The GCTF’s Capacity-building in the East Africa Region Working Group (EAWG)

The overarching mission of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) is to promote a strategic, long-term approach to counterterrorism and the violent extremist ideologies conducive to terrorism that underpin it. Established in September 2017 to broaden the scope of the previous GCTF Horn of Africa Working Group, the EAWG aims to mobilise resources to address terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the region. It also provides a forum for a variety of stakeholders to promote dialogue, network and share information, analyses and lessons learned in a process aimed at building collaborative partnerships in and for the region.

Profiling organisations working on preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism in East Africa

While affirming the primary responsibility of the State in countering terrorism, and recognising the increasingly localised dynamics and threats of violent extremism conducive to terrorism, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism conducive to terrorism recognises the importance of engaging communities. The Plan of Action calls specifically on Member States to:

- Develop joint and participatory strategies, including with civil society and local communities, to prevent the emergence of violent extremism, protect communities from recruitment and the threat of violent extremism, and support confidence-building measures at the community level by providing appropriate platforms for dialogue and the early identification of grievances.¹

With support from international donors, local actors are helping to develop and implement interventions that address the underlying drivers and conditions conducive to conflict, violent extremism conducive to terrorism and terrorism. Local-level civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) are uniquely able to provide a voice to a broad range of groups and stakeholders within their communities. Critically, they can reach those groups that are too marginalised, vulnerable or stigmatised to raise the grievances and problems that affect them. Local organisations are driving programmes that cover a wide

array of activities, which include researching the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism, facilitating inter- and intrareligious dialogue, empowering and capacitating the youth, strengthening peacebuilding efforts and developing counter-narratives.

Building the capacity of local actors and focussing on community-led interventions is part of a more comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. To be successful, this approach requires the development of ‘a sustainable global network of … stakeholders that can have impact at the local level and a voice at the global level.’

To achieve this, the GCTF’s Inspired Institutions – the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ) and Hedayah – are working closely with local partners in East Africa. GCERF is a global fund that strengthens community resilience by supporting local initiatives to address the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. GCERF ensures that activities are led by local communities and supports the strategic objectives of national governments to prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The IIJ works to strengthen criminal justice systems and build regional judicial, police and other criminal justice practitioner networks to promote justice, security and human rights. To accomplish this, the IIJ works to form partnerships with international, regional and national training centres and academies, universities, the UN and other multilateral organisations, as well as relevant non-governmental organisations. Hedayah works to build the capacity of CVE actors across the globe to promote tolerance and stability by researching effective interventions, sharing international good practices, engaging in constructive dialogue and effective communications, and implementing evidence-based programmes.

This Mapping Report profiles three local-level organisations in Kenya that are working with the Inspired Institutions to develop and implement preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism (P/CVE) interventions in their communities.

**Coast Interfaith Council for Clerics**

The Coast Interfaith Council for Clerics (CICC) is an interfaith organisation dedicated to using intra- and interfaith dialogue to promote peace, cohesion, security and development in diverse communities in Kenya. Its membership is drawn from institutions of Islamic, Christian, Hindu and African traditional faiths. The mission of the CICC is to gather religious leaders together to respond to community problems that affect all members of society, regardless of religion, ethnicity or race.

Its main strategy is to encourage communities to discuss their challenges and work together towards finding solutions. Dialogue and collaboration help people to shift their perception of the problems they face – while still accepting the realities of the situation – and come together to resolve these problems. This approach fosters understanding and tolerance through learning, sharing and doing things together.

Although the CICC was established in response to violent political and resource-based clashes following the repeal of Section 2A of the 1963 Constitution of Kenya in 1992, it began channelling its efforts toward P/CVE after a series of terrorist attacks created tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities of the Kenyan Coastal Region. The CICC perceives violent extremism conducive to terrorism as one of the biggest threats to the unity, growth and development of diverse communities in Kenya today.

The CICC believes that winning the war against violent extremism conducive to terrorism and extremism requires multifaceted strategies and a multisectoral approach that involves all players within the community, as well as stakeholders outside the affected communities and regions.

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Intra- and Inter-Religious Dialogue Forums

This programme brings together religious leaders from diverse faiths to discuss specific religious teachings and principles that are often used to radicalise individuals. Open discussions allow for divergent views to coalesce in a common approach to eliminate the hate, stereotyping and prejudice used to divide communities. These discussions lead to the debunking of myths and misconceptions that drive people into radicalism, extremism and finally terrorism. These forums have also been used by religious leaders to agree on common interpretations of religious texts that have otherwise been used incorrectly to radicalise young people across the region.

Strengthening Social Cohesion in Communities

Leading by example, religious leaders come together on agreed initiatives that promote unity among faith leaders. Faith leaders replicate this approach at the community level by mobilising their congregations to join together in promoting peaceful coexistence and cohesion within their communities. The CICC has been able to establish safe spaces for community dialogues to resolve conflicts and promote unity within diverse communities.

Training and Capacity Building for Religious Leaders

Working with like-minded institutions – such as the Kenya National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and other CSOs – the CICC has identified a number of religious leaders who have received training on P/CVE, the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees, and early warning and early response to prevent activities related to violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Through this programme, the CICC has established a pool of trained religious leaders able to strengthen community resilience against violent extremism conducive to terrorism and terrorism.

Post-Terror Attack Therapy

The religious leaders offer group and individual psychosocial support to victims of terror attacks. This is achieved through counselling, encouragement and religious advice to help them address their feelings of loss, anger and hate so as to avoid the need for revenge or retaliation.
Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme

This programme has two different beneficiaries: victims of terror; and returnees willing to be reintegrated back into their communities. For victims of terror, the programme offers psychosocial therapy, social rehabilitation and financial stability (to those who have suffered the loss of loved ones). The victims work with professional counsellors, religious leaders, entrepreneurship trainers and institutions that offer business financial support. For returnees, the programme works with support and guidance from the NCTC and grassroots government officers (including chiefs and faith leaders). Although information about this programme remains restricted, the anticipated end result is a rehabilitated individual who is accepted and reintegrated back into the community to live a positive, productive, responsible and accountable life.

Networking and Collaboration

The CICC connects with other like-minded organisations working in P/CVE to build synergy and establish working relationships among communities, local authorities and national government. The CICC is currently on the secretariat of the Mombasa Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism Engagement Forum, which brings together actors from government, civil society, the private sector and business to share expertise, resources and information in order to develop effective interventions.

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Kenya Community Support Centre

The Kenya Community Support Centre (KECOSCE) was established in 2006 to promote and facilitate the institutionalisation of good governance values and practices at all levels of society as a basis for sustainable social-economic development. Based in Mombasa, the KECOSCE focusses on the coastal areas of Kenya and aims to strengthen vibrant, grassroots, voluntary and self-reliant organisations and structures that are rooted in tradition and culture in order to ensure community empowerment and self-development.

With the understanding that many – if not most – members of the public are not effectively involved in the public policy processes that impact on their social, economic and political lives, the KECOSCE has based its programming on empowering people towards actively participating in the processes that will lead to their communities’ transformation and development. The KECOSCE believes that all members of a community, including the marginalised and vulnerable, need to be fully involved, committed and have ownership of any initiative aimed at enhancing their socio-economic and political development.

To address growing radicalisation and youth recruitment to violent extremism conducive to terrorism in Mombasa and satellite counties – driven by a combination of land disputes, inequalities, resentment against ‘upcountry citizens’ and religious tensions – the KECOSCE contributes to building community resilience to violent extremism conducive to terrorism through a number of different projects.

Community Communication and Engagement to Counter Radicalisation and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism

Aimed at empowering coastal communities in Mombasa, Kwale, Malindi and Lamu counties to prevent and contest radicalisation, this project promotes communication and engagement among different community groups (e.g., youth, women, religious leaders and security agencies) to: create awareness about the negative impact of radicalisation; build skills to counter and contest violent ideology within the family, at schools and in public spaces;
promote partnerships with security agencies; change perceptions; and increase collaboration. As mechanisms to achieve its aims, the project builds capacity, develops radicalisation awareness networks, implements peer education, offers guidance and counselling, promotes dialogue and debate, and facilitates monitoring.

Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism by Building Strong, Resilient Local Communities

This project aims to improve the relationship between youth and law enforcement in Mombasa, Kwale and Lamu counties, as well as promoting tolerance to diversity amongst the youth. The project has implemented various engagement and empowerment activities, including:

- Nine youth discussion forums reaching at least 900 at-risk youth
- Four police and community outreach events
- Communication and messaging activities to counter extremist ideology, such as a dedicated web site, a dedicated Facebook page and at least four community radio broadcasts.
Working with Religious Leaders to Promote Tolerance and Prevent Radicalisation

Terrorists in the Kenyan coastal region have used religion and the call to action to urge youth to join terrorist organisations. The KECOSCE is working with religious leaders in Kwale and Mombasa counties to promote tolerance, protect religious minorities and prevent radicalisation. In 2019, the KECOSCE held interfaith dialogues involving key religious leaders, youth, women and local leaders to discuss the positive ways that diverse religions can reduce the threat of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the region. Over this period, 30 religious leaders used their positions to preach peace, tolerance and non-violence in their churches and mosques, reaching about 3,000 people on a weekly basis. At least 10 youth leaders in Mombasa and Kwale exited violent groups and are working within their groups to reach out to their fellow youth. Over 60 religious leaders are now able to visit and hold discussions with local police stations on how to enhance local security and to establish how they can help the police in maintaining peace and law and order in their localities.

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Foundation for Dialogue

The Foundation for Dialogue (FFD) was established in 1998 in response to recurrent post-election violence and community conflicts in the mid-Rift Valley.

The main objective of the FFD is to promote positive values, respect for the rule of law, good governance and peaceful co-existence through constructive, creative and durable approaches to peacebuilding and transformation. The FFD empowers communities to resolve conflicts through inter-community dialogue, traditional structures of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Supporting the County Engagement Forum to Implement the National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism County Action Plan

In June 2019, Nyeri County established a County Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (CAP), with guidance and support from the NCTC. A multi-stakeholder County Engagement Forum (CEF) was established to support the implementation of the CAP, with the FFD as the lead organisation.
In March 2020, the FFD conducted a workshop bringing together key government leadership and relevant stakeholders in Nyeri County to develop a sustainability plan for the implementation of the CAP. The workshop aimed to: encourage ownership of the CAP with the Nyeri County Assembly; prioritise P/CVE activities in the Nyeri County Government’s resource allocation; mainstream P/CVE activities in all government operations in Nyeri County; and establish an Intergovernmental Working Committee for the Implementation of the Nyeri CAP.

Public Awareness Campaign for the Youth on Terrorism and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism

In October 2019, the NCTC engaged the FFD to develop and implement a public awareness campaign on terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism aimed at equipping youth initiates undergoing their rite of passage with skills to identify, prevent and counter radicalisation and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

In consultation with the NCTC, the FFD identified 32 rite-of-passage centres across the country. The campaign directly reached 2,672 initiates and 881 centre leaders, as well as indirectly benefiting 8,622 parents, guardians and relatives who attended induction meetings and graduation ceremonies. The media component of the campaign included 17 talk shows with a total of 31 hours of live coverage that reached an estimated 3,483,296 people.³

The campaign highlighted the impact and importance of rite-of-passage counselling as a tool for instilling values of peace and cohesion. With a high level of acceptance and community interest, this is a tool that may help in building resilience among the youth.

Engagement with Tertiary Learning Institutions

The FFD is engaging with tertiary learning institutions to build resilience and establish P/CVE forums to identify and appropriately respond to radicalisation and recruitment to violent extremism conducive to terrorism and terrorism.

The engagement aims to: identify key student leaders nominated by their peers, clubs and societies to network on P/CVE activities and cascade the actions to individual groups;

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develop innovative communication strategies amongst students to counter radicalisation and recruitment; and promote positive narratives through institution-based activities, arts, sports and on-line platforms.

At the Kagumo Teachers Training College (KTTC), which trains primary school teachers, a student working group was formed to spearhead P/CVE activities at the institution. A designated representative briefs the student community weekly on completed P/CVE activities as well as notifying them of and inviting them to activities planned for the coming week. The FFD holds monthly meetings with the student working group to assess their progress and provide additional training on P/CVE work.

Engaging Community Elders on P/CVE work

As part of the implementation of the Ideological Pillar of the Nyeri CAP, the FFD engaged community and cultural elders to help reduce the vulnerabilities of villages in Nyeri as well as enhancing surveillance on activities related to violent extremism conducive to terrorism. This engagement is informed by the rise in recruitment of youth into violent extremism and terrorism from informal settlements. The mastermind of the 2019 Nairobi Riverside Drive and Dusit D2 terror attack, Ali Salim Gichunge, had his roots in the Majengo slums of Nyeri.

The programme specifically targets ‘Nyumba Kumi’ (or Ten Households) – elders of the smallest administrative unit in government administration and the link between members of the community and the government. The work of these elders is voluntary, but they are key players in security matters due to the trust they enjoy with people in the communities and their role in dispute resolution and community policing. The FFD has trained elders in identifying and responding to violent extremism conducive to terrorism through vigilance, addressing vulnerabilities at the household level and building resilience.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, some communities are particularly vulnerable to social and economic challenges, including radicalisation and extremism. Building the resilience of such communities requires skills in contact tracing, surveillance, urgent communication and interventions in view of the pandemic’s influence on social and security dynamics.

The project is targeting 300 Nyumba Kumi unit leaders and will impact 25 000 elders and health workers as indirect beneficiaries.
Capacitating Kenya Police Service Officers to Integrate P/CVE into their COVID-19 Pandemic Response

The FFD has conducted three training sessions with police officers, both at command and line levels, in conjunction with the NCTC and the Nyeri County Department of Public Health. The training helped to impart P/CVE skills to police officers at the front line of enforcing COVID-19 control measures and to prevent terrorism through intelligence gathering, investigations and enhanced surveillance in the protection of critical infrastructure.

While working at the frontline of enforcing government COVID-19 directives, police officers are prone to exposure due to their intensive human interactions and encounters. The training therefore also aimed to equip officers to better understand the COVID-19 pandemic and response at an individual level. The FFD issued the police officers with protective face masks and alcohol-based sanitisers to enhance their safety. This activity has gone a long way to encourage harmonious and coordinated efforts between security agents and the community in the war against violent extremism conducive to terrorism and radicalisation, as well as curbing the spread of COVID-19 infections in the county.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Kenya, the FFD has worked with the County Emergency Response Team through the CEF to train special interest groups and select target beneficiaries in integrating P/CVE with the COVID-19 pandemic response. Other than training, the FFD has distributed personal protective equipment and facilitated the installation of several hand-washing stations in the county.

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Nyeri County Director of Public Health addressing police officers on integrating P/CVE into the COVID-19 pandemic response

FFD personnel handing over PPE to police officers in Nyeri County
The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) is an informal, multilateral counterterrorism platform that helps to strengthen civilian counterterrorism efforts through sharing expertise, strategies and capacity-building programmes. The GCTF has five Working Groups. Three are thematic (Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law; Countering Violent Extremism; Foreign Terrorist Fighters) and two are geographic (East Africa and West Africa). The Working Groups identify challenges and mobilise political will, financial resources and expertise to implement those activities. The GCTF is currently Co-Chaired by Canada and Morocco. The 30 members of the GCTF include: Algeria, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States.

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