole means to meet basic needs. The notion of 'original inhabitants', and associated competition over **land**, were highlighted by respondents – the creation of new settlements being cited as a particular driver of violent behaviour. This is inseparable from concerns around resources and sustainable livelihoods.

Unlike Nairobi and Mandera, respondents in Wajir referred to **individual motivation** as a factor in violence and criminality. This is a self-drive for personal gain and ambitions. Individualised drivers, such as selfish interest and its importance in the context of a "*lenient culture*" were noted, including around the use of drugs and drinking of illicit alcohol. Explanations for Wajir's distinction in prioritising individual choice remain speculative. For instance, a larger urban area and a greater diversity of livelihood options, or the erosion of social support structures may all contribute to responses in Wajir.

Politics and **political machinations** were also established as factors – respondents claimed that politicians incite violence, or lure residents toward violence, through propaganda. The same was said for violent extremist groups – that they manipulate community members into joining and taking up violence. This attention to the use of propaganda, and alleged credulity, is unique in this research to Wajir. The ubiquity of clans, and persistence of inter-clan conflict was also noted by respondents. It may be that political actors are able, due to the importance community members place on clan affiliation, to deploy and navigate inter-clan dynamics in order to rally support and drive polarisation in their favour.

While gendered elements of violence and crime were not specifically highlighted in Wajir, the **targeting of women**, including through sexual violence in the form of rape and defilement, were identified. Although not explicitly elaborated by respondents, it may be that these actions drive cycles of violent revenge and inter-communal mistrust, as well as the continued marginalisation of women.

In common with both Nairobi and Mandera, the relationship between **formal security actors** and violence at the community level was singled out. In general, respondents expressed a demand for greater security provision, with inadequate actions by government in response to clan conflict highlighted in particular. A small number of respondents stated that the Maslaha system, a component of broader Sharia that focuses on prioritising the interest of the Islamic community as a whole, has not been sufficiently decisive in punishing crime, and that the government should respond in stronger terms. This point is distinct from perspectives in Nairobi and Mandera, in that in Wajir the respondents demand increased involvement of formal justice actors, where elsewhere there appears to be a pragmatic decision to live in spite of, rather than in partnership with, established state institutions.

3. What changes might reduce insecurity? How do women and men (in public and private spheres) work towards countering insecurity in the community?

The findings demonstrate that community members hold a nuanced and informed understanding of insecurity and propose a wide variety of potential options that might reduce it. Research participants provide a set of recommendations that are striking in their depth – for instance, only a small number of responses proposed material fixes for immediate insecurity such as street lighting, instead focusing on the underlying roots of particular issues.

Nairobi

Findings from Nairobi, across all respondent groups, evidence the **pivotal role of youth** in reducing insecurity. It was clear that youth should be given space to lead and pursue their own agendas through the provision of investment and support, for instance toward entrepreneurial, start-ups and small businesses. Respondents noted that these activities may then work towards changing the perception of youth (among adults) as causes of insecurity in and of themselves. The research revealed a sense among residents in the three research sites in Nairobi that '**intermediaries**' (for instance, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or managing agencies) should be cut out of the financing process, with young people given the means to **access funding** for initiatives directly themselves. Separately, youth should be provided access to projects, given employment by existing businesses, or routes to rehabilitation from violence. These responses reflect the common perception (noted above) that 'idle' youth will turn to violence, and suggestions that 'rehabilitation' is

necessary imply that young people are already members of violent groups and some form of reintegration into society is needed (in addition to assumptions that associate youth with drug use). Respondents, however, did not provide strong evidence for this assumption.

A set of typical **peacebuilding activities** traditionally implemented by NGOs were also stated as having the potential to reduce insecurity – peace forums, community walks, sport tournaments, social and recreational gatherings, information dissemination, clean-ups and *barazas* between security officials and community members,[7] for instance. While these are largely individual events, respondents also demonstrated an awareness of the need for more sustainable peacebuilding activities, including capacity enhancement and training of peace ambassadors that outlast single, time-bound projects. Further, findings show an understanding that externally-led development by NGOs may not be sufficient on its own – **individual initiative** by community members is also needed, through acts of counselling, mentorship for youth and provision of employment for the advancement of communities as a whole. Those individuals that currently hold decision-making authority or are in positions of relative economic strength should advocate on behalf of young people, in particular directing their influence toward police, and encouraging them to alter their interactions with young people.

This led to a wide range of suggestions by respondents for increased security through stronger and more sustainable **relationships**. For instance, participants identified a need for an interdependent relationship between the community (in particular youth) and the police, rather than adversarial interaction. Respondents highlighted accountability and argued that the community and police should be held to the same laws and be equally active in speaking out against corruption. Trust, transparency and open communication were considered to be needed. While this was a common theme in discussions, it remains unclear as to whether the same can be said for (formal) security actors themselves, and if these stakeholders are equally in favour of this kind of collaborative engagement. Further research is necessary in order to secure clarity on the perspectives of police, and whose behaviour needs to change in order for these relationships to be built.

[7] The term *baraza*, commonly used in East Africa, refers to a public meeting place.

Community peace action in Majengo

Accountability and clear procedural systems, in particular for police operations, were identified by a number of respondents as a means of reducing insecurity in the community. A need for increased police accountability for malpractice, and the requirement for both adequate systems to regulate police behaviour, and equally importantly, their consistent enforcement, were described as significant determinants of greater security. Reporting procedures, reliable follow-up of anonymous information provided to police, securing confidentiality and protection measures for those that report crimes were specific needs highlighted by respondents in relation to the actions of security agencies. These processes would also be improved by a **mutual awareness of rights** among both community members and police in order to enhance overall interactions and safety. Demonstrating a potential disconnection by respondents between police and the governing architecture, when improvements in security were noted by community members, they were largely attributed to the Chief and **local administration**.[8] Young people, for instance, identified the Member of County Assembly (MCA) as providing youth with employment opportunities. Other respondents stated that they felt 'represented' specifically through the MCA. Further, when describing indicators of sufficient representation, community *barazas* held by the Chief and other local officials were highlighted as a positive signal. Findings show a possible opportunity and incentive in linking improved security, and increased trust between communities and state actors, to better performance by the latter.

In order to do this, respondents suggested the creation of **spaces for interface between youth and police**, for instance by establishing a 'Youth Desk' within the police station or testing joint patrols among young people and formal security actors. Interaction is also needed, according to respondents, in other domains – between youth and informal leaders, and among leaders and community members. In doing this, the fear

[8] This was particularly the case in Eastleigh.

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and intimidation dynamics that currently dominate the relationship between community members (particularly young people) and police can begin to be eroded. In general, respondents in Nairobi believed that connecting communities with the currently **distant and inaccessible organs of the state** would be beneficial in reducing insecurity. Relationships between national-level institutions, specifically the National Security Intelligence Service (NSIS), and community members were seen as particularly crucial, with a role assigned to NGOs in bridging these two groups. However, it should be noted that there are risks in building this relationship – youth that collaborate with police, participate in activities such as joint patrols, or even voice their support for such initiatives, may place themselves under threat from their peers. Equally, if sufficient attention is not provided to the police themselves, including around issues of harassment, intimidation and abuse of power, young people may be co-opted, becoming a function of policing themselves, or more broadly reporting the criminals in the communities in which they live.

Finally, respondents in Nairobi highlighted the institution of the family in reducing insecurity – parents supporting their children to make 'good' decisions, and to provide 'good' parenting. It was not further elaborated, though, what would constitute 'good' decisions or positive parenting, in this case. Some responses were given framing criminal activity as the behaviour of youth that come from single-mother homes, with a perception that single mothers would not adequately support their children. No mention was made by respondents of absent fathers, reflecting gender-based stigmatisation and expectations placed on mothers. Concerns around the breakdown of the family and the erosion of family values were a common theme throughout the research.

Mandera

Respondents in Mandera provided a similar depth of information to those in Nairobi. The majority of respondents felt that the deployment of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) had improved peace and stability within the county while a few expressed that corruption was hindering the work. This could have been motivated by the fact that the KDF have recently come into the scene as opposed to the police who have served in the area for a long time and their weaknesses known to the residents. Improvements were seen in the manning of border points, responding to incidents along the border and pacifying potential conflicts.

Broadly, a **combination of factors** were suggested that would work toward increased security – increased spaces for effective conflict mitigation and social reconciliation, trust-building between communities and security actors, more effective coordination in security matters (for instance, across borders and around movement and trade), and a broad commitment to reinforced rule of law, in particular associated with enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. When asked to recall non-violent approaches to dealing with insecurity, respondents stated a number of traditional peace-building activities – trauma-healing, mediation, dialogue processes, youth empowerment and engagement across generations. These responses may indicate an increased exposure to peace-building activities led by NGOs in Mandera, or the relative priority of the county in the strategies of the national government and major donors.

> "*[The] community feel victimised to share information to local security providers because at last you remain [a] suspect for sharing such vital information thereby recording statement[s] to the police*." – Respondent in Mandera

Trust and respect between communities and security actors were key themes in Mandera. Information-gathering, strong feedback mechanisms, confidentiality in reporting to the police, respect for human rights and an inclusive approach to engaging the public were all noted as important in improving this trust. Further, respondents stated there is either no relationship between citizens and the security actors or one characterised by fear on the part of the community, and victimisation by (formal) security agents – specific examples were given, for instance the belief that sharing information with police will lead to the source becoming a suspect. The greatest fear on the part of respondents was for the KDF and Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) – these are relatively new entrants in this context compared to the police. The police themselves, as well as the NSIS and local administration were comparatively more trusted.[9] There is a contradiction between responses that emphasise a lack of trust and relationships with security actors, but simultaneously a recognition that they bring immediate changes in the security environment

Respondents also prioritised the **involvement of youth** in improving security – young people were seen as particularly effective in this regard. In many cases, respondents noted, youth have taken the initiative in collaborating with other security stakeholders, for instance through arranging collaborative community-police sport tournaments. With this in mind, there was a demand for young people to be given a more substantive role in peace activities. The findings show a form of 'peace-entrepreneurism' among youth – an innovative and boundary-breaking approach that itself may be a product of their marginalisation from most peacebuilding activities. This request for the involvement of young people may also be linked to the prevalence of traditional (male elder-based) conflict resolution mechanisms in Mandera, including those based on inter-clan negotiation systems such as *Xeer*.[10] There remains a pervasive sense that peacebuilding is an (elderly) man's domain – meetings, *barazas*, ceremonies and closed-door conversations, and that the exclusion of women and youth has impacted peace outcomes, especially because they form the majority of the population. The young people feel labelled as perpetrators and the women lack the spaces to contribute to the peace agenda.

When asked **where the responsibility lies** for improving security, respondents in Mandera pointed to formal security actors, with priority placed on reducing corruption, responding more quickly, and working with (rather than against) young people.

Wajir

Respondents in Wajir, similar to Nairobi and Mandera, placed only minimal emphasis on physical, infrastructural elements of security, for instance the direct presence of security personnel, instead focusing on systems and structures. However, findings from Wajir demonstrate a comparatively higher priority placed on **traditional and religious-based mechanisms** for improving security. Traditional authorities were viewed as important, with a strong role ascribed to elders in handling security matters, for instance the Maslaha

[9] A minority of respondents felt positive about sharing information with security actors. Further research is needed to elaborate the reasons for this, and whether it can attributed, for instance, to background or personal links with government.
[10] *Xeer* is a polycentric, traditional legal system used primarily in Somalia.

dispute resolution system,[11] community dialogues, mediation and intra and inter-clan reconciliation.[12] The role of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms was highlighted, however, with a caveat that these mechanisms needed to improve inclusion (particularly) for women, and that (male) elders needed to be pushed to accept this need. Findings seem to show an awareness of the exclusionary nature of many traditional frameworks for security, but equally a continued reliance on them in the absence of (functional) alternatives. Further research is needed, specifically on the various security avenues in Wajir, in order to provide a more substantive interpretation of this finding. There is a wider attention, on the part of respondents, to the significance of **justice** in broad terms, rather than linked narrowly to criminal justice processes. The elderly people, in particular, identified the need for a "*just system*" that included good governance and the equitable distribution of resources. A need for broad-based truth and justice, and the tools through which to implement these, were highlighted.

The **role of religion** in securing and sustaining long-term peace was also mentioned in Wajir, with a suggestion that religious leaders should use their positions to preach peace. Respondents did not provide further detail on the content or medium for these messages.

Cutting across the above, respondents noted the need for **a joined-up and collaborative approach**, in which councils of elders, local administrators, community policing units and others work together. In doing so, traditional peacebuilding activities were identified as the means by which to do this – broad-based dialogues, diplomatic approaches, peace rallies and forums, social media campaigns and community sensitisation to peacebuilding approaches were mentioned specifically.

> "*We have been fighting for our own space to add our opinion, and things are changing*." – Youth respondent in Wajir

Unlike Nairobi and Mandera, in which almost all respondents recognised the key role for young people in increasing security, those in Wajir were split along **generational lines**. While youth argued for their involvement in peace and security decision-making, in particular requesting more opportunities to work with elders, older respondents saw youth as largely peripheral – playing a role in notifying the community of potential danger, attending community dialogues and using sports to advocate for peace. Findings reflect a sense on the part of adults that youth can be used as informants for matters of insecurity – linked to an assumption that youth themselves have access to the individuals and information-sources for this insecurity. These responses demonstrate, as with previous research questions, that community members presume young people are tied to insecurity and can therefore be instrumentalised, rather than empowered, to counter it.

More positively, the majority of research participants in Wajir felt represented within the **county government**, through, for instance, public participation in county programmes, persons with disabilities and minority communities receiving attention through County Executive Committee members representing interests for these groups. It was noted that high-ranking officials from Wajir were serving in the national

[11] Maslaha is an extension of Islamic jurisprudence that deals with the prohibition or permissiveness of actions based on specific circumstances. More broadly, it handles cases that are not explicitly clear in Qur'an, Sunnah or Qiyas.
[12] It should be noted, however, that respondents, in answering previous questions, had noted that the Maslaha system may cause further insecurity by not dealing 'adequately' with clan-related conflict.

government, giving the impression that county-specific issues were placed on the national agenda. Respondents more sceptical of political representation instead stated that clan divisions drove political participation, while one respondent highlighted the history of marginalisation of the region through state actions. Despite such negative sentiment on representation, Wajir demonstrated a comparatively higher level of appreciation for the formal political process than Nairobi or Mandera. This may be linked to increase governance and peacebuilding work in Wajir. However, further research is needed to elaborate on this divergence.

4. How coordinated and effective are current interventions targeting insecurity?

When asked to list organisations and initiatives focused on security, respondents identified a variety of civil society- and government-led organisations and projects.

- ***Eastleigh***: Community Development Initiatives (CODI), Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Eastleigh, Eastleigh Residents Community Association (ERECA), Global communities, Kamukunji paralegals, Kenya Alliance of Resident Associations (KARA), Community Together Initiative (CTI), LPI, National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).
- ***Majengo***: Amani Kamukunji Initiative, Independent Medical Legal Unit (IMLU), Kenya Tuna Uwezo, Kenya Young Muslims Association, Kenya Muslims Youth Alliance (KIMYA), LPI, Nyumba Kumi initiative, St. John's Community Centre, RUSI and Building Resilience in Civil Society (BRICS).
- ***Mlango Kubwa***: Dream Girls, Kenya Tuna Uwezo (KTU), local youth groups including Beavers and White Customs, LPI, Mathare Peace Initiative, St. John's Community Centre, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Young Mothers.

Nairobi

Respondents in Nairobi were open in their discussion of specific interventions, and the overall performance of efforts to reduce insecurity. **Sustainability** was a particular concern, where government interventions, specifically, were perceived to be short-term. Kazi Kwa Vijana and National Youth Service (NYS) were mentioned as examples of this tendency. No additional information was provided on the basis for these criticisms, and further research would be useful on the effectiveness of individual initiatives, and their collective impact.

Funding initiatives were considered to be hard to **access**. The Youth Fund was identified as an avenue that, where known, is overly bureaucratic and needlessly complex, creating barriers for young people to benefit from this opportunity.

The **Nyumba Kumi** initiative was noted by a number of respondents. However, while there is a high level of awareness of it, a series of improvements were suggested.[13] Currently, there are low levels of trust and respect between community members and the Nyumba Kumi infrastructure. Respondents stated that new

[13] Nyumba Kumi is a community policing initiative in Kenya that has received significant investment, and aims at establishing active partnerships between formal policing agencies and local communities.

Nyumba Kumi members should be more openly introduced to the community, should receive training and a stipend for their work. The initiative should establish a physical base, in addition, and lay out clear reporting procedures, as well as establishing greater operational transparency. Crucially, Nyumba Kumi should be more youth-inclusive, capitalising on "*young people's vision for reform*" in their communities.

> "*There is a lot of 'boardroom syndrome' where NGOs sit in their boardrooms, discuss and decide on activities to be implemented*." – Respondent in Mlango Kubwa

Respondents also **criticised current work by civil society actors** to reduce insecurity finding that there was a disconnect between civil society and communities, with civil society organisations (CSOs) accused by respondents of malpractice and failing to effectively communicate and feed back to community members. A number of CSOs, according to research participants, do not implement activities led by the community, implement activities that are not aligned to their research findings, and perpetuate distance between staff and project participants by failing to meaningfully involve community members in decision-making. In other cases, however, respondents criticised community members that only become involved in NGO activities for the financial compensation that accompanies participation. These findings testify to a politically engaged, discerning and critical population that is familiar with NGO engagement and the development sector, and ready to point out its flaws.

Those in Nairobi also provided a broader critique of the effectiveness of initiatives targeting insecurity – programming being insufficiently consultative was a common theme. More community meetings should be called by peacebuilding actors and the Area Chief. Where these meetings are called, details should be communicated more widely so that a larger group can participate. Space should be given for conflict-affected populations to input into strategies. Projects should be more community driven. Accused in general of being slow-moving, praise was reserved for projects that acted quickly as a measure of their quality. Those that were able to incorporate elements of rapid response to incidents that may trigger violence were seen as comparatively strong.

Mandera

> When asked to mention organisations and initiatives focused on security, respondents in Mandera identified only a small number of mixed institutions and projects.
>
> - ***Mandera Township and Rhamu***: Danish Demining Group (DDG), Mandera Peace and Development Committee (MPDC) and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC).

Those in Mandera demonstrated an awareness of the importance of the Kenyan Constitution, Kenya National Standing Orders, and the National Police Services Act as being relevant to security interventions. They did not, however, provide further detail on these frameworks. As with Nairobi, participants highlighted the **Nyumba Kumi** initiative as a key conduit for reducing insecurity, but suggested that the initiative needed greater funding, and efforts to improve its responsiveness and effectiveness.

Criticisms were, similar to Nairobi, levied at the work of **civil society**, this time focusing on problems associated with duplication of activities with insufficient coordination and engagement across projects and

programmes. However, respondents were solution-oriented – expressing support for capacity enhancement in conflict early warning, negotiation skills and social reconciliation, as well as accelerated civic education efforts and trust-building between community members and (formal) security agents. Research participants suggested that efforts be directed at enhancing working relationships between the government and local peace actors. Peace Committees in Mandera (through the support of the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding & Conflict Management) were seen as critical in this regard, as well as cross-border peace committees, Nyumba Kumi and the wider NGO community. Findings indicate that community members are aware of existing structures and their current capacities. Respondents did not suggest the creation of new mechanisms.

Wajir

When asked to mention organisations and initiatives focused on security, respondents in Wajir, in alignment with responses to previous research questions, identified traditional institutions as well as civil society and government projects.

- ***Wajir Township and Griftu*:** Alfatah Council of Elders, Jamii Thabiti (District Peace Committees) and Wajir Peace Agency [referring to Wajir Peace and Development Agency].

In Wajir, respondents focused on **motivations** for endorsement of development activity. Rather than providing information on the effectiveness of initiatives seeking to reduce insecurity, participants stated that community members would only attend community meetings if provided with incentives (such as financial reimbursement). Further research is needed on individual drivers for participation in development activities in the three target counties, this finding in Wajir may link to earlier responses on individualised drivers of insecurity – personal motivations and an eroded sense of community and collective good.

A positive role was highlighted for the county government in security initiatives – one respondent in a KII mentioned dialogue forums facilitated by the county government and the Office of the County Commissioner as having reduced tension. Another participant noted community dialogues initiated by the community.[14]

While in Nairobi respondents were generally negative in their views on security-related development interventions, for instance Nymba Kumi initiatives, those in Mandera discussed approaches, and those in Wajir prioritised spaces and individuals through which insecurity is reduced.

5. To what extent are female and male youth involved in addressing insecurity?

Responses to this question were gathered in all the three project sites. Information provided is consistent with the rest of the data collected in all three sites – building a picture of divisions in perspective based on age and gender. It is interesting to note that Mandera and Nairobi regard security actors as the best placed to handle security with a rating of 22% and 26% respectively and followed closely by the youth at 17% and 12% respectively.

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[14] It is worth clarifying that rape, specifically, was identified as a cause and symptom of insecurity around which traditional dispute resolution systems were not effective.

In Nairobi, the youth involvement in peace and security matters, according to KIIs and FGDs responses included: peer counselling of young people involved in crime, participating in public arrests, encouraging people to return stolen goods, working with NGOs for capacity-building, competing in sports for peace forums and talent shows.

Generational differences emerged in responses, and as a common theme throughout the research – adults, it appears, were split on whether youth were and indeed, should be, involved in addressing insecurity, or whether this was a responsibility that lay with the government alone. Older respondents also provided gendered responses to a larger degree than youth, demonstrating the embeddedness of distinct roles for women and men – one female participant, for instance, stated that security was a 'male issue' and female youth were therefore not involved.

Gendered roles in peace and security was a strong principle that emerged through a multitude of responses. Women are understood (and expected) to be involved in self-help groups and promote peace and development through these fora. The Chief, National Police Service, Nyumba Kumi and other formal (and informal) meetings are assumed to be male domains. The findings illustrate that formal or informal authority and power is associated with men's engagement – in 'meetings', while women's interaction is through a more personal, emotive and individualist framing of 'self-help', limiting their power to the private and relational sphere.

Youth respondents also provided a set of practical roles that young people can and do undertake to promote greater security. These included intra-youth support such as peer counselling of young people involved in crime, including encouraging people to return the goods they have stolen. Forms of semi-vigilantism were proposed, such as participating in flushing out criminals. Work between youth and the NGO sector was highlighted, from capacity enhancement and competing in sports-for-peace models, to forums and talent shows.

A belief in the innovative, entrepreneurial spirit held by young people, seemingly by virtue of this element of their identity: their self-identification as 'youth', also became apparent. Examples mentioned included the provision of security services by young people for a fee, as well as start-up businesses employing ex-criminal or rehabilitated youth. Many of these examples focus, implicitly, on changing and setting new norms around what is, and what is not, socially acceptable, in particular around dimensions of youth participation in laying the foundations for a more secure, peaceful society.

6. How do community members define and experience violent extremism?

Responses, where they were indeed provided, to questions around violent extremism are understandably sensitive. This is an area of significant investment by security and peacebuilding actors both within Kenya an outside, as well as an issue raising fear in several ways. Community members may be fearful and concerned that violent extremist groups are operating silently and targeting sectors of society for recruitment, while also being unwilling to speak out for fear of being branded and victimised by security actors or targeted by

violent extremist groups themselves. The data collected should be seen in the context of these considerations.[15]

Nairobi

The **sensitivities** associated with violent extremism became clear immediately, through the research methodology itself – large differences emerged between responses in FGDs, and those in KIIs. Information gained through the former was sparse, with respondents frequently claiming that they were not aware of any preventing/countering violent extremism (PCVE) work taking place.[16] Some stated that their areas had not experienced any incidences of violent extremism. These distinctions were also based on area, for instance in Eastleigh and Mlango Kubwa, no direct awareness of PCVE efforts was stated. This may indicate a hesitancy on the part of respondents to speak openly on violent extremism, likely linked, as noted above, to increased scrutiny by the state security apparatus, or intimidation or direct violence meted out by violent extremist groups themselves.[17] This also highlights the difficulty in securing valid and reliable data on perceptions of, and experiences with, violent extremism.[18]

When asked to **define** violent extremism, respondents (FGDs, KIIS, Survey) provided a set of fairly broad answers – most in very practical terms and more akin to individual violent incidents than the phenomenon itself – bombs, large-scale violence and specifically violence linked to ideological fundamentalism, the act of joining al-Shabaab, and engaging in fighting in Somalia, were all mentioned.

Describing the **reasons** that one might engage in violent extremism, respondents identified a lack of awareness of the implications of seeking revenge, the prospect of financial gain, reacting to marginalisation, isolation, peer pressure and religious or political mobilisation. These reasons are not entirely dissimilar from answers provided by respondents when asked the identify more general factors that contribute to an individual's decision to use violence. There was also a suspicion among respondents that young people were being 'tricked' into joining based on promises of employment in another country. These statements are broadly in alignment with established drivers for joining violent extremist groups.[19] Perhaps more importantly, they underline the importance of inclusive peacebuilding and economic development programming, as well as transparent and participatory governance processes, as appropriate responses to

[15] In order to manage these sensitivities, conversations on violent extremism were held separately as part of the validation, safe space was provided for the conversation and consent for willingness to discuss the issue sought from those in attendance. A group work methodology was also employed so as to protect individual contributors.

[16] This may also be because projects focused on preventing/countering violent extremism are not explicitly labelled or framed as such.

[17] An unwillingness on the part of community members to discuss and report issues associated with violent extremism to formal security actors may be further exacerbated by the profiling, heavy-handedness and extrajudicial tactics employed by individual police and other officials in response to the issue.

[18] See, for instance, Countering Violent Extremism Through Public Health Practice: Proceedings of a Workshop. (2017) National Academies of Sciences. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537578/.

[19] See, for instance, Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment. (2017) United Nations Development Programme. Available at: https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf.

violent extremism, based on respondents' prioritisation of economic, governance and socially-related reasoning for joining violent groups.

Significantly, respondents identified **the normalisation of violence** as part of the patchwork of reasons that lead to individual choice to become involved in violent extremism, and an easy justification for it. This connects issues of broad day-to-day insecurity to the specific issue of violent extremism, and rejects simplistic explanations linked to ideology or religious belief. Findings associated violent extremism with a reduced cost of violence itself, as well as weakened barriers to prevention, and a dearth of other options for material or personal advancement.

PCVE programming was found to be of mixed and fluid effectiveness. For instance, respondents relate a reduction in youth recruitment to violent extremist groups with development organisations offering scholarships and vocational training. However, they went further to state that this has only led to more secretive and invisible recruitment techniques. Narrow, reductionist interventions were criticised as not adequately addressing the root causes on violent extremism, while a lack of protection provided to returnees, leaving them living in fear, was also subject to the ire of research participants. Respondents made a direct link between economic, political and social marginalisation and violent extremism. Findings demonstrate an awareness, among community members, of the multifaceted, systemic and structural nature of the drivers of violent extremist behaviour, as well as the formation and expansion of violent extremist groups.

Further, government or government-led approaches to PCVE were criticised by respondents – linking these efforts to allegations of extra-judicial killings, profiling of Muslims, and the kidnapping of alleged suspects. A lack of support for individuals and families, for trauma counselling, or respect given to the families of suspects, were also areas of concern for research participants.

"*Police have been involved in torturing and victimising the community in guise of fighting terrorism and al-Shabaab sympathisers and insurgents*." – female respondent in Majengo

Mandera

The majority of respondents in Mandera stated that they were **aware** of the PCVE work being carried out in the county. However, the relative dormancy of the Nyumba Kumi in the county was mentioned in relation to this question, as was the need for greater social inclusion of women and youth, as well community sensitisation on violent extremism and the dangers associated with it. In this way, research participants mentioned needed responses to PCVE, while conveying a lack of knowledge on PCVE programming in particular – this may indicate a degree of self-censorship associated with the sensitivity of speaking about violent extremism.

Similar to Nairobi, **government responses** to violent extremism were viewed with some negativity, and were associated with manhandling, torture and extra-judicial killing of suspects. A need was identified for proper and diligent investigations before action is taken by security services.

Violent extremism in Mandera was linked to **typical factors** related to economic and social exclusion and a lack of pathways for personal development. However, specific to Mandera, respondents also connected

violent extremism to misunderstanding of, or broader illiteracy associated with, Islamic teachings. This may suggest an exposure to established narratives on violent extremism, and a desire to disconnect it from alleged religious drivers, on the part of research participants.

Wajir

Unique in the three target counties, respondents in Wajir were the only to **independently raise the issue of violent extremism**, without prompting. Violent extremism was identified as an area of insecurity, with a specific incident mentioned in which non-local teachers were killed, leading to other educators from outside Wajir leaving the area. A negative impact on the education system in the region was accordingly linked to violent extremism.

"*[Violent extremism is] a new madness affecting the youth and it leads to the loss of lives*" and "*the use of force to innocent civilians leading to deaths and destruction of properties*" as well as "*a tactic by al-Shabaab and related terror groups to instil fear among the residents and communities [with which] they disagree*" – Respondents in Wajir

In Wajir, there was **strong knowledge of violent extremism, a clear explanation on its nature and causes**, and a willingness to discuss the issue. Violent extremism was connected to unemployment among young people, misinterpretation of the Koran, and marginalisation (by the national government, specifically). Specific CVE efforts were also noted by a small number of respondents – USAID funding, the work of Wajir Peace and Development Agency, Women for Peace, Act!, Ni Wajibu Wetu (a community-level CVE programme implemented by Development Alternatives Incorporated) and concerted efforts to deal with De-radicalisation within the county government were all highlighted. Further research is necessary in order to unpack the logic behind this comparative openness, as compared to Nairobi and Mandera, as well as the contradiction in findings – that respondents in Wajir earlier noted a sense of representation in the national government, and here a perception of marginalisation.

This awareness and openness, however, did not necessarily translate into a positive view of CVE efforts – as in Nairobi and Mandera, respondents accused government (and associated responses) of heavy-handedness, the profiling of whole communities, and extra-judicial killings. Weak ties or an absence in relationships were noted with the KDF, ATPU and NSIS, while the role of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) was praised on awareness raising on issues of CVE.

"*We aren't lawyers or literate, but we know that is wrong. Rule of law has been abandoned in the war against terror.*" – Respondent in Wajir

Again, distinct to Wajir, research participants also described a role for the community in CVE efforts, not in driving the design and measurement of programming, but in taking responsibility for creating insecurity when harbouring 'criminals'. This demonstrates an awareness of the mutual responsibility held by government, civil society and community members in understanding and working against violent extremism.

Conclusion

Community members, particularly young people, define security in terms of relationships with others. Those relationships allow for coexistence, mutually held freedoms, and understanding across generations and groups. On the other hand, violence and crime are understood as driven by a multitude of factors, such as survival, a need to develop and advance oneself and having no other alternatives – in particular when individuals are victimised and targeted by state actors intended to provide security (and the memories of this past abuse). There is also a sense that insecurity comes from 'outside', from some 'other' and its associated practices. Young people across sites have shared about victimisation, profiling and marginalisation – focused on both the sense, and practical experience, of being targeted by security actors, and being perceived as drivers of violence, rather than peace.

However, as the Brief shows, young people have a critical role in reducing insecurity – a perspective among youth themselves, as well as the older generation. Note that female and male youth experience and have the potential to counter insecurity in distinct ways. Trust between communities and security actors such as the police – as well as clear and transparent procedures and operational protocols among the latter (and adherence to them) are critical areas to promote security. This is linked to a need for a day-to-day sense of justice being upheld – in criminal as well as social terms.

Development interventions in areas of insecurity have limited sustainability and should focus less on continued material support, instead building long-term skills and connections. Young people need to be more meaningfully consulted – in particular by NGOs – in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of their projects. Interventions could also be more effective through coordination and synergy – between peacebuilding actors, through communication and cross-project engagement.

Overall, violent extremism is a sensitive issue, and discussions on it should not be forced. A common definition among communities is not yet clear, but communities emphasised structural and social root causes, with less attention on shallow, material incentives. It would be important to ask those living in these areas to propose solutions, rather than importing external models.

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Annex 1: Emergent Themes from the Research Questions

Research Question 1 – definitions and experiences – How do communities (in particular young people) define and experience security in their day-to-day lives?

- Peaceful coexistence, inter-communal harmony and active community inter-dependence.
- Fundamental freedoms – of movement, of speech, of association and of thought.
- Fair and transparent security provision bound by a mutually respected rule of law.
- Inter-generational understanding and collaboration, and spaces in which this can take place.
- The absence of fear.
- Perceived equitable and principled participation in political processes.

Research Question 2 – drivers and factors – What communities believe drives people towards violence (and crime)?

- Visible indicators – addiction, and anxiety associated with external culture and fashion.
- Poverty and a drive for survival, linked to an unfair distribution of resources and capital.
- Self-development, in particular access to education and employment, as well as sustainable livelihoods.
- Identity and belonging – an ability to find one's place and comfort in definition of self.
- Memory and stories of the past – the profound impact of history, and how this is passed down through generations, in setting the rules for engagement with society and the state.
- Gender and associated roles and expectations – structural barriers placed on women, and violence as connected to manhood, or used in order to obtain it.
- Individual choice – violence and criminality as a response to personal, unique reasons.
- Victimisation, profiling and marginalisation – focused on both the sense, and practical experience, of being targeted by security actors, and the ongoing assumptions that these stakeholders maintain about the nature of entire communities.

Research Question 3 – suggested changes – What changes might reduce insecurity? How do women and men (in public and private spheres) work towards countering insecurity in the community?

- A fundamental role for youth – to identify new solutions, to pursue their aspirations and to provide guidance to others.
- Reduce links in the chain – where possible, remove intermediaries between development actors and local communities.
- Peacebuilding activities and more of the same – traditional peace-building activities focused on dialogue, reconciliation, trust-building and capacity enhancement.
- Mutually-beneficial relationships and understanding – in particular, between young people and police, with spaces created for these relationships to flourish, and for trust and respect to be built between the two groups.
- Accountability and procedural clarity – for police operations, including behaviour, reporting, confidentiality, and protection.
- Awareness of rights – on the part of citizens and the state, and a reinforced commitment to these rights.

- Reduce the distance between communities and state institutions – for instance through discussion fora and consultative decision-making.
- Justice – in the criminal process and in daily experience.
- Political participation – through avenues in which any and all are able to communicate with their representatives.
- Working together – collaboration among state and non-state security mechanisms, and a common vision of security.

Research Question 4 – effectiveness of interventions – How coordinated and effective are current interventions targeting insecurity?

- Limited sustainability – there is the potential to reduce the focus on interventions dependent on continued material support, instead building long-term skills and connections.
- Improving Nyumba Kumi structures – through increased training, transparency and embracing the potential of youth.
- Consultation and participation – needed in particular by NGOs, in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of their projects.
- Coordination and synergy – between peace-building actors, through communication and cross-project engagement, would lead to more effective interventions.
- Consider incentives – build a greater understanding of the reasons why communities participate in development and look to harmonise remunerative aspects such as per diems and transport reimbursements.

Research Question 5 – the role played by youth – To what extent are female and male youth involved in addressing insecurity?

- Generational perspectives – ask where the responsibility lies for increasing security and find appropriate ways that young people can support.
- Gendered entry points – young women and men are affected by, and have the potential to reduce insecurity, in distinct ways. While efforts should be made to ensure equal and equitable participation, interventions must be sensitive to uniquely gendered experiences.
- Unified by marginalisation – youth are able to provide support to other young people and wield positive influence over their peers.

Research Question 6 – experiences with violent extremism – How do community members define and experience violent extremism?

- Thinking and acting sensitively – conversations on violent extremism are often forced, with responses that put respondents either at risk or in fear.
- No common definition – community members define violent extremism differently, based on a combination of their exposure to acts of violence and externally-devised understandings of the phenomenon.

- Violence as normal – broader issues that perpetuate violence and reduce costs for its deployment are intimately connected to violent extremism.
- Easy answers lead to broad criticism – community members recognise that efforts to combat violent extremism have often been violent themselves. While it is tempting to pursue immediate and securitised responses, structural and social factors must be considered.
- Those living in high-risk areas hold appropriate solutions – communities that live in areas in which violent extremist attacks have taken place often understand the phenomena and ways to counter it more substantively than those designing responses elsewhere.

Annex 2: Further Research Questions

1. In the Kenyan context, to what extent, and in what way, is unemployment directly connected to violent behaviour, or are economic factors more incidental to other, predominantly social dimensions of individual experience?
2. What is the role of perceived injustice, day-to-day experiences of this, and the lack of avenues for redress of grievances, in continued insecurity?
3. What are the perspectives of individual police officers, as well as members of the ATPU and KDF, on the need, and willingness, for improved relationships with young people? What perspectives and actions do they believe need to change? Does this differ based on level and seniority of police officials?
4. How are traditional and religious dispute resolution and security mechanisms interacting with formal structures, and what contributes to their relative prioritisation by community members living in a given environment?
5. What is the logic behind certain counties and areas, in this case, Wajir, having greater faith and put greater stock in the value and functioning of the formal political system? What combination of political systems, individuals and history contribute to this?
6. What initiatives have been more effective in reducing insecurity, and what are the reasons for this?
7. To what extent is participation in development activities by local communities driven by material incentives (for instance, per diems and transport reimbursement), as opposed to a commitment and belief in the need for these activities? How can civil society actors (re)gain the trust of communities where it has been lost, and participation has become largely cynical and self-serving?
8. Where CVE programming is being implemented, under what conditions are, or would, communities willing and open to speak about the need for, and usefulness, of this programming?
9. When respondents use the terms 'police', 'security agents' and 'security forces', what distinction is being made, if any, and how do communities understand and delineate the various security functions of the state?

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