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 address terrorism and the dynamics and requirements of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the region by mobilising adequate resources and enhancing the capacity of national actors. It provides a forum for information exchange, networking and cooperation among a variety of stakeholders to promote dialogue, understanding, sharing of analysis and lessons learned with a view to build collaborative partnerships in and for the region.

Regional counter-terrorism centres of excellence in East Africa

East Africa continues to face multiple threats relating to violent extremism conducive to terrorism and terrorism. Although other local groups also operate in the region, al-Shabaab poses the most persistent threat to security despite strategic and operational setbacks in recent years.

Based in Somalia and with strong links to international terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Shabaab perpetrates terror attacks against government forces and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) in central and southern Somalia. It also reaches across borders to carry out attacks in Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

In three recent high-profile attacks, al-Shabaab attacked the DusitD2 hotel and office complex in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2019, leaving more than 20 dead and 28 injured; the Asasey Hotel in Kismayo, Somalia, on 13 July 2019, leaving at least 26 dead and 56 injured; and a female suicide bomber claimed the life of the mayor of Mogadishu and several government officials on 24 July 2019, in an attack targeting the new United Nations (UN) special envoy to Somalia who had earlier left the mayor’s office.

While initially having strong ties with the Somali clan-based structure, there has recently been a shift in al-Shabaab’s recruitment. The organisation is currently more willing to recruit fighters and supporters from across the region and from foreign-based tribes, exploiting local grievances and targeting vulnerable and disenfranchised men, women, boys and girls from Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Sudan for radicalisation to violent extremism conducive to terrorism.
East Africa’s terrorist groups, including al-Shabaab and smaller groups such as Daesh-Somalia, are widening their influence towards the south and centre of the continent. Daesh’s interests in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique, and its claimed links with local jihadist groups operating in these countries, are mainly opportunistic and propagandist. However, there is a need to closely monitor the evolution of this situation. In addition, terrorist groups like al-Shabaab operate like criminal syndicates, with a large portion of their funding acquired though extortion and illegal trafficking activities. In light of the recent United Nations Security Council Resolution 2482 (2019), possible linkages between organised crime – whether domestic or transnational – and terrorism in the region should be continuously monitored and addressed in a coordinated manner.

With the current threats posed by violent extremism conducive to terrorism and terrorism jeopardising sustainable peace and stability in the region, it is crucial that the GCTF’s EAWG continues to work alongside and in support of countries, partners and other stakeholders in East Africa to provide input and follow-up assistance on new and ongoing capacity-building programmes and activities in the region.

Although there are a number of initiatives and efforts in East Africa to address the threats of violent extremism conducive to terrorism and terrorism, this mapping report focuses on the work of the two regional counter-terrorism centres of excellence in East Africa. An overview of the centres is provided, as well as highlights of specific work carried out by these centres as they continue to develop their work plans and activities.

**Intergovernmental Authority on Development Center of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism**

In April 2018 the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) opened its Center of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (ICEPCVE) as a premier institution offering a dedicated platform to institutionalise the prevention and countering of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the Horn and East Africa.

The ICEPCVE is a resource for various stakeholders to achieve the following: empower youth, women, religious leaders and civil society, including preventing/countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism (P/CVE) actors; enhance their resilience and capacity in countering ideology that promotes violent extremism conducive to terrorism; reach audiences both online and offline; generate positive alternatives for young people vulnerable to extremist recruitment; improve law enforcement and security force engagement with local communities; amplify influential religious voices and critical thinking skills; prevent radicalisation to violence in prisons; and rehabilitate and reintegrate disengaged fighters, including foreign terrorist fighters.

The mission of ICEPCVE is to bring together state and non-state actors involved in P/CVE to develop and implement coherent strategies to build resilience against violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the Horn and East Africa. It also aims to strengthen coordination, cooperation and collaboration between IGAD member states, Tanzania and non-state actors involved in P/CVE. Crucially, this includes harnessing the grassroots knowledge of local communities and involving them as active participants.

Since its inception, the ICEPCVE has carried out a number of activities, some of which are highlighted below.

**Working with the European Union to develop a strategic plan**

Within the framework of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund’s (EUTF) regional project, IGAD Promoting Peace and Stability in the Horn of Africa Region (IPPSHAR), implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the European Union (EU) is developing a five-year Strategic Plan (2019-2024) for the ICEPCVE.
The programme aims at operationalising key aspects of the 2017 IGAD Regional Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. The strategy identifies 5 pillars of engagement that can be applied to the ICEPCVE: 1) strengthening regional capacity; 2) strengthening the capacity of at-risk communities; 3) strengthening rule of law and justice systems; 4) enhancing capacity for diplomacy on P/CVE; and 5) research and knowledge sharing.

The programme will offer an institutionalised platform within IGAD to work with and through member states, civil society actors, research institutions and other partners to increase knowledge, skills and abilities for the creation of more inclusive, conflict- and gender-sensitive, evidence-based and coordinated approaches to address violent extremism conducive to terrorism and contribute to peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa region.

In particular, the EU is ready to work with the ICEPCVE on: 1) harmonisation of legislation on terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism to ensure it is in line with international, regional and domestic commitments; 2) a strategic communication and counter-messaging project with non-state actors and civil society; and 3) collaboration and training opportunities with the Hedayah International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi.


The ICEPCVE hosted a three-day workshop on developing alternative and counter narratives to violent extremism conducive to terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya from 17–19 June 2019. The workshop was attended by 17 participants from IGAD member states plus Tanzania.

The main objective of the workshop – which is also offered at a beginner level – is to equip youth, women, civil society and faith-based organisations already involved in the P/CVE space with skills that will enhance the development and dissemination of narratives to undermine extremist ideologies.

Through the participatory training, participants were taught how to develop messages, set communication objectives, select audiences and work through a dissemination plan for the materials they developed, including colourful sketch illustrations and elaborate infographics.

Participants benefitted from a hands-on approach, developing the storyboards for the illustrations and collating information for their selected theme for the infographics.

The final products, which were displayed at the end of the workshop, had one running message thread – we all need to work together to provide alternative and counter narratives to people at risk of radicalisation by extremist groups.

Addressing the participants at the official opening of the workshop, Chief Administrative Secretary in the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ababu Namwamba noted that,

> [i]f we get it right at this level, we can be a step ahead of violent extremist organisations. We appreciate the role that IGAD is playing in rallying us to focus on critical issues in the region. This workshop exemplifies the spirit of partnership shown by IGAD actors across [the] board. Your next role is to take this training opportunity to build a suite of ‘communication warfare’ in order to challenge established and emerging fake news and propaganda narratives.

Director Dr Simon Nyambura concurred that

> [w]e all believe in one cause. We are creating a movement of state and non-state actors to ensure that we contribute to the shrinking of the space occupied by violent extremist organisations. We believe that strategic communication skills will play a big part in this. And we are grateful for the commitment and support of the Global Engagement Centre of the
US [United States] State Department and USAID [United States Agency for International Development].

In his closing remarks at the end of the workshop, USAID/Kenya and East Africa Deputy Mission Director Patrick Wilson said,

It is not easy to sell ideas to people. We hope that we have given you the tools to promote the message of peace. You are going to have to be the leaders in your communities. I am proud of what you have developed in the last three days and cannot wait to see what you will do in future.

**Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Workshop (12–14 June 2019)**

Researchers from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda gathered at the three-day Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Workshop hosted by ICEPCVE’s Research and Analysis Unit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 12–14 June 2019. Supported by the Royal Danish Embassy in Ethiopia and USAID, this was the second of such workshops, the first of which took place in Mombasa, Kenya, in May 2018.

The aim of the workshop was to enhance the research capacity of young and upcoming scholars in the region and to develop proposals for field research to be commissioned by ICEPCVE.

During the workshop participants analysed the current challenges posed by violent extremism conducive to terrorism in their respective countries before formulating research questions, hypotheses, methodologies and abstracts on country-specific topics and thematic areas pertaining to P/CVE.

ICEPCVE will commission and supervise field research by the participants from the six countries over the course of the next few months. The findings of their field research will be presented at a regional conference in December 2019.

Dr Jonas Helth Lonborg, Team Leader for Regional Affairs, commented that the Royal Danish Embassy in Ethiopia is looking to support ICEPCVE so that the research done and knowledge being generated is being done by the people who understand the context and [are] familiar with the nuances and complexities of new and emerging trends in preventing and countering violent extremism. A combination of a down-up approach where information comes from civil society organisations to researchers, and an up-down approach where information flows from researchers to civil society organisations, will achieve the best results.

These sentiments were reiterated by Razia Kimani, USAID’s Conflict Mitigation Specialist in the Office of Democracy, Governance and Conflict, who stated that

> [t]he vast knowledge and skill set represented at this workshop is indeed inspiring. I encourage you to continue learning from and challenging each other even when you return to your respective countries. Let us work together to delve deeper into evidence-based analysis and continue to fill the research gaps in this field.

**Trust-based, qualitative field methods: a manual for researchers of violent extremism (2018)**

In 2018, ICEPCVE published a manual, *Trust-based, qualitative field methods: a manual for researchers of violent extremism*, designed to introduce a new approach to researchers already trained in research methods, protocols and ethics.
A question that comes up in all field research with human subjects is ‘Why should anyone tell you the truth?’

This challenge is particularly significant in researching violent extremist organisations (VEOs), where it may be safer for respondents to mislead researchers or conceal vital information when faced with the threat to their or their family’s safety posed by VEOs, or when there is a high probability that they are under surveillance by extremists or state actors. The research approach detailed in this manual aims to address this challenge.

The manual emphasises the cultivation of trust, an appreciation of the impact of surveillance and power on local environments, communication with marginalised youth, a focus on understanding gender and class issues, and analysis of youth dynamics in different locations. This approach is designed to help researchers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism address three major research gaps: understanding youth who are vulnerable to entering VEOs; local dynamics in areas where VEOs are influential; and why youth in certain areas enter VEOs while others living nearby do not.

While the intended audience of the manual is experienced researchers who examine issues of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the IGAD region and elsewhere, the methods it details can be adapted and used in other development and conflict contexts, as well as for research featuring youth globally. It will be of particular use for researchers with prior field experience with qualitative techniques, in contexts impacted by conflict or violent extremism conducive to terrorism (or both), and in interviews with non-elites.

Specifically, the manual aims to enhance the capacity of researchers from countries that are members of IGAD (plus Tanzania) who focus on VEO dynamics and the area of P/CVE.

This manual supports IGAD’s strategic objective to ‘[g]enerate and share research, knowledge, analysis, and information to better understand the drivers of violent extremism’, as detailed in its Regional Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.

Akil N Awan, Associate Professor of Modern History, Political Violence and Terrorism at the Royal Holloway, University of London, called the manual ‘a timely and much-needed practical guide for researchers of violent extremism, for conducting high-quality, trust-based qualitative field research … written in an accessible and highly readable format’.

Raymond Gilpin, Academic Dean of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, said the manual ‘effectively elevates the discourse regarding community-based approaches to countering violent extremism in fragile regions … [and] fills crucial gaps for scholars, policy-makers, and general practitioners’.


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Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence

The Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (EAPCCO) is currently supported by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Norway in its plans to develop a Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence in Nairobi.

On 16 May 2019 Director of Criminal Investigations (DCI) George Kinoti officiated at the opening of a two-day Counter-Terrorism Workshop for EAPCCO at the INTERPOL Regional Bureau of Eastern Africa headquarters in Nairobi. The forum brought together experts from member countries to deliberate on how the Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence could become fully operational.

DCI Kinoti illustrated the regional nature of the initiative by confirming that ‘all member countries are expected to second focal point officers whose operations are going to cut across the entire region’.

Sospeter Munyi, Head of the Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence, said that it is hoped the centre ‘will serve as a key resource for counter-terrorism efforts in the region’.

Participants at the meeting offered their views on how the centre could be fully operationalised, which led to agreement on a guidance document to inform its operationalisation over the coming months.

DCI Kinoti offered his thanks to those involved in developing the centre, saying that ‘[h]aving a fully staffed office will mean that our expertise built over the years under our countries’ unique experiences will amalgamate to ensure that we are better equipped to fight terror in whichever form it assumes’.

In further support of these efforts, UNODC facilitated the organisation of the first Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence technical meeting in June 2019. Attended by key law enforcement officials from the region, experts from member countries, regional and international agencies (including INTERPOL), as well as bilateral partners, the meeting was hosted at the UN offices in Nairobi.
Joint initiatives in the region involving the EAPCCO CT Centre of Excellence and the IGAD CT Center of Excellence

EAPCCO Gender Training Workshop (11–14 June 2019)

There is growing global recognition of violent extremism conducive to terrorism and terrorism’s differential impact on the human rights of women and girls, as well as the multiple roles that women play within terrorist organisations, in P/CVE and in countering terrorism.

In addition, the increased threat posed by transnational organised crime and its linkages to terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism mean that policymakers and law enforcement agencies are required to think through the role of women as either victims of organised crime groups or as enablers of organised criminal activities.

On 29 January 2019, following a recommendation from the EAPCCO Gender Sub-Committee, the INTERPOL Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa requested support from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in training law enforcement officers on gendered approaches to terrorism-related and transnational organised crimes and investigations.

The aim of the course was to equip participants with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitude needed in the fight against violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the region, with a specific focus on integrating a gendered approach. Sixty-five high-level participants from EAPCCO member states, the EAPCCO Regional Bureau (Nairobi), the EAPCCO Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence and the Kenya National Counter Terrorism Centre attended the workshop, which took place in Naivasha, Kenya from 11–14 June 2019.

The workshop covered a range of topics relating to law enforcement responses to terrorism and transnational organised crime. These included gender equality and mainstreaming; women’s inclusion in the security sector in Africa; operational considerations of including women in the police force in Africa; women’s involvement in terrorism; sexual and gender-based violence against men and boys in conflict or terrorism-related contexts; and women’s involvement in transnational organised crime and responses to transnational organised crime.

Cross-Border Peace Initiative to Prevent Violent Extremism and Conflict in the Horn of Africa (October 2018)

In October 2018, at an event co-hosted by the governments of Kenya and Ethiopia, IGAD, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), representatives from the governments of Ethiopia and Kenya presented their cross-border peace initiative to prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism and conflict in border regions.

The Ethiopian–Kenyan cross-border initiative addresses the nexus between security and development by focusing on building resilience and fighting marginalisation in border areas, with an emphasis on the role of youth and women. Many countries, including Ethiopia and Kenya, have implemented decentralisation policies to delegate fiscal, administrative and financial authority to regional and county authorities. Through this devolution, authorities have been able to ensure closer cooperation and coordination with border communities. This has helped to more effectively fight terrorism, violent extremism conducive to terrorism and conflict.

In his keynote address, Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, Head of the UNOCT, noted that ‘[t]he collaboration between Kenya and Ethiopia is a demonstration of the importance of tackling the threat of radicalisation, violent extremism and conflict in a collaborative manner’. He added that it was critical to recognise the importance of border security and the challenges that many countries face in preventing the transnational movement of terrorists.

Ahunna Eziakonwa, UNDP’s Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa, commended the initiative and said that ‘the root of extremism is exclusion from the economy and society’.
Cabinet Secretary Eugene Wamalwa of Kenya recognised that progress is made through building a ‘story of confidence instead of hopelessness along our borders, a story of our borders being bridges instead of barriers to development and integration, a story of peaceful sustainable development along our borders instead of insecurity and marginalisation’.

The Deputy Permanent representative of Ethiopia to the UN, Mahlet Hailu, spoke about the commitment of the two governments to address historical marginalisation in the region by turning ‘cross-border barriers into bridges of opportunity’.

IGAD Executive Secretary Mahboub Maalim stressed that ‘cohesive linkage through collaboration among all stakeholders enhances cross-border cooperation [and] ensures that we deny space to extremists and undermines their violent ideology’.

Referring to the joint CTED-UNOCT visit to Kenya in July 2018, Michèle Coninsx, Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), praised the way in which the drafting and implementation of county action plans increased ownership among communities and their overall effectiveness.

The keynote addresses were followed by a panel discussion entitled the ‘Ethiopia–Kenya cross-border initiative: a regional strategy for preventing violent conflict and extremism’, moderated by Siddharth Chatterjee, the UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya. Focusing on a new regional policy to combat terrorism, participants from the European Union (EU), intergovernmental organisations and the UN also shared their experiences in the Horn of Africa.

Participants included Ambassador Martin Kimani, Director, Kenya National Counter Terrorism Centre, and Dr Simon Nyambura, Director, ICEPCVE.

About the Global Counterterrorism Forum

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) is an informal, multilateral counterterrorism platform that identifies areas of civilian counterterrorism where national capabilities can be strengthened. It provides a dedicated platform for 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 and West Africa). The working groups identify challenges and mobilise political will, financial resources and expertise to implement those activities. Morocco and the Netherlands are the Co-Chairs of the GCTF. The 30 members of the GCTF are: Algeria, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, EU, 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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