PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: UNDERSTANDING AT-RISK COMMUNITIES IN KENYA

DECEMBER 2018

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Funded under the UK cross-government Conflict, Stability & Security Fund (CSSF), with additional support from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, **BRICS supported community-led initiatives with the aim of making populations in East Africa less vulnerable to drivers, enablers, and narratives of Violent Extremism (VE)**. From April 2016 - August 2018, BRICS was implemented by DAI Europe in partnership with Wasafiri Consulting. The multi-year programme aimed to reach the most at-risk groups and individuals. This was to decrease their vulnerability to VE by working closely with and through community-based influencers who have access to and credibility within these target groups. Both BRICS and its community-based partners worked with security and government actors, whenever possible, to support constructive and sustainable community engagements to prevent the rise of VE. The programme approaches were informed by the research conducted by community-based researchers, which aimed to understand both the root causes of VE and the effectiveness of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) interventions.

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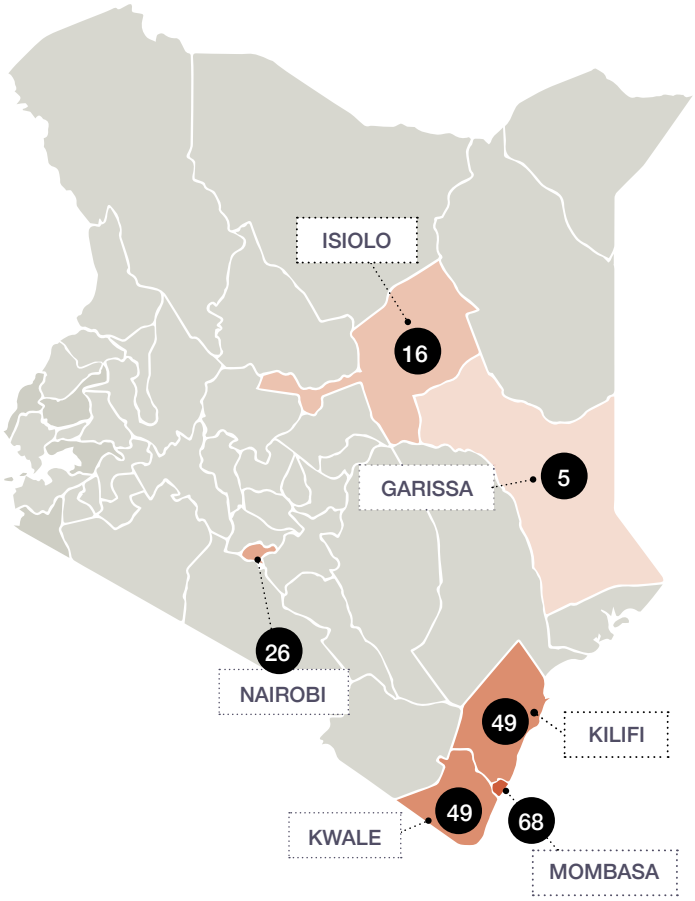
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From March to July 2018, BRICS conducted 213 in-depth interviews with Kenyans who were 18 years and older. Out of these, 190 interviews were with at-risk individuals and 23 with the community influencers who facilitated access to the at-risk respondents and who were knowledgeable about violent extremism (VE) in their communities. Geographically, the study focused on the Kenyan coastal counties of Kwale, Kilifi, and Mombasa in areas known to have VE actitivty (i.e. Bongwe, Kisauni, Likoni, Majengo, Mtwapa, etc.). Additionally, a smaller number of interviews (22% of the total) were conducted in Garissa, Isiolo, and Nairobi. 46% of all the respondents were 18-25 years old, and 75% were in the age group of 18-35 years old. 38% of the respondents were women.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the drivers that are leading individuals to be at risk of radicalisation and recruitment?
- How do radicalisation and recruitment work in practice?
- Which preventing & countering violent extremism (P/CVE) approaches may be most effective?

KEY FINDINGS

- **Using the social network approach described below, BRICS was able to expeditiously interview nearly 200 at-risk individuals with direct knowledge of VE. They included individuals who were disconnected from civil society organisations (CSOs) and community leaders.**

- **The study identified information almost exclusively about Al-Shabaab activity**, which is likely a result both of its prominence in Kenya and the research's sampling strategy based on social networks. Daesh appears more likely to target individuals who are educated, middle-class professionals. In contrast, the study participants came primarily from lower socio-economic backgrounds and communities highly affected by VE.

- **Extremely small or weak social networks, as experienced, for example, by orphans or ex-gang members, seem to facilitate radicalisation and recruitment**. Recruiters are able to capitalise on the failure of an individual's social network to provide adequate emotional, financial, and economic support, and to utilise VE networks to fill these gaps.

- **The study corroborated other P/CVE research around macro-structural drivers for joining or sympathising with VE,** including poverty and lack of sustainable livelihoods (mentioned by 134 of 213 respondents), security force abuse (77), and ideology (51).

- **The research did not find any evidence of widespread VE recruitment efforts specifically targeting gangs**, though individual members or groups of members may be targeted for recruitment. Some evidence suggests that individuals who have recently left gangs are at increased risk of radicalisation and/or recruitment.

- **Recruiters used a number of both global and local narratives** in the radicalisation and recruitment process. While these included religious, socio-political, and economic narratives, the most frequently cited narrative was *"Islam is under attack"*.

- **The study identified eight common pathways to radicalisation and recruitment**. The two most common were *thwarted providers*, typically young men who became involved with VE to help provide financially for family members and *regular mosque attenders*, both men and women who were approached by recruiters initially at their mosque. These pathways are not necessarily linear and an individual may fit into or experience elements of more than one pathway.

- **Recruitment and radicalisation tend to happen in person.** There appears to be a recent drop in radicalisation and recruitment happening online due to surveillance concerns.

- **Mothers play a significant role in encouraging their children to leave VE.** In cases where individuals considered, but did not ultimately join a VE organisation (VEO), mothers often either intervened to prevent their son from leaving or the son decided not to go because he knew it would cause his mother pain.

- **Families associated with VE are often stigmatised and isolated by their communities, and live in fear of both Al-Shabaab and government security forces, resulting in both men and women emphasising their need for psychosocial support.** This situation appears to further limit their social networks and access to alternatives and opportunities, which may lead to more dependency on VE social network ties.

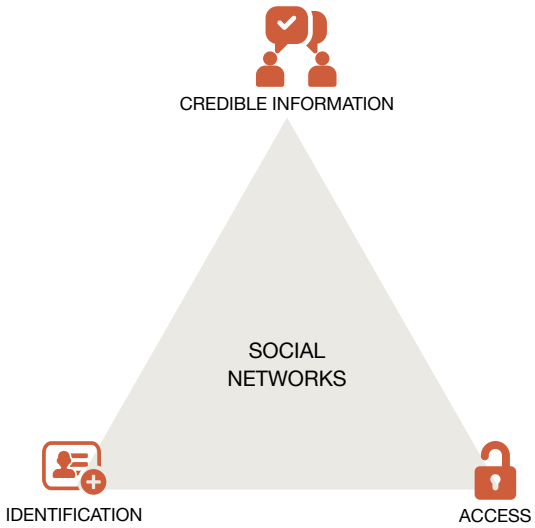
- **The study identified VE network connections and movement between Tanga (in Tanzania), Mombasa, and Kwale**, as well as between Garissa and Uganda.

- **Respondents reported that many existing P/CVE activities by CSOs may not sufficiently target individuals or groups at risk of VE. This is due to either targeting participants through overly broad demographic criteria** or not working in the localised geographic areas most affected by VE, which limits their impact.

- **There are a number of informal P/CVE 'interventions' being conducted without any external funding, by local influencers** who have trust and access to at-risk individuals, which appear to have positive impacts.

RATIONALE & APPROACH

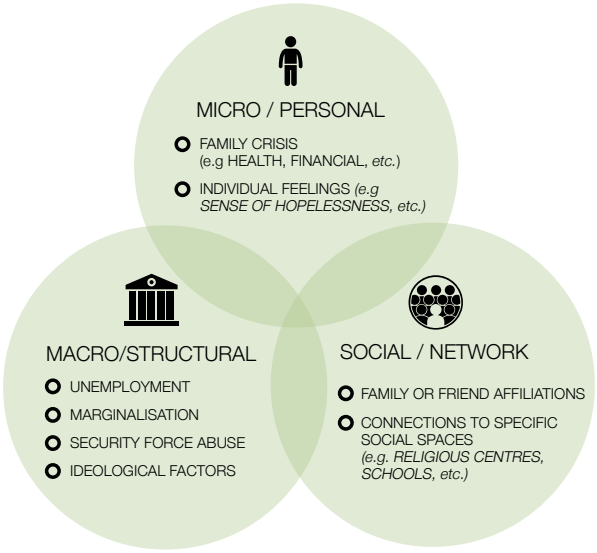
Given the sensitive and often secretive nature of VE, credible information about radicalisation, recruitment, and intervention is often difficult to obtain. Building on existing VE research and BRICS' own previous 15-months of community-based research on VE, ***a social network-based approach*** was developed to address three common challenges in VE research: **credibility, identification, and access**.



Challenge 1 - Obtaining credible information about VE:

Individuals willing to be interviewed may not be able to speak knowledgeably about VE, particularly if they are a community member without direct knowledge of or experience with VE. However, individuals who have direct experience with VE - those who have already been radicalised or recruited - may not be willing to be interviewed, not be forthcoming, or pose too great a safety risk to themselves, other community members, and the researchers to engage.

- **Response: Individuals who are themselves at risk, but who have not yet been radicalised or recruited, offer a middle ground** for gaining potentially well-informed information about VE.



Challenge 2 - Identifying who is at-risk:

In examining the drivers identified by the broader P/CVE research community, as well as its previous research findings, **BRICS utilises a model dividing the drivers into three categories: macro-structural factors, micro-personal situations, and social network ties**.

Individuals may be at risk of radicalisation and recruitment due to one or more **of the above-mentioned driver categories**. Traditional research on VE, specifically within East Africa, often focuses on the **macro-structural factors;** however, these factors, such as lack of a sustainable livelihood, may not be discriminant enough because they affect significant portions of the population. Focusing on **personal situations**, such as family crises, pose challenges as well, as they are difficult to identify and programme for, on an individual basis.

- **Response: Focusing on individuals who have existing social network connections to VE allows researchers to employ a systematic and targeted approach to identify individuals with credible knowledge of VE through their own experiences and knowledge of the experiences of their social network ties to VE.** It does not reach every person potentially at risk of VE, but it focuses on those who are a) identifiable and b) have a clear pathway towards VE involvement.

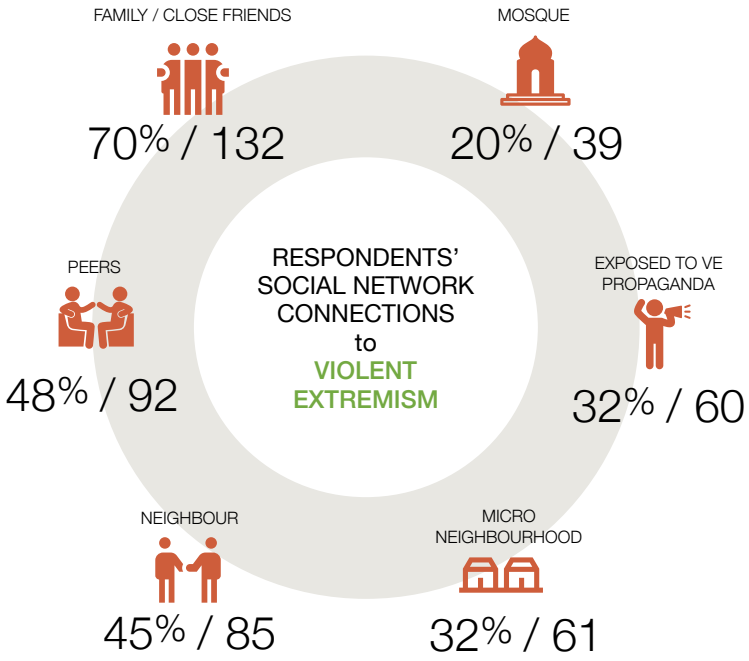
Challenge 3 - Accessing at-risk individuals:

At-risk individuals with social network ties to VE may be suspicious of speaking with researchers and are more vulnerable to VEOs, security surveillance, and social stigmatisation, given their proximity to VE.

- **Response: Fostering long-term relationships with local influencers, community members who have access to and influence with at-risk groups, allows for trust-based, ethical, and safer engagement.** Based on previous participatory research, BRICS found that through long-term engagement the programme was able to identify and work with intermediaries whose social networks include at-risk individuals who normally avoided interacting with CSOs or community leaders.

Utilising the social network approach, BRICS engaged with multiple community influencers (local facilitators) in a given geographic area to identify and gain access to at-risk individuals. In order to be included in this study, **every at-risk respondent had to have a direct social network connection to VE.** This allowed them to speak about VE based on their experiences and the experiences of those in their social networks. For the purpose of this specific study, **the research defines an at-risk individual as a person who has a direct social network connection to VE through at least one of the following:**

- has a **family member, close peer, or neighbour** who has been involved in VE (sympathisers, recruiters, fighters, etc.);
- lives in a **micro-neighbourhood** with known VE activity;
- participates in **specific social spaces** (e.g., schools, religious centres, social centres, etc.) with known VE activity; or
- has had significant exposure to **VE propaganda** (typically through one of the above sources).



RECOMMENDATIONS

The below recommendations tie directly to the key findings highlighted on pages 4-5. *Please also see the full report for specific recommendations for the Government of Kenya, Kenyan security actors, CSOs, researchers, practitioners, and international development partners that build on this research study, and larger lessons learnt from the BRICS programme*.

- **Use a social network approach as a framework for P/CVE programming and research.** The approach can assist in identifying marginalised at-risk individuals and groups that have clear pathways towards VE involvement, specifically in relation to **Al-Shabaab**, which can allow for more focused and impactful P/CVE interventions. BRICS recognises that this approach has limitations, and therefore encourages the development of different approaches to identify other at-risk groups, not reached in this study.

- **Consult individuals and communities with first-hand knowledge of VE and incorporate their insights into CSO programming and government efforts,** including CVE County Action Plans (CAPs) and County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).

- **Explicitly include women and girls.** Recognise and understand the gendered nature of VE and the differential impact of VE on women, girls, men, and boys. This can be achieved by consulting with women and girls as well as men and boys, and design interventions that address their respective needs, capacities, and contexts.

- **Build the trust, capacity, and networks of local influencers to positively impact at-risk groups.** Seek to identify community members and groups that have access to and influence with individuals and groups that have first-degree connections to VE. Facilitate connections, P/CVE knowledge building, and space for collective action and localised decision-making.

- **Include interventions that work to expand and strengthen at-risk individuals' social networks,** which can provide them with the knowledge that others are experiencing similar life circumstances; a broader social support network; and additional social capital to learn about and access opportunities, most importantly livelihood opportunities.

- **Expand and pursue more tailored P/CVE program interventions,** particularly mentorships and empowerment for at-risk youth with first-degree connections to VE networks; localised and tailored religious knowledge; family-centred prevention; psychosocial support; and awareness raising on the experiences of those who joined and left VE groups.

- **Facilitate mechanisms to link at-risk individuals with existing government and civil society service providers** to improve their access to social services and economic opportunities at the local level. The limited referrals and information that BRICS was able to provide was valued by the at-risk respondents.

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RESEARCH APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH **OBJECTIVES**

While it has been three years since the last large-scale terrorist attack in Kenya,[1] roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and attacks on security forces and public institutions occur regularly, especially in the Coastal counties and counties bordering Somalia. With continued VE activity in Kenya over the past two decades, more research is still needed to better understand how and why individuals become involved with VE and which interventions to prevent this may be most effective. The RESOLVE Network highlights Kenya as one of the ten countries worldwide with the most critical need for research, particularly on the mechanics of radicalisation.[2]

This research study helps to fill this research gap by addressing three key questions:

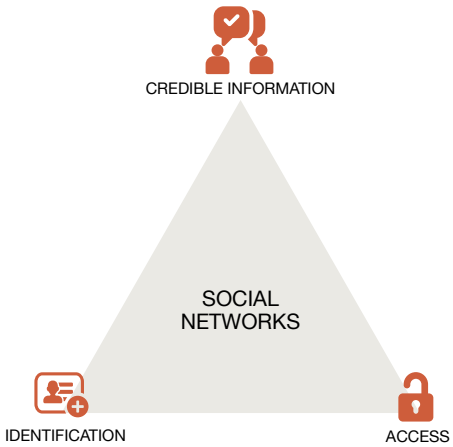
1. What are the drivers leading individuals to be at risk of radicalisation and recruitment?
2. How do radicalisation and recruitment work in practice?
3. Which preventing & countering violent extremism approaches may be most effective?

Unless otherwise stated, **all references in this report to VEOs or VE activity refer to Al-Shabaab**.

The study aims to better inform the Government of Kenya, security actors, communities affected by VE radicalisation and recruitment, CSOs, practitioners, researchers, and international development partners. In particular, it focuses on developing methodological approaches to studying VE and and informing about P/CVE interventions, especially those that can be implemented at the community-level.

This research builds on more than 15 previous research projects focused on VE, that BRICS had conducted in Kenya, as well as additional VE research conducted in Tanzania, Somalia, and Uganda. Importantly, it starts by recognising that the previous research strategies, primarily community perception surveys and key informant interviews, were often unable to answer questions about how VE works in practice.

SOCIAL NETWORK **APPROACH**



Given the sensitive and often secretive nature of VE, credible information about radicalisation, recruitment, and intervention is often difficult to obtain. Respondents may be difficult to identify and access, reluctant to speak on the subject, not forthcoming with the interviewer, or not be able to speak knowledgeably on the topic. Building on the existing VE research corpus in East Africa, and BRICS' own 15-months of community-based research, BRICS developed a **social network-based** approach to address three common challenges in the VE research: **credibility, identification, and access**.

1 The April 2015 attack on Garissa University in which 147 students and one security officer were killed.
2 Rex W. Douglas and Candace Rondeaux (2017). *MINING THE GAPS: A Text Mining-Based Meta-Analysis of the Current State of Research on Violent Extremism.* RESOLVE Network, United States Institute of Peace.

Challenge 1 - Obtaining credible information about VE:

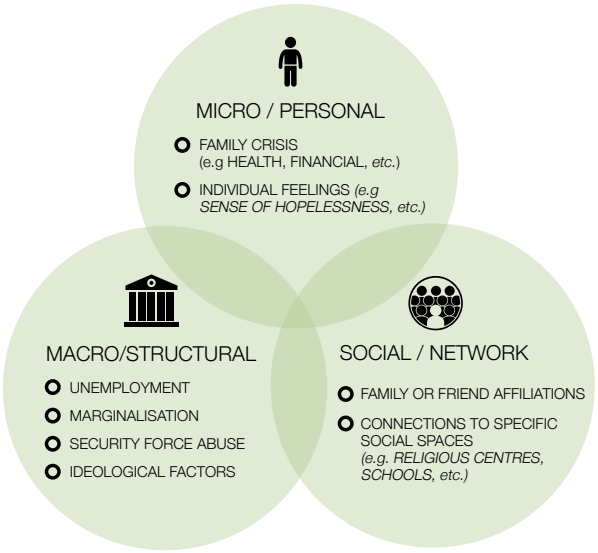
Individuals willing to be interviewed may not be able to speak knowledgeably about VE. For example, community perception surveys offer useful insights on a wider community's attitudes towards VE and how it should be addressed.[3] However, community respondents may not be well informed about the actual nature and practice of radicalisation and recruitment depending on their own personal proximity to VE. In contrast, former VE combatants or other types of VE supporters have first-hand information about radicalisation, recruitment, and VE activities, and can speak credibly as to why they joined, and, if applicable, how they left VEOs.[4] However, given that former combatant research frequently takes place in prisons or detention facilities, respondents may be more likely to alter their explanations to portray themselves in a favourable light since their responses might affect their treatment in detention and/or their legal outcomes. Additionally, there are ethical challenges with interviewing detainees whose participation in research studies may not be voluntary.

- **Response: Interviews with individuals who are themselves at risk of radicalisation and recruitment offer a middle ground** for gaining potentially well-informed information about VE, as well as learning about effective P/CVE interventions without the same level of ethical and security concerns present when engaging with active or detained VE members.

Challenge 2 - Identifying who is at-risk:

While at-risk individuals are a common focus of P/CVE interventions and research, they are often identified by broad and widely-shared demographic characteristics, such as age, religion, county-level or broad neighbourhood-level residence. Because these demographics include so many individuals, they also capture individuals who may have very low chances of ever becoming radicalised or recruited and may not have a first or second-hand knowledge of VE.

In order to have a more targeted approach to identifying at-risk individuals, BRICS focused on the drivers that make someone at-risk, in the first place. **Existing research on VE highlights a number of common drivers,**[5] most often differentiated as push-or pull-factors. In examining the drivers identified by the broader P/CVE research community, as well as its previous research findings, **BRICS utilises a model dividing the drivers into three categories: macro-structural factors, micro-personal situations, and social network ties.**



While drivers are a foundational part of theorising and programming towards P/CVE it is important to highlight three aspects of this model:

1. **Not every individual who experiences one or more of these drivers will ever actually become radicalised or recruited** due to a number of reasons, such as their lack of exposure to VE messaging or a resilience factor like family support.

2. **The significance of a particular driver varies from individual to individual.**

3 See for example: Charles Villa-Vicencio, Stephen Buchanan-Clarke, and Alex Humphrey (2017). *Community Perceptions of Violent Extremism in Kenya*. Life & Peace Institute and The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation.

4 See for example research by United Nations Development Programme (2017). *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment.*

5 For models and theorizations of VE drivers, see for example: United States Agency for International Development (2009). *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism;* and James Khalil and Martine Zeuthen (2016). *Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation.* Royal United Services Institute.

3 **Individuals can experience more than one driver and the interaction potentially heightens risk levels.** BRICS emphasises the importance of the intersection of drivers by portraying them in a Venn diagram rather than as distinct categories. For example, as seen in the diagram, an individual may be unemployed, but may not be vulnerable to VE until there is an additional driver, such as a family crisis or a social network link to VE recruiters.

- **Response: Through this model, BRICS chose to focus on social network connections to VE as the primary means of identifying at-risk individuals.** Macro-structural factors, such as lack of a sustainable livelihood, may not be discriminant enough because they affect a significant portion of the population. Furthermore, when considering how research could affect future programming efforts, it is difficult to have a significant impact on societal-wide interventions aimed at macro-structural drivers, especially for small P/CVE initiatives. Micro-personal situations, such as family crises, are difficult to identify and programme for, on an individual basis.

  Focusing on individuals who have **existing social network connections to VE** (e.g. family member, peer, social space, etc.) does not reach every person potentially at risk of VE, but this approach:

  - **allows researchers to employ a systematic and targeted approach to identify individuals with credible knowledge of VE** through their own experiences and knowledge of the experiences of their social network ties to VE;
  - **provides a clear definition of at-risk and criteria for inclusion** in research or programming;
  - **focuses on individuals who have an existing proximity to VE** in their lives and for whom there is a clear pathway towards VE involvement through their social networks;
  - **targets drivers for which there are potentially more focused and impactful P/CVE interventions,** particularly for smaller organisations.

  Additionally, while the participants are initially identified based on their social network connections, these are not necessarily the only drivers they are experiencing. **In practice, BRICS research found that many participants in the study were at the intersection of both social network drivers and/or micro-personal and macro-structural drivers** (e.g. having a family member who was connected to VE and also experiencing unemployment and/or a family crisis). Therefore, even when targeting social network drivers, research interventions can also learn about micro-personal and macro-structural drivers.

Challenge 3 - Accessing at-risk individuals:

Once identified, at-risk individuals may be reluctant to speak to outside researchers about VE due to its illegality and social stigmatisation, as well as their personal proximity to VE.[6]

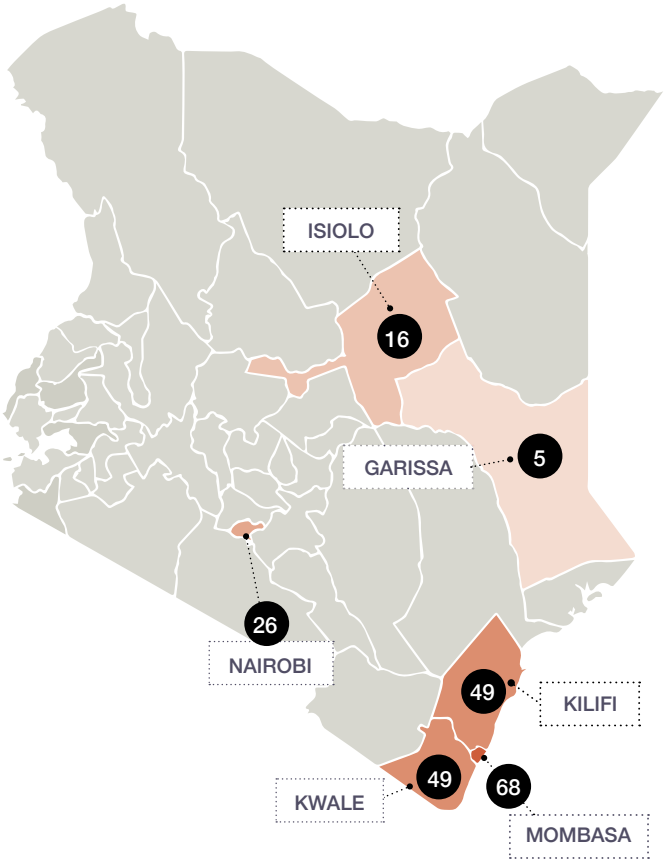
- **Response: Fostering long-term relationships with local influencers and community members who have access to and influence with at-risk individuals and groups allows for trust-based, ethical, and safer engagement.** Working with and through trusted intermediaries who are part of at-risk individuals' broader social networks is critical to gaining access to and building trust with potential respondents, engaging them in an ethical and safe manner. Based on previous participatory research, BRICS found that, through long-term engagement, the programme was able to identify and work with intermediaries whose social networks included individuals who normally avoided interacting with CSOs or community leaders.

  For this research study, BRICS engaged with multiple community influencers in a given geographic area to identify and interview research respondents. Additionally, all of the field researchers involved in this study had professional research and/or practitioner experience with P/CVE and ties to the broader community in which they conducted the research.

6 See for example: Marc Sommers (forthcoming). *Trust-Based, Qualitative Field Methods: A Manual for Researchers of Violent Extremism*. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

RESEARCH **METHODOLOGY**

For the purposes of this study, **violent extremism** (VE) is defined as material and/or immaterial support for or engagement in violent acts justified by an inflexible and uncompromising ideology.[7] The extent to which individual actors or supporters embrace this ideology may vary *(see Appendix A for definitions of key terms)*. Within the context of Kenya, BRICS assessed *jihadist* VE to be the form of VE that poses the biggest current risk to Kenya, and in the context of the communities in which the research was conducted, VE referred specifically to *jihadist* VE. **Al-Shabaab** was the VEO mentioned by nearly every respondent, with only 16 respondents discussing Daesh or any another organisation.



Geographically, the study focused on the coastal counties of Mombasa, Kilifi, and Kwale (78% of the respondents) with the remaining respondents coming from **Garissa, Isiolo, and Nairobi.** These counties were selected first on the basis of known, ongoing VE radicalisation and recruitment occurring in them. Secondly, they were selected based on access to affected communities either through trusted CSOs or trusted community influencers. As described above, **trust is a pre-condition to working with at-risk individuals and communities.** Therefore, trusted female and male influencers played an important role in at-risk individuals being willing to talk with the researchers about VE and how they and their social networks had been affected by it.[8]

INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS WITH KNOWN VE ACTIVITY:

- **Garissa:** Balambala, Fafi, and Ijara
- **Isiolo:** Isiolo Central
- **Kilifi:** Chumani, Kanamai, Kikambala, Kwachocha, Majengo, Malindi, Marereni, Mavueni, Maweni, Mtwapa, Shela, and Shimo la Tewa
- **Kwale:** Bongwe, Kinondo, Matuga, Mbuani, Msambweni, Ngombeni, Shamu, Shika Adabu, Pungu,Tiwi, Ukunda, and Waa
- **Mombasa:** Changamwe, Jomvu, Kisauni, Likoni, Mvita, and Nyali
- **Nairobi:** Kamukunji, Majengo, and Pumwani

7 Drawing on Lauren Van Metre (2016). *Community Resilience to Violent Extremism in Kenya*. United States Institute of Peace.

8 In addition to the interviews conducted for this study, BRICS has conducted over 1800 additional interviews throughout Kenya since February 2016, which have both contributed to an understanding of VE and also built ties to at-risk communities: Busia (142 interviews); Garissa (236); Isiolo (15); Kakamega (137); Kilifi (131); Kisumu (148); Kwale (161); Lamu (211); Mandera (57); Migori (142); Mombasa (268); Nairobi (148); Tana River (18); and Wajir (43).

From March to July 2018, **213 respondents were interviewed using semi-structured form of interviews** lasting from half an hour to two hours or more *(see Appendix B for the complete research methodology)*. The respondents were Kenyans aged 18 and over.

BRICS utilised 23 female and male community influencers - CSO workers, religious leaders, and other individuals in the community that have the trust of at-risk individuals - to identify and introduce BRICS researchers to the at-risk respondents. BRICS interviewed the community influencers because of their knowledge of VE issues in their particular community.[9]

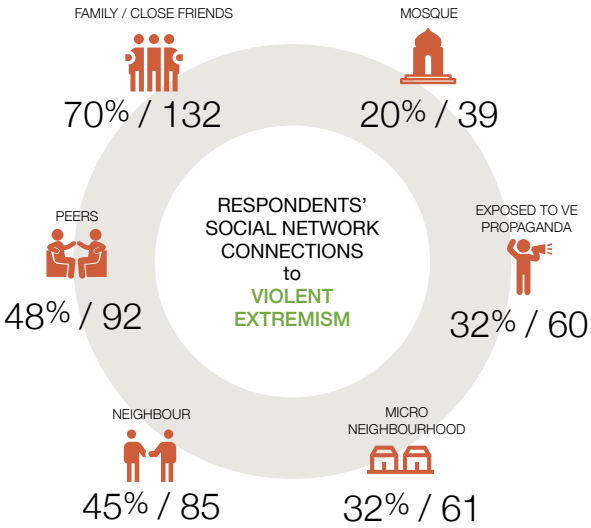
190 at-risk respondents were interviewed. Individuals may be at risk of VE due to a number of factors including macro-structural, personal, and social/network. However, for this study, only individuals who had a clear and existing social network link to VE were included, meaning that every respondent met at least one of the following criteria:

- **has a family member, close peer, or neighbour** who has been involved in VE (sympathisers, recruiters, fighters, etc.);
- **lives in a micro-neighbourhood** with known VE activity;
- **participates in specific spaces** (e.g., schools, religious centres, social centres, etc.) with known VE activity; or
- **has had significant exposure to VE propaganda** (typically through one of the above sources).[10]

Therefore, all the at-risk respondents had one or more social network ties to VE that allowed them to speak knowledgeably about VE in their communities, based on their own experience or the experiences of a first-degree contact in their social network. This criterion does not encompass every individual who is potentially at risk, but it focuses on individuals who are both identifiable and for whom there would be a clear pathway towards VE involvement.

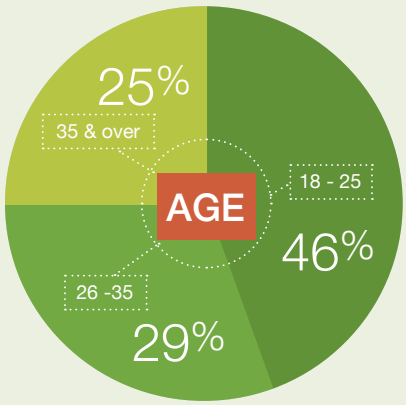
OF THE 190 AT-RISK RESPONDENTS:

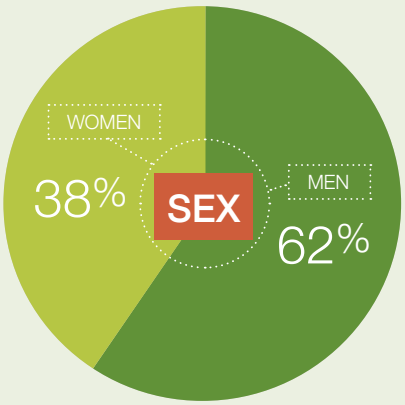
- 70% (132) had a family member or close friend involved with VE, which allowed them to speak in some detail about the experience(s).
- Slightly over a quarter (57) reported that they had a family member (spouse, child, parent, uncle, etc.) involved in VE.
- 14% (27 respondents) reported that they had personally been approached by recruiters.
- 9% (17 respondents) admitted to having actively considered joining a VE group.[11]
- 54% (114) of the at-risk respondents were unemployed or had gained employment from the informal sector. The remainder had small businesses, worked in the transportation sector, volunteered, or worked in the service sector (e.g. cooking, secretarial services, etc.)
- 9% (18) were former gang members.



9 Of the community influencers 6 were female and 17 were male. Ten of them were 34 years old or younger. Eleven of them had direct experiences with VE. Please see *Appendix B* for additional information on the selection of the community influencers.
10 Only two of the respondents exposed to VE propaganda did not have an additional social network tie to VE.
11 It is probable that additional respondents did not report personal interactions with recruiters or their considerations of joining VE organisations out of concern for their own safety and privacy.

Of all the 213 respondents, 46% were 18-25 years old, and 75% of all respondents were 18-35 years old. 38% of the respondents were women. 86% were Muslim.





A NOTE ON GENDER:
Throughout the study, BRICS endeavoured to utilise a gender-aware approach. In addition to ensuring a sizeable representation of women (38% of the sample), four of the six field researchers were women and issues of gender were incorporated into the interviewer guide. Research findings presented in this document refer to or are relevant for both men and women unless otherwise stated.

Respondents came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including:

- Arab
- Bajuni
- Borana
- Chonyi
- Digo
- Duruma
- Giriama
- Kamba
- Kikuyu
- Luhya
- Luo
- Somali
- Swahili
- Taita

Respondents were selected through **convenience and snowball sampling**. The sample is not representative of the entire population of these counties, and there are known biases *(see Appendix B: Identifying and Mitigating Bias)*. For example, an overwhelming number of respondents come from **lower socio-economic backgrounds**, and only ten of the at-risk respondents had enrolled in a university. As a result, this study was unable to include the experiences of populations such as university students and those with higher socio-economic backgrounds.

A NOTE ON NUMBERS:
Respondents were asked about their knowledge and experience with VE, both personally and within their social networks. Therefore, when a respondent spoke of, for example, economic issues being a driver of VE, they could have been referring to themselves, to a single acquaintance, or to multiple other individuals who they knew were involved with VE. The numbers referenced in this paper refer to the number of respondents who mention a particular topic or experience during an interview and not the absolute number of individuals who experienced a particular topic.[12] Therefore, the numbers should be viewed only in a comparative manner. Additionally, the interviews were semi-structured and the actual discussions were guided by both the respondents' individual situations as well as their openness to discussing particular subjects. As a result, not all the respondents discussed every topic described in the study.

12 For example, if a respondent mentioned that approximately one dozen of his friends had been recruited into VE because of economic factors, this would count as one respondent mentioning that economic factors are drivers of VE.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM & SOCIAL NETWORKS

Because this study examined individuals who have social network connections to VE - through family members, friends, neighbours, peers, and social spaces - **the relationship between VE and social ties came through clearly with respect to both risk and resilience**. These are discussed further throughout the report, but key findings relating to social networks include:

Individuals are frequently radicalised and recruited by family members or friends. The radicalisation process often **damages their relationships with their family and friends** who do not sympathise with VE. For example, youth being radicalised will criticise their parents and siblings for not being 'properly' observant or even accuse them of practicing witchcraft, driving a wedge within the family.

Conversely, **friends and particularly family can also play a strong role in encouraging disengagement from VE**. Mothers especially have the potential to influence their children. Several respondents mentioned it was solely due to a mother's intervention or influence that her child did not join Al-Shabaab. Respondents highlighted the importance of parents being aware of what is going on in their children's lives and playing an active role.

Extremely **small social networks seem to facilitate radicalisation and recruitment**; recruiters are able to capitalise on the failure of an individual's social network to provide adequate emotional, financial, and economic support, and to utilise VE networks to fill these gaps *(see Socially Isolated pathway below)*. For example, orphans, ex-gang members, and recent converts to radical Islam were described as particularly susceptible to VE due to their presumably smaller social networks.

Violent extremism creates distrust in affected communities, straining or breaking apart existing social ties. Individuals with family members who joined or thought of joining VEOs frequently spoke of being stigmatised within their communities and even by their own families. This was due to the fear of attracting the unwanted attention of both violent extremists and the security forces.[13] One respondent described the situation his neighbour had created when he left to join Al-Shabaab:

> He left behind a wife and two very young boys who seem to be struggling to survive; the two boys are always in worn-out clothes and their mother seems stressed and depressed. He added that neighbours are aware of what they are going through, but they are scared to get close to them and offer assistance out of fear that a security agent could be watching the family. He said it breaks his heart to see the little boys suffering, but he cannot get close and offer help as he might get into trouble for that (Male, Kilifi, 18-25).

Some respondents reported **moving of the affected families to new locations**, including to different counties, in order to escape the stigma. **Individuals who remain behind, particularly wives, mothers, and children struggle both financially and personally.** Support groups and counselling with other women whose families had been recruited help them to realise that they are not alone and to stop blaming themselves.

Building and strengthening social networks can help to address some of the most common drivers of VE:

- Gaining social capital to find economic opportunities.
- Having reliable social support during the difficult times.
- Having a feeling of belonging and community.
- Being exposed to other viewpoints that help to counter VE narratives and recruitment and to see alternative options to VE.

Carefully planned interventions that build and strengthen social networks, including family-based interventions,[14] are reported to have had positive effects for some at-risk individuals and their communities, such as the support groups and counselling described above. Mentorship programmes suggest alternative pathways for youth and help to provide them with role models who were able to overcome similar circumstances. Increase in community awareness regarding VE also has the potential to build empathy for, rather than distrust of families affected by VE. In addition, social activities such as football clubs can have positive impacts on youth who are considering joining VE, by providing positive, alternative social engagements.

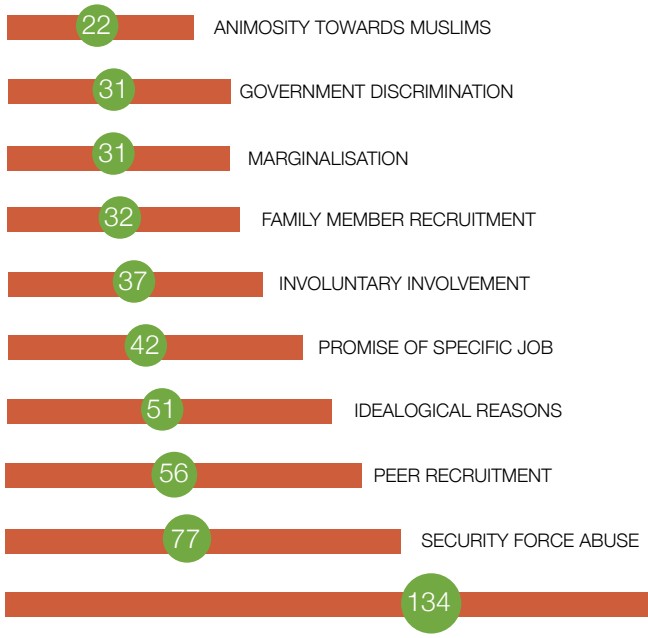
13 See also research by: Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance and International Alert (2016). *We Don't Trust Anyone: Strengthening Relationships as the Key to Reducing Violent Extremism in Kenya.*

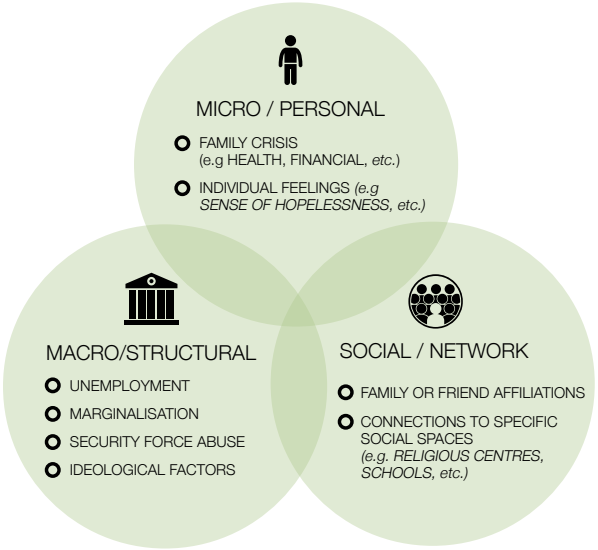
14 See also research by: Edit Schlaffer and Ulrich Kropiunigg (2015). "Can Mothers Challenge Extremism?" Women without Borders; Julia Ebner, Dr Yassine Souidi, and Saeida Rouass (2016). *FATE: Engaging Families to Counter Violent Extremism in North Africa*: *Opportunities in North Africa.* Quilliam Foundation; Global Counterterrorism Forum (2016). *The Role of Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Strategic Recommendations and Programming Options.*

DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

As discussed above, there are a number of VE drivers - macro-structural, personal and social[15]- and often it is the interaction of several drivers that leads to radicalisation or recruitment, rather than a single driver acting in isolation. For example, as seen in the diagram below, an individual may be unemployed, but may not be vulnerable to VE until there is an additional driver, such as a family crisis or a social network link to VE recruiters.

DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM CITED BY RESPONDENTS





NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS MENTIONING A DRIVER

The respondents noted a variety of macro-structural, personal, and social drivers leading to VE. Some of the most frequent include:

1. **Poverty and a lack of sustainable livelihoods** to provide for themselves and/or their family, is a widespread problem and was the most common driver that was provided as an explanation for joining or sympathising with VE (mentioned by 134 respondents). While some respondents mentioned this as a general overall driver, 42 respondents mentioned recruiters promising specific jobs as a recruitment tactic. Eight respondents mentioned the inability to obtain national identity cards as reasons to travel abroad to find employment and possibly join VEOs.[16]

   Potential recruits are often given money to address the individualised financial needs, such as medical bills or food, and are promised future financial support for their families (e.g. sending home remittances from their Al-Shabaab salaries, continued support for their families if they are killed, etc.). Beyond those who leave for Al-Shabaab camps, individuals are also paid for local support activities including weapons and people transportation, providing information, sharing VE propaganda, and managing local financial payments. Recruiters are also paid commission for recruiting individuals.

2. Respondents highlighted **security force abuses** (77), many of which they believed to be connected to counter-terrorism activities, as regular and frequent occurrences in their communities.[17] These include unexplained detentions, hard-handed policing tactics, and extra-judicial killings and disappearances believed to be committed by security forces.

15 For further discussions of drivers of VE see: Peter Romaniuk (2016). *Summary Report: Rigorous literature review of the drivers of radicalization and extremism in Eastern Africa.* GCCS; Harriet Allan, et al (2015). *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review,* RUSI.

16 This number may have been higher had more interviews been conducted in Garissa where other BRICS research has identified VE recruiters using difficulties in obtaining national identity cards as a recruitment tactic.

17 See also research by: International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Kenya Human Rights Commission (2017). *Kenya's Scorecard on Security and Justice: Broken Promises and Unfinished Business;* Search for Common Ground (2017). *INUKA! Community-Led Security Approaches to Violent Extremism*, with Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance, Muslims for Human Rights, Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative .

Although security force abuses predominately directly affect men, at-risk female respondents also reported the indirect impact that security force abuses experienced by male family members or friends had on their own vulnerability to VE. Such community-security relations result in individuals sympathising with VEOs - finding a common antagonist in the Kenyan government - and wanting an outlet for revenge. Additionally, residents are hesitant to report suspected VE activity to security forces and believe that information they share with them may not be treated anonymously. Furthermore, recruiters suggest to young men that they can escape arrest and harassment from police in Somalia and live a better life, in addition to gaining opportunities for revenge in the future.

3 The importance of **ideological drivers** (mentioned by 51 respondents) varies from individual to individual - for some it is a primary driver (e.g. to protect Muslims from non-Muslim threats) and for others it is not a driver or is secondary to other drivers.[18] Ideological drivers, often communicated in one-on-one conversations, include the need to instate an Islamic government *(khilafa)*, to atone for past individual crimes, to attain religious purity or rewards in the afterlife, or requisites to lead what they believe is a devout religious life.

4 As described above, **social networks** also play an important role in VE involvement. Individuals who have first-or second-degree connections to VE networks through family and friends have facilitated connections to recruiters. Peers and family members were indicated to be engaged in recruitment by 56 and 32 respondents, respectively.

5 37 respondents also reported individuals being **involuntarily** pressed into joining a VEO - for example being transported to Somalia for a job and then being forced or pressured to participate in VE activities. While some of these reports are credible, it is also likely that some report their involuntarily involvement to avoid either legal or social repercussions.

> One respondent shared the following story:
>
> He and his friends who needed money were approached by foreigners from the Middle East that offered them employment in the Gulf as manual labourers and gave them an advance of their salaries to provide to their families. The respondent mentioned that he was suspicious as they were never required to obtain a passport or employment contract, but decided to go along with them anyway. However, he escaped from the group when he realised that they were not going to the airport. He reported that he later found out that his friends were taken to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab where three of them are still alive and the others had been killed (Male, Nairobi, 26-34).

6 Additionally, respondents cited **socio-economic marginalisation of their communities (31), government policies or actions (31), and perceived animosity towards Muslims (22)** as reasons to join VE groups.

7 Finally, respondents mentioned **personal drivers**, such as idleness, boredom, a lack of purpose, and a sense of hopelessness that led them to be attracted to VE. One respondent who lived with his elder brother after his parents had died when he was young, described his experience:

> When his brother got married, the wife started mistreating him, and his brother asked him to leave his house. Without a relative to pay his school fees he had to drop out of school. Out of frustration he considered joining Al-Shabaab as he felt it was better for him to die than to stay hopeless and not be able to help other suffering family members. He started asking around about how people travelled to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab, but fortunately met a young man who talked him out of it and helped him to find a job. He is now able to support extended family with his earnings (Male, Isiolo, 18-25).

18 See also research by: John C. Amble & Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens (2014). "Jihadist Radicalization in East Africa: Two Case Studies," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37:6, 523-540.

RADICALISATION & RECRUITMENT

Almost all VE radicalisation and recruitment identified during the study involved **Al-Shabaab**, which is likely a result both of its prominence in Kenya and the sampling strategy.

From the few cases of Daesh activity identified during the study, it seems that Daesh is more likely to target individuals who are educated, middle-class professionals, who were not the target of this study. However, more research is needed to draw conclusions about Daesh activity, including its online component. Unless otherwise stated, **all references in this report to VEOs or VE activity refer to Al-Shabaab**.

The majority of the recruitment stories told to researchers occurred from approximately 2012 to the present, with the most recent occurring in May 2018. **Key changes appear to be a drop in radicalisation and recruitment happening online due to surveillance concerns.** Additionally, it appears that an increasing number of individuals are involved in VE through the promise of employment whether knowingly or unknowingly connected to VE.

RECRUITMENT **STRATEGIES**

Recruitment of both men and women typically happened in-person rather than online, though respondents report continued use of some closed social media groups and messaging. Respondents suggested that Daesh is more active in social media than Al-Shabaab. However, more research is needed to understand the role the internet and social media currently play in the VE space.[19] Recruiters could be known to the individual either as a first-degree acquaintance or via their social network. However, unknown recruiters were also reported to be active in communities.

It was not uncommon for **multiple individuals to be involved in the radicalisation and recruitment process and to have specialised roles in the process** (e.g. identify potential targets, engage in radicalisation, transport people, engage in financial transactions, train new recruits, etc.).[20]

Recruiters often use two key strategies. First, they use **highly personalised and individually tailored** strategies to appeal to an individual's particular circumstances that might attract them to sympathise with or actively support VE. For example, they might bail a potential recruit out of jail or help a potential recruit to obtain medicine for a family member. Second, recruiters are **strategically patient** in assessing who, when, and how to engage, a process that can take anywhere from a month to a year.

RECRUITMENT **NARRATIVES**

Recruiters use a number of both **global and local narratives** in the radicalisation and recruitment process. Global narratives reference injustices towards Muslims in places such as Myanmar and Palestine, and purposeful Western destabilisation in areas such as Iraq and Somalia. Local narratives include the marginalisation of the Muslim community, particularly on the Coast, lack of access to identity cards,[21] the Masjid Musa raid, and the need to be governed by an Islamic government *(khilafa)*. In particular, videos of Aboud Rogo preaching are widely viewed across the six counties studied.

NARRATIVES ENCOUNTERED INCLUDED:

RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES

- Islam is under attack (most frequent narrative).
  - Non-Islamic governments are attacking Muslims.
  - Videos shown of Muslims being killed in Palestine, Syria, and Somalia.
  - Non-believers are killing innocent people and you must fight for your religion.

19 See also research by: Anisa Harrasy and Zahed Amanullah (2018). *Between Two Extremes: Responding to Islamist and Tribalist Messaging Online in Kenya During the 2017 Elections.* Institute of Strategic Dialogue; PeaceTech Lab (2018). *Youth and Radicalisation in Mombasa, Kenya: A Lexicon of Violent Extremist Language on Social Media.*

20 See also research by: Fathima Badurdeen (2018). "Women and Recruitment in the Al-Shabaab Network: Stories of Women Being Recruited by Women Recruiters in the Coastal Region of Kenya." *African Review Special Issue: Gender and Violent Extremism*.

21 Primarily but not exclusively in Garissa and Isiolo.

- *Jihad* is a religious obligation. Fight for your religion.
  - *Jihad* is in Somalia.
  - If you cannot go to the Middle East, you can go to Somalia. If you cannot go to Somalia to fight, go to Boni Forest.
  - Do not be in school when your brothers are in Somalia being killed.
- It is *halal* to kill non-Muslims. Non-believers should be beaten until they have accepted Islam or are killed.
- Women's roles are to support and marry the fighters.
- Comparisons of Al-Shabaab fighters to companions of Mohammed (particularly Ali & Hamza) who died defending Islam.
- Dead fighters are martyrs (depicted by videos).

SOCIO-POLITICAL NARRATIVES

- Marginalisation by the government.
  - The community has been marginalised and victimised by the government. Outsiders are brought in to take jobs. The community is not provided any services or education. Come fight for your community.
  - Your land is taken, you are harassed and killed by the police, employment opportunities are taken by outsiders - go train in Somalia and come back and fight for your rights.
  - Come fight to protect innocent people victimised by the government
- The government is out to get Muslims.
  - The government is corrupt and has ill intentions against Muslims.
  - Only Muslims are killed by the police. Have you ever seen a Christian killed by the police?
  - The government kills innocent people and there must be revenge.
  - The police defiled Masjid Musa and there must be revenge.
  - Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) troops must be killed (depicted by videos).
- If you come to Somalia, you will not be harassed by the police.
- Voting is forbidden.
- Once you fight you will have status and a sense of belonging and identity.

ECONOMIC NARRATIVES

- Earn an income while also fighting *jihad*.
  - In Isiolo, prospective recruits were promised KSh 60,000 with KSh 10,000 given before leaving for Somalia.
  - Promises of earning KSh 100,000/month.[22]
  - If you fight, you will earn money upfront and also be given young brides.
  - You will earn more money fighting than hustling.
- Promise of employment.
- You were promised jobs after the 2017 elections, but none have materialised. You can work in Somalia.
- Without an ID card, it is easier to work in Somalia than Kenya.

22 KSh 100,000 is approximately $985 or £765.

RECRUITMENT **PATHWAYS**

Additionally, the study identified **multiple pathways to radicalisation and recruitment** depending on an individual's particular circumstances (e.g. gender, economic situation, initial degree of religiosity, family situation, history of interactions with the government and security forces, etc.).

Pathways to VE are highly personal in terms of individual circumstances, the motivating drivers, interactions with recruiters, and ultimate involvement with VE. However, **eight common "pathways" emerged** from the research. Though there is variation for each individual, these pathways are not necessarily linear and an individual may fit into or experience elements of more than one pathway.

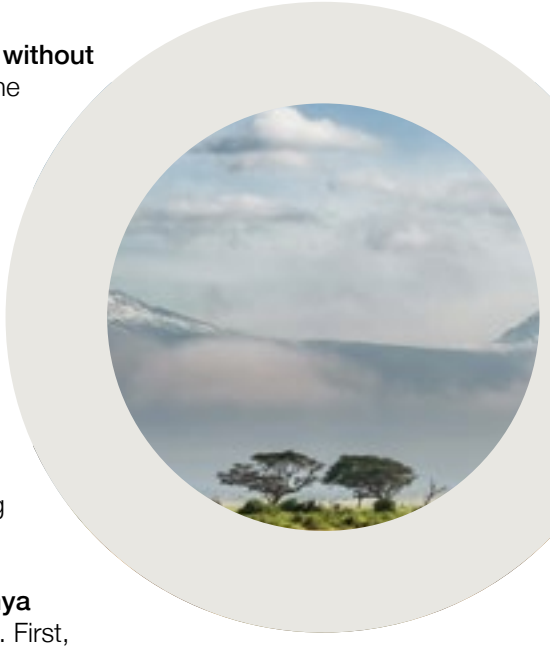
PATHWAY	PROFILE	RADICALISATION & RECRUITMENT
Thwarted providers	• Typically young men (16-35 years old) trying to provide for a family (parents, spouse, children) • Occasionally young women • Have tried unsuccessfully to find a livelihood source • Often under immense pressure to obtain income	• Identified through a variety of social spaces (maskanis, mosques, workshops, neighbourhoods, etc.) • Offered individually tailored support by recruiter (advice, financial assistance, etc.) • Promised a job in Somalia, Kenya, or the Middle East • Frequently given a cash advance to provide for their family • If non-Muslim, will likely be asked to convert to Islam • Unlikely to be aware of VE connection, if so, typically only close to when they are about to leave
Regular mosque attenders	• Mostly men • May be a new convert or already very observant	• Invited to participate in private discussions about the sermon or other religious topics with a recruiter • Conversations increasingly include VE narratives (religious and socio-political) • Offered individually tailored support • Individuals may become more withdrawn from family members they do not feel are practicing religion in the same manner as advocated by VEOs

PATHWAY	PROFILE	RADICALISATION & RECRUITMENT PROCESS
 Family Reunification	• Typically, the wives, sisters, and daughters of male family members who have already joined VE • Often not radicalised themselves • Typically not aware of their male family member's VE involvement until after he left • Often left in difficult financial situations when their male relative leaves	• Particularly wives and mothers are desperate to find out information or be reunited with the male family member • Often go in search of a recruiter • May be asked to gather information or provide other services for VEOs in exchange for information about their relative or facilitation in being reconnected
 Security-abuse victims	• They or their family have been victims of security abuse • Typically young men • Angry and looking for opportunities for revenge	• Sympathise with VE narratives • Often go in search of a recruiter • Higher likelihood for involvement in violence
 Socially isolated / In search of belonging	• Have extremely limited social networks • Including, but not limited to, orphans, recent ex-gang members, new converts, individuals with poor or no family relations, etc.	• Identified by recruiter who becomes their consistent friend and social support by filling the gaps in their life • Offered individually tailored support • Over time is brought into VE social networks

PATHWAY	PROFILE	RADICALISATION & RECRUITMENT PROCESS
 In search of VE	• Men and women • Has already been exposed to VE narratives • Attracted to VE due to a variety of factors (e.g. concerns over government and/or historical injustices; personal grievances; interest in VE religious interpretations, etc.) and want to learn more about VE	• May find a recruiter themselves or be found by a recruiter who knows them • Encouraged that their views of the world are correct and fit into VE narratives • Typically a short recruitment period
 Marriage & Support	• Typically, women who have male family members who have already left to join a VEO • Radicalised alongside or through family members	• Provide support to VEOs in their own communities or travel to VEO camps • May marry a male supporter (particularly a fighter) and/or provide support through gathering information, transporting weapons or money, domestic support of camps, etc. • Typically supported by at least some family members in this decision
 Young madrassa students	• Boys and girls ≈ 6-15 years old • Attend a madrassa led by VE sympathisers or participants	• Exposed to VE narratives (religious, anti-government, etc.) during classes or after classes in small groups deemed to be most open to VE narratives • Boys may also be taught martial arts or other physical activities • Sometimes sent away under the guise of a scholarship at a distant school

WHO IS **AT RISK?**

Respondents described **boys and male youth approximately 15-35 years old without a livelihood source** as having the highest risk level. However, recent converts, the wives of recruits, and educated individuals (finishing Form 4) who had not found employment were also mentioned.



There is a common community perception that **gang members** are particularly at risk of VE recruitment, especially since they are already engaged in violent activity.[23] Gang members experience many of the macro-drivers of VE - experiences with security force abuse, social marginalisation, and lack of sustainable livelihoods - and the respondents reported multiple accounts of gang members who had left for Somalia to join Al-Shabaab. However, this study **has not found evidence of wide-spread VE recruitment efforts specifically targeting gangs**, though individual members may be targeted for recruitment. Further in-depth research on gangs is needed to better understand the relationship to VE, especially given the number and diversity of gangs existing in Kenya.

Some evidence suggests that **individuals who have recently left gangs in Kenya are at increased risk of radicalisation and/or recruitment** for two key reasons. First, the ex-gang members have lost their communities within the gangs and are distrusted by the broader community, making them vulnerable to recruiters. Additionally, recruiters suggest that ex-gang members can atone for their criminal pasts by joining VEOs.

A handful of interviews in Kilifi and Mombasa indicate that there may be a recent link between **drug use** and recruitment, but more research is needed to understand if and what the link is between drugs and VE.

TRANS**REGIONAL**

VE networks are **transregional in nature**[24] and two main connections were identified in the study. First, there is a coastal VE network running from Somalia to at least Tanzania. In particular, there are family, ethnic, and cultural connections between **Kwale, Mombasa, and Tanga in Tanzania** with a flow of ideas and people between these locations. Additionally, respondents reported that Kenyan **Al-Shabaab** members who left Somalia and needed a place to "lie low" would travel to Tanga. Secondly, there are reported connections between **Garissa and Uganda** with youth from Garissa reportedly being radicalised at universities in Uganda. Further research is needed to better understand these connections.

23 See also research by: Jillian Keenan (2016). "Dead Man's Market and the boy gangs of Niger." *Foreign Policy.*
24 See also research by: Intergovernmental Authority on Development (2016). *Al-Shabaab as a Transnational Security Threat;* and International Crisis Group (2018). *Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa.*

GENDER & VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Throughout the report, the research findings have integrated and highlighted how VE affects women, men, girls, and boys differently. However, there are several gender-specific findings related to at-risk women and men and their vulnerability to recruitment worth emphasising and speaking to specifically in this section of the report.

AT-RISK **WOMEN**

Women play a variety of roles in VE in East Africa, including sympathisers, supporters, recruiters, informants, transporters for money and weapons, and caregivers to children (including orphans) and relatives connected to VE.[25]

These roles can also be justified by VE narratives of **Islamic femininity**. One respondent, who was a student for a decade in Ibrahim Rogo's madrassa, discussed being taught as a girl that women's roles once they went to Somalia are to help the *mujahid* when they were injured, get married to them, and cook for them. She noted that references were made from the prophet's time. She added, "what gave us hope and led us to agree to all this was that we would be rewarded since we were practicing what our religion says and expects from us." (Female, Kilifi, 26-34).

Respondents provided accounts of **both male and female recruiters attempting to radicalise and/or recruit women**, though female recruiters appear more common.[26] There are a handful of accounts of women disappearing from their communities and later coming back to recruit other women. More research is needed to better understand women's involvement with VE.

While VE affects communities at large, **women seem disproportionately affected economically, emotionally, and socially.**[27] As described above, the wives and mothers of Al-Shabaab members are often stigmatised and isolated by their local communities and even their families, including the husband's family if they fault the wife for not stopping their son or grandchildren from joining VE. One respondent described her stepson who went missing three years ago, believed to have joined **Al-Shabaab**: She had not noticed any changes in him, even though she was closer to her stepson than anyone else. Her husband's family discriminated against her saying that she had something to do with the disappearance. They were sure she had led him into extremism because they were so close, and she had to separate from her husband due to this (Female, Mombasa, 35-44).

AT-RISK **MEN**

Masculinity and expectations of manhood played major roles in men's involvement with VE. First, young men expressed a **pressure to provide for themselves and their families**, especially, but not only, if they are the oldest male in the household. In particular, respondents cited that their families had paid for their school fees and now they need to support their families in return. These economic pressures make them susceptible to promises of employment by VEOs *(see Thwarted Provider pathway above)*.

Second, several respondents expressed that joining VE is a way to **establish their identities** and a way in which they can lead more honourable lives, fighting for a greater cause and **gaining greater respect** both for themselves and from family and peers.

Third, VE is seen as a way of **gaining agency in difficult circumstances**. In particular, the 2014 **Masjid Musa raid** was a formative event for young boys and men from Majengo and it still is quite influential in shaping their worldviews. Respondents from the area indicate that it led to VE recruitment and cite the desire to **defend their communities** from a similar event (e.g. protect women, the mosque, etc.).

One respondent narrated that he witnessed the police raid of the mosque: "they tainted a holy place of worship and cannot be forgiven. Some of them entered the mosque drunk. Male police officers followed our women in the mosque and beat them up when they should have used female police officers" (Male, Mombasa, 26-34). As a result, some of his friends left for Somalia, a decision, which in light of the raid on Masjid Musa, he understands. Whether or not the accusations are true, it is as important that community members believe them to be the case.

Finally, several young men also mentioned the **allure of obtaining and being able to use weapons** once they joined **Al-Shabaab**. One young man (Mombasa, 18-25) who had thought of joining Al-Shabaab stated that, in addition to defending his religion, he was attracted to being able to use a machine gun, which would also enable him to protect his home if the police raided it. While guns may be tied to desires to defend oneself and community, respondents also indicated that merely being able to use guns is an attraction in and of itself.

25 See also research by: Irene Ndung'u and Uyo Salifu (2017). *Role of women in Violent Extremism in Kenya*. Institute for Security Studies.
26 See also research by: Fathima Badurdeen (2018). "Women and Recruitment in the Al-Shabaab Network: Stories of Women Being Recruited by Women Recruiters in the Coastal Region of Kenya." *African Review Special Issue: Gender and Violent Extremism;* Halimu Shauri (2018). "Impact of Violent Extremism and Recruitment of Spouses on Widows in the Coastal Region of Kenya." *African Review Special Issue: Gender and Violent Extremism;* and Center for Global Cooperative Security and Hedayah (2016). *A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism.* Ed. Fink et al.
27 See also research by: Hassan Mwakimoko (2018). "Coastal Muslim Women in the Coast of Kenya: Narrating Radicalisation, Gender, Violence and Extremism." *African Review Special Issue: Gender and Violent Extremism.*

PREVENTING & COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

LEAVING **VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

Of the individuals who were radicalised by **Al-Shabaab**, respondents reported that some were able to **disengage** before leaving their communities. **Families** appear to be the most important reason that individuals who were radicalised or in the process of being radicalised choose not to follow through.

Mothers play a significant role in encouraging their children to leave VE. Several respondents described children wanting to join VE, but their mothers either intervened to prevent them from leaving or the sons decided not to go because they knew it would cause their mothers pain.

Individuals who leave VE once in Somalia do so because of the intervention of a family member; unfulfilled promises, often financial, by recruiters; and general hardships. Others reported the recruits become disenchanted when they are in Somalia once they come to the conclusion that they are not fighting a religious war, but rather killing other Muslims and engaging in clan-based disputes.

Returnees who abandon VE often remain extremely socially isolated because of their known past VE activities.

P/CVE **INTERVENTIONS**

Many existing P/CVE activities do not sufficiently target at-risk individuals or groups[28] - either targeting participants through overly broad demographic criteria or not working in the geographic areas most affected by VE - which limits their impact. **There are some communities with active VE recruitment that are not reached by CSOs and P/CVE interventions.** Most respondents could not name a CSO working in the P/CVE space in their communities.

Areas with little or no CSO engagement in the field, include, but are not limited to:

- **Garissa:** Dadaab, Fafi, and Ijara
- **Kilifi:** Kanamai, Kikambala, Malindi, and Mtwapa
- **Kwale:** Bongwe, Lunga Lunga, Milalani, Ng'ombeni, Ramisi, Tiwi, and interior villages
- **Mombasa:** Kisauni and parts of Likoni

Any P/CVE interventions that CSOs engage in must ensure that they **offer transparency, durability, and reliability to the participants** both in terms of the scope of the programme activities and the anticipated duration and frequency. Failure to do so results in programme attrition and also **erodes trust between CSOs and affected communities**. Some participants become jaded, believing that the CSOs are there to serve the desires of the international development partners in order to gain funding rather than the needs of the community. Additionally, failed promises by CSOs provide further recruitment narratives for recruiters. As one respondent described, "CSOs come and go, but recruiters are always present."

While there is some scepticism towards CSOs, respondents did report **positive impacts from engaging in CSO programmes**. For example, two mothers reported that as a result of P/CVE awareness raising programmes they were able to spot signs of radicalisation in their sons and take them to CSOs where they were successfully persuaded not to join VE.

Respondents report an intergenerational gap between youth and their elders,[29] particularly in Kwale and Mombasa. This suggests that P/CVE efforts need to work within horizontal peer networks and carefully asses which trusted leaders have influence with at-risk youth, while also acknowledging that key influencers may work outside formal organisational structures.

28 See also research by: James Khalil and Martine Zeuthen (2016). *Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation,* Royal United Services Institute.

29 See also research by: Olivia Russell. (2017). *Meet Me at the Maskani: A Mapping of Influencers, Networks, and Communication Channels in Kenya and Tanzania.* Search for Common Ground; and Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance and International Alert (2016). *We Don't Trust Anyone: Strengthening Relationships as the Key to Reducing Violent Extremism in Kenya*.

For example, there are numerous **grassroots interventions** being conducted, without any external funding, by local community members who have the trust of and access to truly at-risk individuals. Unlike CSOs, community members know that the grassroots initiatives do not run the risk of leaving due to changes in funding. Because of the stigma and distrust associated with VE connections it can be necessary to work through local grassroots leaders who can positively influence and mobilise at-risk individuals.

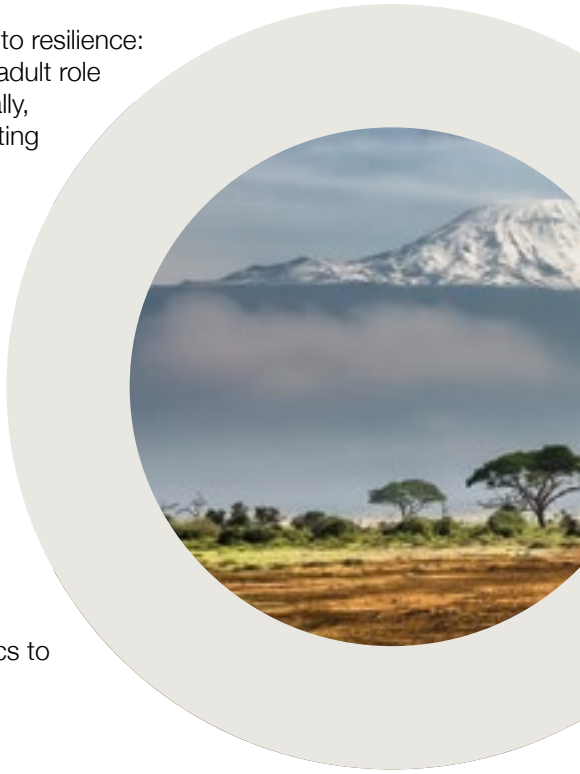
Several respondents mentioned that **government involvement has positive impacts on the community**, for example, by increasing the physical security presence which is seen and trusted by local communities. Additionally, police have engaged in activities with local leaders, CSOs, and citizens to better understand community dynamics and share important information on VE. Implementation of the National and Mombasa CVE Action Plans provided guidance and strategies regarding which level of government deals with VE.

P/CVE interventions should consider how their activities can **work to expand at-risk individuals' social networks**, for example, through mentorship or counselling. Such interventions could provide participants with: the knowledge that others are experiencing similar life circumstances; a broader social support network; and additional social capital to learn about and access opportunities.

Radicalisation and recruitment of individuals can leave significant psychological effects on their family members, with many isolated and stigmatised. Both men and women emphasised the **need for psychosocial support**, including trauma counselling. In particular, counselling enabled participants to realise that they are not alone and feel less guilty and stigmatised in their communities. However, such programming must be carried out carefully and consistently to prevent causing further harm.

Respondents emphasised the need for programmes leading to **income generating livelihoods** in order to address the economic drivers of VE.

Mentorship programmes provide youth with multiple benefits that contribute to resilience: feeling valued by others; engaging in positive relationships with adults; having adult role models from similar backgrounds who were successful (personally, educationally, financially); seeing alternative possibilities outside of their communities; generating new ambitions; and engaging with other youth outside of their immediate neighbourhood.



30 of the respondents pointed specifically to the **importance of religious knowledge as a source of resilience to VE** and the need to be able to have both religious knowledge and critical thinking skills in order to question and push back on the narratives extremists are using.[30] One young man who had many friends join **Al-Shabaab** attributed his resilience to talking to people about *jihad*, including the recruiters themselves. When the recruiters could not answer some of his questions, he described their religious interpretations as being "as fake as their mission in Somalia," adding "I did my research" (Male, Kilifi, 18-25).

Additionally, based on respondent feedback, **religious leaders need to be further educated, empowered, and prepared to discuss issues related to ideological narratives of VE** in order to not cede the discourse on these topics to extremists.

30 See also research by: United Nations Development Programme (2017). *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The below recommendations build on the research presented herein and wider learnings from nearly three years of BRICS research and programming.

- Recommendations for the Government of Kenya:
  - **Consult individuals and communities with first-hand knowledge of VE and incorporate their insights into government efforts**, including CVE County Action Plans and County Integrated Development Plans.
  - **Facilitate mechanisms to link at-risk individuals with existing government and civil society service providers** to improve their access to social services and economic opportunities at the local level.
  - **Review and launch the returnee policy** to ensure that returnees are treated in line with international best practice, and, once processed, are able to access services and programming.
  - **Develop avenues for communities to better access, collaborate, and communicate with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC)** on the coordination of P/CVE and counter-terror activities.

- Recommendations for security actors:
  - **Focus on efforts to develop trust and shared security expectations with local communities** so that necessary counter-terrorism operations will not be a driver for future VE activity and will not damage ongoing P/CVE interventions. Police should develop additional communication strategies to appropriately inform communities about security events and concerns.
  - **Create a trusted system of VE reporting** whereby communities can report confirmed or suspected cases of VE activity while maintaining their confidentiality.
  - **Develop a learning programme to share lessons learned from individual local police stations** in community engagement and trust building.
  - **Be open to collaborating with reputable researchers** so the community and public can understand the challenges police face.
  - **Collaborate with communities and CSOs to address perceptions related to security forces.** As described throughout this report, community perceptions related to security forces can further perpetuate recruitment narratives. Security forces themselves may have different perceptions and understandings to those of the community, therefore efforts should be made to open dialogue between communities and security forces to share and acknowledge different perceptions and better communicate about how to address these perceptions.

- Recommendations for civil society/practitioners:
  - **Use a social network approach as a framework for P/CVE programming and research.** The approach can identify marginalised at-risk individuals and groups that have clear pathways towards VE involvement, and allows for more focused and impactful P/CVE interventions. BRICS recognises that this approach has limitations, and encourages the development of different approaches to identify other at-risk groups not reached in this research.
  - **Target P/CVE interventions so that they reach at-risk beneficiaries by working with individuals and groups within the community who not only have access to these at-risk individuals**, but are also trusted and respected by them. These may not be elders or traditional leaders.
  - **Explicitly include women and girls.** Recognise and understand the gendered nature of VE and the differential impact of VE on women, girls, men, and boys by consulting with women and girls as well as men and boys and design interventions that address their respective needs, capacities, and contexts.
  - **Build the trust, capacity, and networks of local influencers to positively impact at-risk groups.** Seek to identify community members and groups that have access to and influence with individuals and groups that have first-degree connections to VE. Facilitate connections, P/CVE knowledge building and space for collective action and localised decision-making.

- **Ensure transparency, durability, and reliability to the programme participants** both in terms of the scope of the programme activities and the anticipated duration and frequency in order to maintain trust between CSOs and affected communities. If any changes occur, communicate them in a timely manner to the participants so that they are engaged in the process and do not feel as though they have been abandoned or misled.
- **Undertake regular external programme reviews** that involve and consult at-risk groups, including those not reached by the programme to understand why they are not participating, and modify programming accordingly. Conducting these reviews will help the programme continually adapt and be conflict-and gender-sensitive.
- **Include interventions that work to expand and strengthen at-risk individuals' social networks** to provide them with: the knowledge that others are experiencing similar life circumstances; a broader social support network; and additional social capital to learn about and access opportunities, particularly related to livelihoods.
- **Strengthen the role of families and local level community security actors in detecting signs of radicalisation** and the appropriate actions to then take, keeping in mind 'do no harm' principles.
- **Recognise that women are disproportionately affected by VE** and develop programmes offering psychosocial support and trauma counselling; education; sensitisation about their legal rights; and livelihoods support.
- **Develop outreach with boys and young men** to discuss masculinity, identity, and role models, including psychosocial and trauma counselling programmes.
- **Facilitate engagement between decision makers, including those in local government and at-risk youth to enable voices and perspectives to be heard**, thus building the social capital of at-risk groups.
- **Consider awareness raising programmes that present the accounts of returnees** that discuss why they left VE and the impact that their involvement had on their families.

Recommendations for researchers:

- **Adopt participatory research methods with truly at-risk individuals and communities** as both respondents and co-creators in the research design.
- **Broaden research methodologies beyond key informant interviews and focus group discussions.**
- **Ensure an ethical and conflict-sensitive approach to research.** Using researchers from the targeted localities and building trust with respondents will better ensure that local context and conflict dynamics are considered when conducting research.
- **Ensure a gendered approach to research.** Engage both female and male researchers and design research that takes account of how women, men, girls, and boys are affected by VE differently.
- **Aim to better understand the challenges, interests, and experiences of the security forces and police.**
- **Conduct rigorous evaluation of P/CVE interventions** to determine which interventions may be most effective in specific contexts and among specific populations. These evaluations need to be made public and shared with the policy and practitioner community to advance learning and improve programming.
- **Investigate transregional VE connections**, particularly between Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- **Conduct further research on topics**, including radicalisation and recruitment of university students, individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds, gang members, and drug users, further information on the gender dynamics of VE and recruitment, as well as the role of social media in the radicalisation and recruitment process.

- Recommendations for the **international development partners**:
  - **Develop flexible mechanisms that enable support to multiple community P/CVE activities, including very small partners. These should include components on capacity and capability improvement** and offer technical, programme management and design support to small partners with legitimacy and access to at-risk. This often means being willing to work with very small partners that have low organisational capacity. Encourage linkages between these groups and appropriate service providers.
  - **Ensure P/CVE interventions are sustained over longer time periods and incorporate adaptive management** to allow implementers to adjust programming as needed throughout the programming lifecycle, based on ongoing lessons learned.
  - **Pursue specific P/CVE programme interventions,** including mentorships and empowerment for at-risk youth with first-degree connections to VE networks; localised religious knowledge; family-centred prevention; psychosocial support; and awareness raising on the experiences of those who joined and left VE groups. Bring in external technical expertise where necessary to ensure effective approaches.
  - **Pursue efforts to develop trust, communication, and shared security expectations with local communities and security forces.** Both are the biggest stakeholders and potential beneficiaries from P/CVE initiatives.
  - **Consider requiring evidence of the inclusion of at-risk communities in the design** and implementation of interventions.
  - **Incorporate P/CVE outcomes and impacts in the design and evaluation of future security, livelihoods, and employment programmes** in Kenya to enable learning and programme development.
  - **Ensure all P/CVE programme evaluations are made public** to enable learning, and better interventions in the long term.
  - **Coordinate between international development partners and governments to develop regional and cross-border P/CVE programmes** with Tanzania, Uganda, and Somalia.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

At-risk

At-risk individuals are those who are susceptible to radicalisation and/or recruitment by violent extremist groups due to macro-structural factors, personal situations, and/or social network ties. For the purposes of this research, the report targeted its at-risk respondents uniquely based on their social network ties.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

CSOs include all "non-market and non-state organisations outside of the family in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and the not-for-profit media."[31]

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)

P/CVE refers to activities that aim to prevent individuals or groups from adopting violent extremist ideologies, being mobilised, and/or engaging in VE activities or to dissuade them once they have joined. Furthermore, these activities may work to strengthen communities in order to build resilience to VE. These interventions can be on an individual, family, community, or national level. There is no common definition between the use of CVE & PVE. Thus, for this report we use them as one definition (P/CVE) to encompass both terms.

Radicalisation

This is "the process by which people come to adopt beliefs that not only justify violence, but also compel it" and the pathways from thinking to action on the convictions.[32] Radicalisation may take place through several pathways, including self-radicalisation or as part of an ongoing recruitment process into an organised group. It is not necessarily a linear pathway.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the process by which violent extremists or VE groups attract individuals to participate in formal and semi-formal VEOs or VE activities. Recruitment may utilise a number of strategies including invoking specific or general grievances, ideology, increased status, and/or material benefits.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a social system to absorb shock so that the system does not collapse. It may involve adopting new strategies and relationships, or adapting traditional ones, to prevent, mitigate, or recover from violence.[33]

Terrorism

The deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through the unlawful use of force or threat of violence against persons or property (including taking of hostages), in order to provoke a state of terror amongst a population and/or to compel governments or an organisation to change policies or provide financial ransoms.[34]

Violent Extremism (VE)

Violent extremism is material and/or immaterial support for or engagement in violent acts justified by an inflexible and uncompromising ideology.[35] The extent to which individual actors or supporters embrace this ideology may vary.

31 As defined by the 2007–2008 Advisory Group on CSOs and Aid Effectiveness and the OECD's Development Assistance Committee.
32 Randy Borum (2012). *Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories.* Journal of Strategic Security. No. 4: 7-36.
33 Drawing on Lauren Van Metre (2016). *Community Resilience to Violent Extremism in Kenya.* United States Institute of Peace.
34 The United Nations Security Council, despite agreeing various Resolutions on Terrorism (e.g. Resolution 1566 of 2004) has notably refrained from an agreed definition. BRIC's definition was developed from a selection of definitions including those put forward by U.S. Code of Federal Regulations and academic sources.
35 Drawing on Lauren Van Metre (2016). *Community Resilience to Violent Extremism in Kenya*. United States Institute of Peace.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

STUDY **OBJECTIVES**

Given the sensitive and often secretive nature of VE, credible information about radicalisation, recruitment, and intervention is often difficult to obtain. This study addresses the following key questions about why individuals are at risk of radicalisation and recruitment; how radicalisation and recruitment work in practice; and which P/CVE approaches may be most effective.

Key Research Questions

1. **VE Narratives, Radicalisation, & Recruitment**
   - Who is most at risk of radicalisation/recruitment?
   - Who are compelling voices advocating for VE (i.e. negative influencers)?
   - What specific VE narratives are circulated?
   - Which of these VE narratives are compelling and why?
   - Where are these narratives heard (e.g. specific FB groups/websites, individuals, etc.)?
   - Does radicalisation happen in-person or online? Both? In what contexts?
   - Who is involved in radicalisation and/or recruitment?
   - Which organisations (Al-Shabaab, Daesh, etc.)?
   - What are the strategies used to radicalise or recruit individuals?
   - What are the regional linkages of VE (e.g. Uganda, Tanzania, etc.)?
   - Any additional information on "how VE works" in practice?

2. **VE Drivers**
   - What are the primary reasons that the individuals choose to either sympathise with and/or join VE organisation?
   - For example:
     - Economic situation
     - Peer/Family/social networks
     - Interactions with security forces
     - Responses to government actions
     - Ideological agreements
     - Involuntary involvement

3. **P/CVE approaches and strategies**
   - Who are positive influencers in the community?
   - Why & how do people leave VE? Who (if anyone) helps them to do so?
   - How does the community view returnees?
   - What P/CVE programming is happening in the community? What programmes and which organisations?
   - How are these programmes and organisations received?
   - What CVE approaches would be most useful?
   - What are the resources at-risk need the most to avoid being radicalised or recruited?

4. **Gender & VE**
   - Do men and women experience VE or CVE differently? If so, how?

In November 2017, a **month-long pilot study** was conducted to assess both access to at-risk individuals and also to test the methodology. Based on the pilot, the methodology was refined for the current project which ran from March to early July 2018.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

POPULATION OF **STUDY**

The population of study is Kenyan **at-risk adults (18 years old and older)** who are identified by their **existing social network connections to VE**. Criteria for inclusion in the study include one or more of the following:

- **family member** who has been involved in VE (sympathisers, recruiters, fighters, etc.)
- **close peer or neighbour** who has been involved in VE
- lives in a **micro-neighbourhood** with known VE activity
- participates in **specific spaces** (e.g., schools, religious centres, social centres, etc.) with known VE activity
- **significant exposure** to VE propaganda (typically through one of the above sources)

This does not encompass every individual who is potentially at risk, but focuses on those who are both a) identifiable and b) for whom there would be a clear pathway towards VE involvement.

Excluded from the study were individuals under the age of 18 and returnees.

Geographically,the study focused on the Kenyan coastal counties of Kwale, Kilifi, and Mombasa, and more specifically in areas known to have VE activity (i.e. Bongwe, Kisauni, Likoni, Majengo, etc.). Additionally, a smaller number of interviews were conducted in Garissa, Isiolo, and Nairobi in order to provide a comparative perspective on the coastal dynamics and provide an initial basis on which to design future research.

SAMPLING & **RESPONDENT RECRUITMENT**

Many existing studies of VE in Kenya are based on community perceptions or demographically based definitions of VE because of the difficulties in a) **identifying at-risk individuals** and b) **establishing adequate trust** to discuss topic as sensitive as VE.

This research benefitted from connections to the at-risk communities and individuals through the work of BRICS Implementing Partners (IPs), as well as the personal and/or professional ties of the study researchers to the local communities. Due to these existing ties, we believe BRICS researchers were typically seen as trusted individuals within at-risk communities.

Sampling was done through **convenience and snowball sampling** through a variety of entry points (*see below on Identifying and Mitigating Bias)*. In order to reach at-risk respondents, researchers identified multiple community influencers (local facilitators) who are respected individuals within the micro-communities who have direct connections to and trust with at-risk individuals. Community influencers were identified and selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Reside in known VE hotspot areas
- Have extensive knowledge of VE and community dynamics
- Have access to and the trust of at-risk individuals
- Work directly with at-risk individuals to positively influence them against VE involvement and are respected in their communities for this work
- Have good relationships with government chiefs, religious leaders, elders, and other influencers and CSOs in their areas
- Are not deemed to pose a security risk to researchers

The community influencers were also interviewed about VE given their extensive work with at-risk individuals and knowledge of VE in their communities. Additionally, it provided them with first-hand experience of the interview process so that they could adequately describe it to potential at-risk respondents.

Researchers worked with **community influencers** to identify potential research respondents who met the study criteria. Community influencers both reached out to the potential respondents to explain the research study and served as intermediaries to vouch for the trustworthiness of the researchers. This is particularly important given the sensitive nature of the research topic. Additionally, the researchers were able to learn about the potential respondent from the community influencers to ensure that they did not put themselves in danger by meeting with a respondent (e.g. avoiding meeting with an individual who is actively involved in VE, etc.). **Multiple community influencers** were used to access a variety of social networks and to reduce sampling bias. Additionally, researchers used snowball sampling – recommendations from existing respondents on other individuals they knew who might be eligible to participate in the research.

INTERVIEW & **REPORTING PROCESS**

Interviews were conducted by a pair of researchers for a variety of reasons: increasing the safety and security of the researchers; improving the quality of the interview data; and also, reducing interviewer biases in interviewing and reporting. Pairings were tailored based on the gender, age, and locality of the respondent.

The interviews were set-up by community influencers and took place at a mutually agreed upon location *(see below on Research Ethics and Risk Mitigation)*. Interviews were **conducted individually or in small groups of two to three at-risk individuals** if the respondents felt more comfortable meeting together. Additionally, some respondents requested that the community influencer be present during the interview because they trusted the community influencer and did not yet know the researchers. Interviews typically lasted approximately one hour.

Interviews were conducted primarily in Swahili, but also Digo, English, and Somali based on the language(s) the respondent felt most comfortable expressing themselves in. Researchers asked if they could take notes during the interview, though many did not due to the sensitive topic of the research. **No names were recorded.** Immediately after the interview, the researchers completed an electronic **interview report** form detailing the content of the interview. Both researchers contributed to and reviewed the report to ensure completeness and to reduce individual researcher biases.

The reports were submitted electronically and stored through encrypted systems. No interview or respondent data or identifiable information was kept by the researchers and only the Research Director, Research Manager, and Research Analyst/Systems Manager had access to the submitted interview data.

DATA ANALYSIS **& SHARING**

Once collected, the interview data was coded based on topics and themes identified through an inductive basis. The coding allows for significant themes and trends to be identified; for generalisability (e.g. on the basis of location, gender, ethnicity, age, etc.) to be assessed; and to reduce the chance of confirmation bias or overemphasis on a particular set of respondents or researchers' findings.

The researchers debriefed weekly and there were monthly, in-person meetings of the full research team to discuss the research findings and methodology. After the research was completed, the researchers shared the findings with local stakeholders and community members.

DATA ANALYSIS & SHARING

There is inherent risk in studying VE for both the study participants and the researchers due to the nature of topic. However, credible information about VE is critical for designing and conducting effective P/CVE programs to reduce the prevalence of VE in these communities. BRICS takes seriously the responsibility it has for both the research respondents and researchers and follows an ongoing and adaptive approach to **risk mitigation**. Researchers were in daily communication with the Research Manager so that any concerns were addressed immediately. **Researchers held weekly meetings and there were monthly in-person meetings for the entire research team where risk mitigation was discussed.**

Informed consent was a cornerstone of the interview process and happened at two points prior to the interview. First, when the respondent was recruited by the community influencer they were informed about the nature of the interview (e.g. topic, purpose or research, etc.). Second, before the start of the interview, the researchers ensured that the respondents understood that the interview was for research with a goal of informing the design of future P/CVE programming. Respondents were able to skip any question and were able to end the interview at any time.

Expectation management was also an essential component of the pre-interview discussion. Respondents did not receive compensation for their participation in the interview, except for reimbursement for transportation expenses (typically by *boda boda*) if the interview took place outside of their neighbourhood. Additionally, researchers made clear that while the goal of the research is to produce positive change in the respondents' communities there is no guarantee either of programming or of the respondent's inclusion in ongoing or future programmes.

The research strove for the principle of **do no harm**. The conditions of the interview were designed to ensure that the respondent felt as safe and comfortable as possible with respect to location, timing, notetaking and whether the respondent wished to be interviewed alone or with another person present (e.g. another at-risk individual, a support person, or the community influencer). For example, a respondent might have wished to be interviewed in a location outside of their neighbourhood in order to ensure their privacy. Researchers reviewed all the research products to ensure that the identities of the respondents have been protected and adequately anonymised.

The interview questions could be **sensitive and emotional**, particularly for respondents who have been personally affected by VE. Interviews were suspended or terminated upon request of the respondent or if the researcher judged that the interview was causing emotional distress for the respondent. **All of the researchers participated in a weeklong trauma-counselling training and follow-up conducted by professional trauma healing counsellors.** The researchers were not serving in a counselling capacity, however this training provided them with the skills to act professionally and empathetically with difficult and emotional situations. Additionally, in BRICS research meetings, researchers discussed and roleplayed responses to difficult interview scenarios and have on-call access to a professional counsellor for both questions and their own psychosocial support.

BRICS also focused on mitigating risks for the researchers. BRICS has research clearance and active relationships with county governments and security services. Before any interview, the researchers went through a risk assessment process for each individual respondent and discussed any concerns with the Research Manager. The researchers also worked with the community influencers to gain any additional information about potential respondents in order to adequately assess potential risks and avoid meeting with risky respondents (e.g. individuals who are actively involved with VEOs, etc.). Additionally, while BRICS could not avoid all risks given the nature of the work, there were strict guidelines in place for interviews to ensure the safety of the researchers. For example, at-risk interviews were conducted by two researchers working together.

IDENTIFYING & **MITIGATING BIAS**

Violent extremism is a complex phenomenon and BRICS recognises that there are numerous places for bias to affect the study. While many, due to the nature of the research topic, cannot be avoided, BRICS works to actively identify and mitigate these biases. Some of the known sources of bias:

- **Definition of at-risk:** BRICS identifies respondents based on their existing social network ties to VE. This excludes individuals who may be at risk of radicalisation and/or recruitment due to other structural or personal factors (e.g. self-radicalisation through online materials), but do not have existing social networks connected to VE. The design of this study does not capture these respondents and likely excludes respondents with higher socio-economic backgrounds. BRICS is cognisant of this bias and that the research does not explain the experience of every type of person who is at risk. However, the research design allows BRICS to better access and understand an understudied population that has a clear pathway to VE.

- **Sampling bias:** Because of the topic of the study, non-probability sampling (convenience and snowballing) is used primarily through the recruitment of research respondents through CSOs and community influencers. This, by its very nature, taps into particular social networks while potentially excluding others. To reduce this, BRICS works with multiple community influencers in a geographic area to gain entry into different communities and neighbourhoods to diversify its sampling and made specific efforts to include male and female respondents and influencers. However, this will never eliminate sampling bias from the study. Therefore, in the analysis of the data, the researchers are particularly sensitive to how the respondents are sampled and who might not be included (e.g. in this particular project it has been difficult to recruit Somali women) and acknowledges both the limitations and the potential effects of the sampling bias in the research findings.

- **Researcher biases:** Any research study can be affected by researcher bias in both how they ask questions and also how they record and interpret responses. Additionally, the researchers have personal and professional ties to the broader communities in which they conduct research, though BRICS estimates that the benefits of these local ties (e.g. trust, access, contextual knowledge, etc.) outweigh the drawbacks. In order to mitigate researcher biases, BRICS has ongoing research capacity training (e.g. interview techniques, avoiding leading questions, etc.) and researchers conduct interviews in pairs and write joint interview reports. Additionally, while the researchers participate in extensive discussions on the research findings, the data analysis of the interview reports are conducted by the Research Director and Manager who are not members of the communities being researched.

- **Response validity:** Respondents may not be truthful during interviews. This could be due to a variety of factors including: a lack of trust in the researchers, a desire to provide misinformation to the interviewers, social desirability, or the presence of other respondents or the community influencer in the interviews. To mitigate this, researchers may conduct second, individual interviews with respondents as they find respondents are more forthcoming in subsequent interviews as they develop trust with the researchers. Researchers also attempt to verify information provided in interviews (e.g. if a particular recruitment tactic is mentioned in an interview, they will ask other respondents if they have heard of something similar, while maintaining the anonymity of the original source of information, etc.). Additionally, BRICS attempts to mitigate unreliable interview data by conducting a large enough sample (+200 respondents) so that it can establish whether certain information is particular to a single respondent or if it is repeated across multiple interviews.

BRICS also attempts to reduce biases by triangulating its research data with other data sources including previous BRICS research (including interviews with CSOs, grassroots organisers, religious leaders, government officials, security representatives, and other key informants); research and learning from BRICS implementing partners; published and unpublished external research studies; and local and open source media reports. Additionally, BRICS also shares initial findings with key informants and local stakeholders to identify potential gaps or alternative interpretations of findings.

BRICS

Building Resilience in Civil Society