



## Kiunga Youth Bunge: Pilot Intervention Learning Paper

### *Project Title: Countering Violent Extremism Through Targeted Support to Lamu County Government: An Integrated Approach*

Kenya continues to face persistent threats from violent extremist (VE) activities particularly in North Eastern and coastal counties. In the coastal region, Lamu remains one of the most affected counties and thus fits within the framework of fragile, conflict and violence affected settings (FCVAS) due to radicalisation, extremism and terror activities posed by the Al Shabaab group. In response to the growing insecurity in the county as well as the problem of radicalisation and recruitment into VE, the REINVENT Programme worked with Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative to undertake a pilot intervention to support the Lamu County Plan for Countering VE (LCPCVE) developed and launched in March 2017.

This learning paper highlights lessons emerging from the pilot phase and how strategic interventions in FCVAS with a violent extremism dimension interact with administrative, political and religious leaders and responsibilities of key community

actors. One stark lesson emerging in this pilot intervention is in VE laden settings, the role of community influencers shapes community and State responses to deradicalisation, counter narratives and recruitment into VE ecosystems.

Taken together, the lessons emerging pose important challenges to the design of VE interventions in these fluid security settings where community grievances (e.g. government's use of excessive force, religious- and social-profiling/intolerance etc.), poor police-community relationships (characterised by lack of trust and fear), unsupportive political leadership, corruption, ethnic infighting and resistance or apathy to CVE programmes must be considered. The findings are relevant for the effective implementation of interventions dealing with community- State relations and how to engage religious leaders and Madrassa teachers.

## Design and implementation of the pilot intervention

Kenya's strategy for CVE is now anchored on the full implementation of County Action Plans (CAP) in the 47 counties. Furthermore, National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) – the government's lead agency on CVE, is focused on supporting and coordinating all state and non-state CVE efforts to operationalise the CAPs. However, as analysed and articulated in REINVENT programme's CVE Strategy, the LCPCVE, despite its launch three years ago has remained relatively under-implemented. Even the few notable activities have by and large been uncoordinated with their impacts inadequately measured.

Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI) is a local organisation with a vast experience in implementing security-related programmes in Lamu County - including CVE. As such, leveraging its existing networks, good working relations with, and acceptance by, the government and community partners, KYBI was tasked to design and implement pilot activities to support the LCPCVE and in particular, the ideological pillar. This led to the design of a pilot project under the wider theme of "Embracing pluralism by promoting inclusivity, tolerance and respect for diversity through supporting LCPCVE".

The main goal was to initiate and contribute to operationalisation of LCPCVE. By supporting LCPCVE, the main objectives were (a) strengthening collaboration between and among the key stakeholders and (b) enhancing specific roles of administrative, political and religious leaders and responsibilities of key community actors. The pilot activities were phased into two; phase one conducted in December 2019 involving mobilisation and capacity-building of Lamu County Engagement Forum (CEF) and phase two conducted in February 2020 focused on engaging religious leaders and teachers.



# 1. Activity One: Mobilisation and Operationalisation of Lamu's County Engagement Forum (CEF)



As identified in REINVENT's CVE strategies, mobilisation and capacity-building of Lamu CEF is one of the most critical first steps to operationalise the forum – and ultimately successful CAP implementation. As such, KYBI convened a four-day CEF forum/workshop at the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) hall as from 17 to 21 December – bringing together at least 79 participants (key CVE stakeholders in Lamu county). In collaboration with the NCTC and REINVENT's CVE workstream, these participants/stakeholders were mapped and mobilised from the national government administration offices (NGAO) and key security departments, Lamu county government's (LCG) relevant offices/departments, religious leaders, community influencers, youth and women leaders.

The four-day activity co-graced by Lamu county's deputy governor – H.E. Abdulhakim Aboud and the county commissioner – Mr. Macharia Irungu involved sessions for sensitisation and awareness creation on VE and CVE, role understanding in CAP implementation and CEF's stakeholder review of LCPCVE (a first generation CAP) and alignment with Objective Key Result model (the latest model used in development of R-CAPs). Further, during the CVE training session, expert facilitators from the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) took the participants through the global, regional, national and local challenges of violent extremism (VE). In addition, the CEF members were sensitised on the different drivers of radicalisation, recruitment processes and pathways to VE. The participants were enlightened on (suggested) at-risk factors, vulnerability identifiers prevention mechanism in mitigating the problem of radicalisation, recruitment and VE. As a result of this pilot activity, a number of quick wins were realised. For instance,

an expanded, diverse and inclusive CEF was mobilised and trained – improving understanding of the problem and forum members' roles in addressing the VE challenges. Also, all the stakeholders were strategically grouped into pillar teams based on their interest and specialisations. LCPCVE was reviewed and aligned to OKR model requirement with support from NCTC and a one-year implementation plan drawn/agreed upon – with SMART objectives against which the pillar teams are reporting progress. A secretariat to directly steer CAP implementation was constituted – with its expanded membership including representations from the different pillar teams.

One particularly positive post-CEF activity outcome is that of (the then constituted) secretariat consistently engaging on a monthly basis under the co-chairmanships of the CC and representative from LCG. Although collaborative support provided by administration officers from the two levels of governments especially in mapping and mobilising CEF members and champion religious leaders and teachers was initially observed as remarkable, post-CEF activity engagements between national and county governments and their close collaboration is quite encouraging – and indicative of a progressively improving ownership of the LCPCVE by stakeholders. The pillar teams have also been helpful, and particularly useful in coordinating and presenting progresses on implementation supports. In addition, these meetings have been facilitated on rotational basis by the different non-state CEF members – as such, further increasing coordination and collaboration between the two levels of government and among county-based government and non-government actors.

## 2. Activities Two and Three: Mobilisation and CVE Capacity building for Mosque Management



### Committee Members and Madrassa Teachers

Although initially designed as part of pilot activities, the December 2019 activity (detailed in section (2-a) above), further brought into fore the necessity of engaging religious leaders in CVE work. Accordingly, it was noted by Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) and Council of Imams and Preacher's (CIPK) members present during CEF engagement that religious leaders have inadequate knowledge in P/CVE – hence are not able to adequately play their key roles in the implementation of ideological pillar of LCPCVE. As such, KYBI in collaboration with the office of county commissioner, CIPK and CICC officials mapped out mosques and madrassa that would be able to benefit from religious leaders CVE training.

The selection criteria focused mainly on mosques frequented mostly by youth, and with religious leaders who are viewed to be radical in their religious teachings and madrassas within hotspot areas and further identified by security agents as possible areas for youth radicalisation in the county e.g. in villages within Amu and Pate Island and Mpeketoni. Hence, a total of 70 mosques (21 in Amu, 24 in Faza and 25 in Mpeketoni) and 70 Madrassas (22 in Amu, 26 in Faza and 22 in Mpeketoni) were targeted – translating to engagement of a total of 124 mosque leaders and 126 madrassa teachers.

The purpose of training the madrassa teachers and mosque

management committee was to equip them with adequate knowledge in CVE and understanding of the roles in prevention of VE – to enable them to play their rightful role in CVE in Lamu County – considered as one of the VE hotbeds Counties in Kenya. It further expanded the pool of CVE champions in the county with religious leaders and teachers drawing up individual small-large scale and short-long-term prevention plans and interventions. More so, the following knowledge areas were covered during the training:

- Understanding radicalisation into violent extremism, the global, regional and local context.
- Identifying the underlying root causes of radicalisation into violent extremism.
- The process of radicalisation into violent extremism and the different models of radicalisation into VE.
- Understanding how religious texts and concepts are misused by VE groups. (Focus on how Madrassa students and other youth can be radicalized through misuse of religion.
- Identifying the early warning signs of radicalisation into VE.
- Understanding religious narratives used by VE groups and developing appropriate religious counter and alternative narratives.
- The role of madrassa teachers and mosque management committee in preventing and countering violent extremism.

## Emerging Lessons

**1. Strategic stakeholder mapping and engagement enables better results:** KYBI conducted a robust stakeholder mapping during the pilot's proposal development and project designing phase in collaboration with NCTC, Lamu CSIC under the leadership of County Commissioner and various local leaders with the support of REINVENT's CVE workstream. As such, key national and county government offices, local CVE actors, influential community members, political and religious leaders etc. were pre-identified and strategically engaged. This secured critical buy-in and sustained support for the pilot activities. One particularly useful approach was engagements that were coordinated and conducted collaboratively at different levels with NCTC, REINVENT and KYBI. It further helped in mobilisation of participants avoiding duplication of efforts. For instance, REINVENT and CREATE activities in Lamu were de-conflicted – and currently the CREATE is complementing REINVENT at the sub-county level with both programmes being implemented by KYBI.

**2. Multi-level security sector stakeholders mapping is crucial:** Violent extremism interventions are highly risky and rely on continuous and sustained support of key government stakeholders. It should be noted that although National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) exists nationally, it lacks regional or county physical presence and thus has delegated the mandate to coordinate and oversee CVE operations, programs, initiatives to CSIC and sub-CSICs. Hence, the key stakeholders and main entry points at national and subnational levels are NCTC and CSICs respectively. Activities at sub-county levels are coordinated by Sub-CSICs. Failure to get this approach right would likely lead to unnecessary delays and sometimes administrative sanctions.

**3. Localisation of content and delivery is crucial:** The use of local partners and in-depth analysis in developing training content enhances local acceptance, relevance, ownership and sustainability. Furthermore, the engagements and particularly the trainings were designed with local realities, vulnerabilities and opportunities in mind. This was learnt as part of participant and facilitator's feedback. As such, participants resonated well with the training contents that were primarily delivered in preferred local language by subject matter experts who are well versed with prevailing local situations.

**4. Gender representation:** Although ideal and desired, gender representation, parity and mainstreaming on issues of religion and CVE still presents a challenge due to cultural and religious undertones present in Lamu county. REINVENT promotes the inclusion of women in peace and security spaces. As such, during mobilisation, the representation of women was greatly considered in all the three activities. Furthermore, women led organisations were purposely targeted for inclusion in the pilot interventions. However, as shown in the graphic representations of participants' demography, this was not achieved – at least not as desired. This is understandably due to cultural and religious imperatives that generally lock out the participation of women. For instance, until today there are no woman imams in the whole wide world. Also, there is a level of apathy from women to get involved in security issues and systematic and systemic exclusions by government may be assumed. For instance, even in government establishments and appointments where the women's agenda has been overly emphasized, women are generally missing from key security appointments – particularly in conflict areas and VE hotspots.

## Challenges experienced during the pilot phase and mitigation measures

- 1. Stakeholder antagonisms and differences:** During the engagements particularly with CEFs, different stakeholders were found to be speaking from different stand points – at times seen to antagonise each other. For instance, some represent the national government's position while others are acting in local county's political and community interests. In such instances, blame games and controversies have been common – and not peculiar or exclusive to Lamu's context.
- 2. Ownership challenges:** Though subtle, existence of confusion, sometimes reluctance and or conflicts around

who should lead the CAP implementation process was observed. Such ownership challenges coupled with potential for political and supremacy conflicts were assessed to possibly impact future efforts in CAP implementation. Furthermore, good working relationship is essential for successful co-ownership. Unfortunately, such relations are more of personalised – instead of institutionalised. As such, changes in leaderships at the county levels will keep the engagements turbulent. However, through the involving process of CEF engagement, the diverse viewpoints are believed to have

been harmonised and unified with every stakeholder accepting their roles and significance in CVE moving forward. So far, enhanced collaboration between and among stakeholders has been observed in the manner in which CEF engagements.

3. **Securitisation of the CVE space:** The Constitution of Kenya 2010 created devolved system of governance hence establishing 47 counties. It further separated powers and functions between the central and county governments. Accordingly, various functions of the national government e.g. health, agriculture, early child education etc. were decentralised. However, security is one function that was not devolved to the county governments. As such, the national government enjoys absolute authority over the management of day to day security service provision - to a greater extent including CVE. Up until now better part of CVE roles particularly of dealing with returnees have been centralised (reserved by the government) e.g. de-radicalisation, disengagement, rehabilitation etc. However, it is important for the government security agencies to appreciate the significant role that non-state actors play in CVE. For a whole society approach to be achieved, there is need to consider a deliberate engagement of the CSOs and public on CVE. Unfortunately, for any non-state

actor to get involved in the CAP processes, it has to be approved/accepted by security machineries. Further, close monitoring of CVE work by security teams and reporting requirements can potentially damage non-state actor reputations. This continues to challenge current and future CVE interventions. As such, deliberate efforts must be made in building trust between security officers and the community members.

4. **Resourcing, sustainability and impact measurement of CAP implementation:** Up until today, CAP processes have been donor funded – and to a great extent externally driven/motivated. Furthermore, both national strategy and CAPs are yet to be anchored in law. Still, some stakeholders feel that CAP is a security function, which needs implementation at the county-levels raising questions of resourcing as security remains a national government function even post-devolution. Moreover, CAP implementation goes beyond programme's lifespan, there remains a grey area around who should and how to effectively track progress and how best to measure impact, raising sustainability questions. Nonetheless, under REINVENT KYBI will be tracking progress and sustainably supporting CAP implementation processes over the coming years.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The engagement of County Engagement forum is believed and expected to enhance collaborations between and among stakeholders and enable harmonised implementation of LCPCVE. Therefore, for easier and effective engagement of participants it is further recommended that a simplified version of CVE materials including LCPCVE to be provided for the stakeholders. In addition, to further enhance greater sensitisation of the CAP, there is need to translate the document into a language that can be easily understood by grassroots communities i.e. Kiswahili. The feedback from the training conducted for the Mosque managers, religious leaders and teachers was that the concept was well thought out, timely and will go a long way to improve the situation.

The participants appreciated the training and requested more at both the county and the grassroots levels. The participants were very receptive of and related well to the training highlighting a need for further training to build their knowledge base and skills to prevent and counter violent extremism. Facilitators who are well grounded on the context ensured relevance in their training approach. Selection criteria

of madrasa teachers and mosque management committee ensured that right participants were selected to enable sustainable impact. Recognition of madrasa teachers and mosque management committee as key primary actors in P/CVE was a morale booster in their work.

However, the content covered in the training needed to be documented in form of resource book/handbook for participants to refer to in their daily engagement on the issue of preventing and countering violent extremism. Further, development of madrasa curriculum incorporated with CVE and value-based education for holistic student development. The post evaluation shows that the training was able to achieve its objectives and meet the participant's expectations. However, a specific training needs to be organised on effective counter narratives delivery techniques. Although participants were able to

internalise the narratives and the counter narratives, they were not able to master effective communication skills because of time constraints.

## Other recommendations included

- Holding joint CVE forums that will bring together both religious leaders from different faith groups represented in Lamu and security agents– in an effort to “talk with/to each other not at/against each other”.
- Increase youth CVE outreach seminars and economic empowerment programmes for the many ‘idle and frustrated’ youth in Lamu, particularly targeting out-of-school youths.
- Ensure school-based CVE interventions enhance school-level prevention of radicalisation. This may take form of organised intra- and inter-school debates on CVE in order to help youth at schools be more responsible and create sense of patriotism in the fight against terrorism.



## ABOUT US

Reducing Insecurity and Violent Extremism in the Northern and Coastal regions of Kenya (REINVENT) is a £20m 5-year programme that aims to enhance Kenyan capacity and capability to address inter-communal conflict, weak community-police relations, violence against women and girls (VAWG), violent extremism and election related violence. It will support the continued advancement of police reforms to improve the management, oversight and accountability of the police force. The programme is delivered by TetraTech International Development in partnership with the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) and the Danish Demining Group (DDG) builds on the experience of the Jamii Thabiti Programme (2014-19), also known as the Kenya Improving Community Security Programme (ICS), and expands DFID support across more counties. It supports new areas of work including conflict sensitivity, pastoral livelihoods and combating violent extremism.

### Impact of the programme:

Improved community safety and security as measured by effect on inclusive and equitable development, investment and service delivery in Kenya

### Envisaged outcome of the programme:

Improved state and non-state actors' collaboration in a mutually accountable and inclusive manner to respond effectively to root causes of violence.

### Programme outputs:

- Increased practice of accountability to build police (and other security agencies) effectiveness when addressing community security, violent extremism and election security.
- Strengthened agency of women and girls in peace, safety and security
- Intra and inter institutional commitment to address the root causes and drivers of conflict
- Knowledge and evidence generated and utilised to enhance community and institutional learning and adaptation.

**6 . Countering Violent Extremism:** Based on RUSI's experience from the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) programme and other CVE interventions, REINVENT's approach to CVE envisions an effective CVE policy framework

**1 . Police Reform:** The police reform agenda in Kenya envisions quality policing services for a safe and secure Kenya through strengthened capacity among policing institutions to address institutional and people centered reforms.

**5 . Conflict Sensitive Development in the Northern and Coastal Regions:** Kenya's rapid but unequal pace of economic growth poses enormous political and social ramifications. REINVENT Programme approach to Conflict Sensitive Development (CSD) is to promote the practice of conflict sensitivity among state, development actors and private sector in their planning and implementation of development and large-scale infrastructure projects in the country

**2 . Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls:** The Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Gender Mainstreaming workstream supports national, county and community initiatives, discourses and activities that deliberately interrogate gender inequalities and increase the agency and voice of women and girls.

**4 . Enhancing Election Security for a Peaceful General Election in 2022:** Kenya's electoral narrative has often been characterized by systemic failings in implementing violence free electoral management processes. REINVENT Election Security work is closely intertwined with police reforms, tackling VAWG and peacebuilding

**3 . Peacebuilding to address Inter-communal conflict:** Understanding that there are multiple fault lines in Kenya where inter-communal conflict occurs, driven by failure to address structural, institutional, historical, cultural and legal factors, creating opportunities for VE groups and criminal gangs to take advantage of conflict and instability.

If you have any questions or inquiries about the report, please reach out to us:  
REINVENT Programme | Tetra Tech International Development  
4th Floor, Prosperity House, Westlands Road  
Email: [reinventkenya@tetrattech.com](mailto:reinventkenya@tetrattech.com)  
P.O Box 19084-00100  
Twitter: ReinventKenya | Facebook: Reinvent Programme | Instagram: reinventkenya

