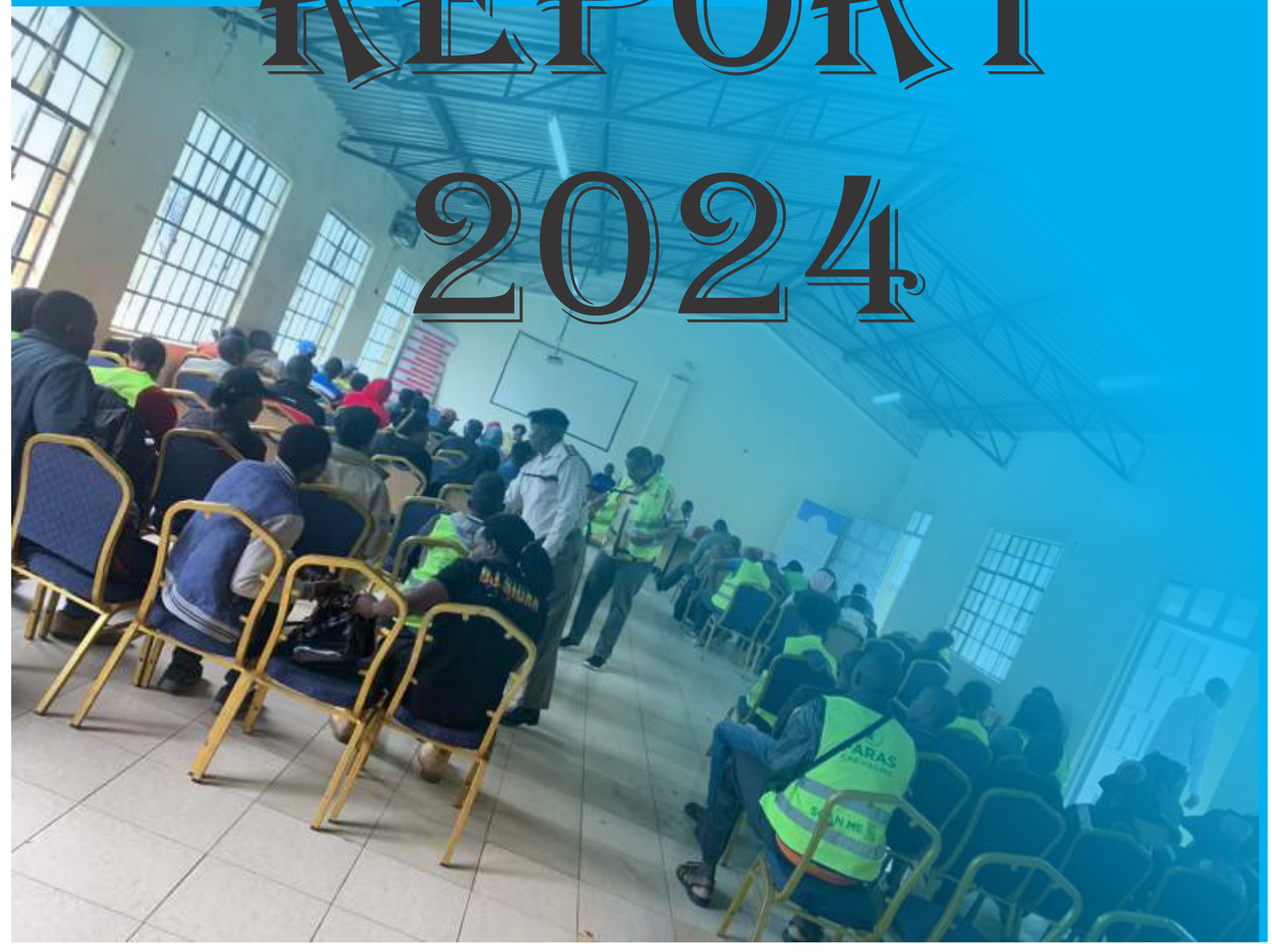AGENTS OF PEACE

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REPORT 2024

A Reflection of the Young People's Knowledge, Experience and Aspirations on Realities and Inclusive Mechanisms for Countering Violent Extremism

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Training PCVE and was designed to be practical, accessible, and user-friendly, providing a valuable resource for participants. It covered a wide range of topics that included international standards and national legal framework on peace and security in relation to violent extremism; radicalization and violent extremism; rehabilitation and reintegration responses to violent extremism; and life-skills and self-care in responding to violent extremism. The one-day training was in March, 2024, in the conference hall of the Agents of Peace (AoP). The objectives of the training were to:

1. To introduce participants to a country and regional case studies of PCVE; and
2. To define key concepts around PCVE
3. To examine context relevant "push" and "pull" factors that influence young people engagement in violent extremism
4. To develop action points to guide the nature of subsequent engagements with young people.

The training course was attended by young people from Kariakor/Ziwani Ward and the larger Eastleigh Area. Others were PCVE actors working at sub county level and university students with core interests on matters violent extremism. With this training, participants were equipped to better understand the existing violent extremism dynamics and how to counter or remedy the push and pull effects. As such, implementing some of the key learnings and take-aways will in the future call for sustained engagement and according space in the evidence building and decision making spaces at ward level for young people to improve the value, meaningfulness and ownership of the processes by young people in countering violent extremism.

Training Foundation

The recruitment of young people for terrorism and violent extremism have increasingly become a global challenge, occurring in situations of armed conflict and even outside of armed conflict. Such recruitment often leads to exploitation, abuse and victimization of young people, in their diversity. Cross-cutting social issues such as poverty, marginalization, religious beliefs and dysfunctional families are all contributing push, pull and personal factors that predispose children and young people to radicalization to violent extremism.

PCVE is an emerging concept in Kenya, necessitated by the rise of terrorist threats over the years. Although this is not a new concept, the dynamism of violent extremism has called for consistent proactive interventions to prevent and combat terrorism and other related crimes. These counter-terrorism strategies have taken prevalence countrywide, through government and community-based approaches based on support and protective pull factors. While it is important to note that not all young people involved in serious crimes are in contact with the justice system, often actors working within that system, for example, police, and probation officers are the first ones to have contact with those individuals.

For this reason, they have an undeniable responsibility to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of young people, to prevent victimization & revictimization and to take action to ensure that the justice system collaborates to provide suitable responses to vulnerable groups. To this effect and through the project peace and security agenda, Agents of Peace (AoP) conceptualized and developed a one-day, tailor-made Training on PCVE for young people.

About Agents of Peace [AoP]

Agents of Peace is a youth-focused non-governmental and Non-profit organization dedicated to promoting peace, stability, and community development in conflict-affected regions of Somalia. and Kenya. The organization places a strong emphasis on engaging youth in peacebuilding, good governance, and leadership. The organization conducts workshops and training sessions that focus on youth, peace and security, equipping young people with the skills to participate in conflict resolution and community development. Through lobbying and advocacy campaigns, youth are encouraged to become active in political processes, promoting transparency and accountability. Additionally, initiatives such as leadership forums and mentorship programs foster young leaders who advocate for peace and justice. By supporting young people's political participation, Agents of Peace empowers a new generation to contribute positively to Somalia's future.

Our Vision is to promote peaceful co-existence among our societies regardless of religion, ethnicity, race, and color.

Our Mission is to provide a platform for peace in which people's differences and misunderstandings can be dealt with non-violently and through dialogue and discussions.

Agents of Peace (AoP)

Agents of Peace [AoP], was established as an organization in response to the growth of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism acts against innocent lives in Kenya. AoP's core mandate is on Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism [P/CVE] and Radicalization within the community and to promote peaceful coexistence among our society regardless of Religious, Ethnicity and tribal backgrounds. To deliver on its cultural identity [vision and mission], AoP organizes and convenes various activities and programs centered at empowering key social actors on prevention of P/CVE, enhancing prospects for peace and security.

Its core activities include street campaigns addressing and awareness on violent extremism and terrorism, peace walks against terrorism attacks, peace summit with religious leaders to address radicalization and true position of faith and how it shapes narratives around extremism and university programs on preventing/countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. As AoP, the organization strives to eradicate the myths, negative perceptions and assumptions within Kenyan Communities on religious, ethnicity and tribal grounds, which leads to some young people becoming alienated and disempowered.

Vision Statement: To promote peaceful coexistence among societies regardless of religion, ethnicity, race or color. Mission Statement: To provide a platform of peace in which peoples differences and misunderstandings can be dealt with non-violently through dialogue and discussions.

Sessional Themes

The day long training was divided into five sessions as cited below;

Session 1: The Overview of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE)

To better understand and form and informative ground on PCVE, participants were engaged in a plenary session that detailed a Deep-Dive into the historical sitaution of PCVE, anchored on personal or social experience on PCVE. During this session, participants were able to share some of the contextual situations that apply in their neighborhoods as well as contextual situations that they have been able to interact with at the social media, radio, TV, newspapers or even in person.

The discussions led to participants understanding and appreciating the origins and development of PCVE as a discipline (What is it? Why is it still an issue currently? Who is affected most? Who is the primary target by PCVE proponents? What are the social, economic, political and cultural impacts?). The sessions also provided a premise for them to explore the factors that lead or have historically led to the emergence of PCVE as a specialized field (What triggers PCVE? Why is PCVE a focus as related to political, social and economic development?).

Session 2: The New Way of Conflict, State Reactions and Understanding of Themes

Based on the discussed historical understanding of PCVE, and what causes it coupled by its impacts, this session examined how Countries have responded to the changing nature of conflict, what effect this has had on socio-economic factors, political factors, religious and cultural factors and subsequently, how these have affected communities in their diversities as men, women, young people, children and the elderly. Participants shared and discussed the following concepts in plenary through; what they know, what they have learnt and what they have personally experienced.

This session subsequently had group work sessions where participants were engaged to define what they know or understand of the concepts of; RADICALISATION – making a deep-dive on; the process and concept of radicalization; the path that individuals take towards radicalization; the importance of PCVE in preventing and countering violent extremism; the role of education, community engagement, and policy interventions; the importance of PCVE in preventing and countering violent extremism and the role of education, community engagement, and policy interventions. The participants also discussed the following as reasons as to why people become radical, or are radicalized; Psychio-logical factors; Psypho-EconomicalFactors; Psycho-Political Factors; Psycho-Ideological Factors and Psycho-Cultural Factors.

VIOLENT EXTEREMISM? (Beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideological violence to achieve ideological views) and; TERROSISM? (threat or use of violence to attain political, social or cultural ideologies). During this session, the participants further cited they understanding – at individual, household and community level as to what causes radicalization, violent extremism and extremism. Their submissions were informed by social-economic drivers, limited knowledge and capacity and, religion – as driving factors.

Session 3: Push and Pull Factors

This session begun by a definition and context citation of the terms "push" and "pull" terms.

a)"Push factors" - the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges. These include: Lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalization and discrimination; poor governance, violations of human rights and the Rule of Law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalization in prisons.

"Pull factors" - the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. These include: Individual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimization stemming from domination, oppression, subjugation or foreign intervention; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences; and leadership and social networkS

Why do 'people' return? And What are the VE narratives

Often, people who under-go a DE radicalization phase and are integrated back to community, may unfortunately be enticed back into militia outfits by being radicalized again. These are called returnees. This session, sought to discuss what are the push and pull factors that occasion situations whereby people opt back to the militia outfits despite being DE radicalized and re-integrated back to community. The group discussed the following; Disillusionment Factors, Captured Factors, Instructed Factors, Conditional Factors, Age Dynamic Factors and Age Related Factors. After the group sessions, the participants convened for plenary session to discuss the violent extremism narratives that are perceived or real factors occasioning radicalization. These were; brutality, mercy, victim hood, strength, a sense of belonging and, utopia.

The Roles of Young People and Practitioners on Peaceful Co-Existence and Tolerance?

To ensure that young people as a huge demography in Kenya take a leading role on matters of countering VE, it is imperative that they are able to map opportunities that exist locally, as well as map their roles and responsibilities. This session, enabled the participants to discuss some of the existing opportunities that exist in their local contexts that if effectively taken up can positively remedy VE. These were;

a)Community Radios: Community radios play a pivotal role in building and sustaining peace. They serve as a powerful tool for communication within local communities, providing information, promoting dialogue, and fostering understanding. By amplifying diverse voices and sharing messages of peace, community radios contribute to peaceful co-existence.

b)Education and Tolerance: Empowering local actors, especially teachers, to promote multi-faith tolerance, human rights, and religious freedom is essential. Culturally appropriate materials and teacher training can create positive classroom environments that embrace pluralism and understanding.

c)Individual Orientation: Peaceful co-existence and tolerance begin at the individual level. When community members prioritize peace over violence, it ripples through families, schools, and the entire nation. Encouraging empathy, respect, and dialogue helps build bridges across differences.

d)Youth as Agents of Peace: Young people are vital actors in peace building. Equipping them with peace building skills, fostering reconciliation, and strengthening relationships across divides contribute to a more tolerant and peaceful society.

e)Inter-Religious Councils: Organizations like the Inter-Religious organizations can work toward religious freedom, equality, and peaceful co-existence. Their efforts aim to create a vision of a developed Ethiopia based on love, tolerance, and peace

Session 4: Participants' Feedback

At the end of the day-long session, the participants committed to engage their peers at the community through any available platform to ensure that there is improved knowledge especially around the push and pull factors of PCVE. This they perceive will form a strategic entry point towards meaningfully engaging communities to take action on countering and preventing violent extremism.

The participants also indicated that, they will diversify stakeholders that they often engage (from MCAs and Ward Reps), to other core actors and stakeholders that may have voice and agency to support their actions as young people.

Kamukunji and Starehe Constituency Peaceful Co-existence Activities

Peaceful coexistence is the foundation of any stable, just, and prosperous society. It refers to the ability of individuals and groups—irrespective of their ethnic, religious, cultural, political, or socio-economic differences—to live together in harmony, mutual respect, and tolerance. In a world that is increasingly diverse and interconnected, peaceful coexistence has become more critical than ever. It is not merely the absence of violence, but the presence of positive relationships, inclusive dialogue, equitable participation, and shared values that uphold dignity and human rights for all.

In Kenya, and particularly in densely populated and multicultural sub-counties like Kamukunji, the imperative for peaceful coexistence is deeply rooted in the daily realities of the population. Kamukunji is home to communities from various ethnic backgrounds, including Somali, Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, and Nubian, as well as significant populations of both Muslims and Christians. These communities often coexist within limited urban space, competing for scarce resources such as housing, employment, water, education, and security. Without intentional efforts to promote mutual understanding and inclusion, such diversity can become a flashpoint for tension, mistrust, and sometimes open conflict.

Historically, many parts of Nairobi—Kamukunji included—have experienced intermittent episodes of ethnic clashes, political violence, gang-related insecurity, and even radicalization. These situations often stem from deeper underlying issues such as marginalization, youth unemployment, poverty, and lack of inter-group communication. In such environments, stereotypes and misinformation flourish, and one group's struggle is easily interpreted as another group's threat.

However, the same diversity that sometimes causes friction can also serve as a powerful engine for social innovation, economic development, and collective problem-solving—if managed constructively. When communities actively choose to build bridges of understanding rather than walls of division, they create a culture of peace that not only prevents conflict but fosters cooperation and shared prosperity.

Peaceful coexistence contributes to the long-term peace and development of a country by enhancing social cohesion, promoting equitable access to opportunities, and encouraging inclusive governance. It builds trust among communities, facilitates reconciliation after conflict, and nurtures a sense of collective responsibility for the well-being of all citizens. For children, it means growing up in an environment free from fear and violence. For youth, it means having the space to express themselves and contribute meaningfully to their society. For marginalized groups, it means finally having a voice.

Recognizing the vital importance of this principle, organizations like Agents of Peace–Kenya have taken the lead in facilitating community dialogues, youth empowerment programs, and collaborative peace initiatives that bring people from different walks of life together. These efforts aim to create spaces where people can learn to appreciate their differences, discover their shared humanity, and work together to build peaceful, resilient, and inclusive communities.

This section of the report explores in depth the multifaceted importance of peaceful coexistence among people of different backgrounds—socially, economically, politically, and as a peacebuilding strategy. It illustrates how this principle not only helps prevent violence and mistrust, but also acts as a catalyst for social innovation, economic inclusion, and democratic resilience.

The Eastleigh community has over time been described as a "demographic outlier" due to exceptionally high rates of population density especially by Somalis. This exceptionally high population rate has many implications for co-existence, safety and security. As such, the structured deficit contributes to very high exposure to a diversity of social vices that in effect contribute to waning peace and cases of intolerance and conflict among the different cadres of the community. This is because the deficit essentially strains the government capacity to invest in programs such as basic education, health care, housing, employment and security as measure to counter competition for resources leading to social tensions.

Whether a youth bulge constitutes a 'demographic dividend' or a dangerous burden for Eastleigh depends mainly on the existing context and the contributing social, economic, political, cultural and religious aspects. For Eastleigh, the context is far from favorable whereby employment rates are quite high and as such, the labour market which continues being saturated with frustrated jobseekers and the current youth bulge is only adding more. Left unchecked, the youth bulge in Eastleigh is more likely to result in: continued high levels of frustration over limited access to resources such as education, jobs and social mobility; easy recruitment of unemployed young men & women into secret or virtual militia outfits of all types; and, perhaps most significantly. Recent findings suggest that the last limited resources and opportunities for young people trigger tensions across the entire community of Eastleigh.

Use of Community Peace Forums Platforms

Community peace forums are increasingly recognized as essential platforms for dialogue and collaboration to prevent conflicts and promote social harmony. The engagement of the young generation, alongside government officials, in these forums can enhance the peacebuilding process. Youth bring energy, innovation, and a fresh perspective, while government officials provide authority, resources, and policy direction. This report examines the collaboration between government officials and youth in community peace forums, the challenges they face, and the opportunities this partnership presents for fostering peace.

Community peace forums bring together key stakeholders—government officials, community leaders, civil society, and the general public—to discuss and address local conflicts. They aim to promote dialogue, reduce tensions, and propose community-led solutions for peace. These forums are significant for several reasons: agents of peace organized intergeneration dialogues in penuel centre. The major discussion was the disconnect between the older generation and the so-called generation Z and how it contributes to violent extremism. During the discussion the moderator tried to build an ample environment when it come to the communication on the topic.

The meeting was opened by prayer and after that brief introductions. The stalk-holders that were present chiefs from airbase, county office representative, community based organization representatives from within Kamukunji sub county. During the conversation: the older generation were said to play a crucial role in the community and they influential on the mannerism on which the youth carry themselves. The first participant pinpointed on how the (millenniums) as they term them play a role of educating the younger generation, play a role of advisory both in positives manner and negative manner. Secondly they address the need for communication between the two generations whereby through the discussions this will help understand what is needed to bridge the gap and help cater for the missing pieces. Some mentioned that westernization is still the issue that corrupts the youth and it becomes really difficult for any discussion to take place. Technology has also been too impactful making it difficult to have consensus when it comes to any family talk. Erosion of our African culture has made the interaction more difficult more than the latter days. During the closure of the meeting it was mentioned that more community activities such as sports were needed to be carried forth to indulge both generation for better relationship.

The forum concluded that;

a)Tensions were mainly as a result of differing perspectives on issues such as religion and political which lead to intolerance and finally, conflict. As such, the forum called for co-existence and appreciation of each and everyone's public views and positions on matters related to religion, politics, culture and gender.

b)The forum also noted that, it is key all stakeholders to work together to achieve much more through coordination and social action. This approach will reduce cases of duplicity of efforts and also show the larger community of the collaborated action to support peaceful co-existence and tolerance.

c)The forum also noted that, the relations between the security apparatus and the general citizenry is quite problematic and this reduces scenarios where the police can effectively cater or support the community, or case unto which the communities can at all-time engage the police for support. Community policing was cited as an opportunity to improve the relations and enhance collaborations.

Recommendations

· Promote Youth Participation – Governments should create policies and programs that promote the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding processes at both local and national levels.

· Facilitate Government-Youth Dialogue – Establish formal mechanisms for regular dialogue between youth and government officials in community peace forums.

· Support Youth-Led Peace Initiatives – Provide funding and resources for youth-driven peace projects, particularly those focused on digital peacebuilding strategies.

· Build Capacity – Governments should invest in training programs to equip young people with the skills needed to engage meaningfully in peace processes.

· Strengthen Intergenerational Partnerships – Peace forums should encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing between older generations and youth, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

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