



A Community Peace Forum Report

Embracing Inter-Religious Harmony for Transformation and Peaceful Coexistence

Report Submitted To

Mohammed Abdirizak, The Executive Director,
Agents of Peace [AoP]
Championing for Peace, Justice and Equality
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACC	Assistant County Commissioner
AoP	Agents of Peace
ASC	Area Senior Chief
DCC	Deputy County Commissioner
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KPC	Kamkunji Peace Committee
MOE	Ministry of Education
OCPP	Officer Commanding Police Post
OCS	Officer Commanding Station
P/CVE	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
VE	Violent Extremists
VEO	Violent Extremists Organizations
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

The world has been experiencing old and new waves of radicalisation and Violent Extremism [VE] that have destroyed property and led to the death of many innocent people. Whichever is the justification, faith, economic exclusion, ethnicity, politics, or ideology, violent extremists reject tolerant and inclusive society as expounded by Sustainable Development Goal No. 16 [SDGs]¹. Indeed, the increase in actors that engage in VE and the growth of networks of violent extremists, across the world, is raising serious concerns in development and democratic social spaces. While the global 2030 agenda on sustainability envisions an inclusive world, violent extremists are antagonistic.

Therefore, innovative approaches are needed to respond to VE and mitigate the dynamics that lead to recruitment into Violent Extremist Organisations (VEOs). This realisation was the rallying call for Agents of Peace [AoP] when it convened the Community Forum for Peace seeking to go over and beyond the securitisation and economic push and pull framework into interfaith collaborative activities to foster peaceful coexistence.

About Agents of Peace [AoP]

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 to Prevent and to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization within the community and to promote peaceful coexistence among our society regardless of Religious, Ethnicity and tribal backgrounds.

*Its Vision is to promote peaceful co-existence among our societies regardless of religion, ethnicity, race and color, while
Its Mission is to provide a platform for peace in which people's differences and misunderstanding can be dealt with non-violently and through dialogue and discussions.*

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 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 meaning of jihad in Islam 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.

Extremists of all persuasions aim to develop destructive relationships between different communities by promoting division, fear and mistrust of others based on ignorance or prejudice and thereby limiting the life chances of young people. Education, dialogue and forum of discussions is a powerful weapon against this; equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and critical thinking, to challenge and debate in an informed way. Any prejudice, discrimination or extremist views, including derogatory language, based on religion, ethnicity or tribal displayed by religious leaders, student or youth within our community will always be challenged and, where appropriate, dealt with according to both Christian and Islamic values.

Forum Proceedings

Agents of peace organized the second monthly community peace forum on 25th March 2021 which was held at Kamukunji, Eastleigh. The theme of the forum was *"Community peace forum embracing inter-religious harmony for transformation and peaceful coexistence"* with specific focus on the young people and religious institutions within the society. The focus on young people was to identify the issues that lead or attract them to crime, drugs and radical groups in society particularly young men and, what can be done by different stakeholders [madrassa teachers, community elders and the government] in society.

¹ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Key Discussants

- Mr. Kenny Isigi - Representative, Kamukunji Peace Committee [KPC]
- Sheikh Salim Charo - Representative, The Board - Agents of Peace [AoP]
- Mr. Mohammed Abdirizak - Founder and Executive Director, Agents of Peace [AoP]
- Ms. Leila Binti Ali & Hindu Shabaan - Representatives, Dusk Till Dawn
- Mr. Anthony Njoko - Area Snr. Chief [ASC]
- Mr. Samuel Kariuki - Deputy County Commissioner [DCC] of Kamukunji Sub-County
- Mr. Tobias Okoth - Assistant County Commissioner [ACC] of Eastleigh
- Mr. Inspector Rono - Officer Commanding Police Post [OCPP], Eastleigh North, Pumwani

Stakeholder Submissions

□ *Kamukunji Peace Committee*

- There is need for an effective community inclusivity strategy on matters peace and security.
- It is key to promote peaceful coexistence regardless of ethnicity and religious standing.
- There should be emphasis on importance of peace in our society as an essential factor to development.
- Integration of Islamic Madrassa on formal Kenya Curriculum should be addressed by government authorities and Ministry of Education.

□ *AoP*

- Urged for peace and security and mentioned the weak/most affected *i.e women, children and the elderly*.
- On the topic of community engagement in peace building and prevention of violent extremism, everyone in the community can help in peace building; women's role in support of radicalization
- There is need for women inclusion in peace conversations and also the inclusion of the elders to benefit from their wisdom in guidance and to encourage youth to integrate into society as peaceful agents.
- The Madrassa Curriculum approval by the Ministry of Education [MoE] and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD] is ongoing and as such, there will be a common curriculum to be followed by all Madarasa nationwide. This will also facilitate the Training of Madrassa teachers to formal education
- On the issue of COVID-19, it was noted that the 3rd wave is similar to pneumonia and much more devastating. Participants were urged to practice social distance and good sanitation as well as sensitization. The 3rd wave of COVID-19 unlike other waves this is similar to pneumonia.

□ *AoP Award [Abdighafar Abdullahi - The 1st community member in Kamukunji to win the AoP trophy].*

- There is need for greater respect and inclusivity in Community policing processes. As such, the community should cooperate with the police and security agencies during curfew hours instead of roaming around.
- On their side, the police and security agencies to refrain from police brutality during pre-curfew hours.
- The participants should maintain good sanitation, self-cleanliness as well as the environment of Eastleigh.

Key Question

- How can the community voluntarily provide information to security agencies – that is on; violent extremism and waste dumping?

□ *Dusk till Dawn*

- Women are also affected by radicalization/violent extremism and police brutality in their community.
- Security agencies should cooperate with organization such as Dusk till Dawn in exchange programs. This approach will enhance probability of inclusion of women as ambassadors in prevention of radicalization.

- Dusk till Dawn has women who have become widows through violent extremism while some have lost sons, brothers, nephew or relatives to violent extremism. Further, some of these women are traumatized and cannot talk due to their grief. Through Dusk till Dawn, the women are able to fight stigmatization of the family of the terrorists/extremists

It was noted that, Dusk till dawn has 32 members so far and the organization tackles issues of peace, security and education. Through these interventions, the organization provides mentorship (give guidance and advice) for fellow women and the children affected by violent extremism and radicalization. The organization also provides psycho-social programs (i.e. team building) that assist in prevention of the youth to be radicalized into joining terrorist activities or a life of crime. Dusk till dawn creates a safe haven for women affected by terrorism, radicalization, extreme violence and crime (i.e. gang activities). They are able to receive support and feel understood without social- stigma or feeling judged.

- Security agencies should to take note that there are a lot of traffickers and recruiters (of terrorist/extreme violence/radical groups and gangs) in Pumwani, Kamukunji.
- Recruiters don't radicalize/recruit ill-mannered or misbehaved young people mostly, they target the well behaved youth with ambitions and well performing at school or madrasa.

"I lost my nephew to a violent group. He was a well-mannered child. He performed well at school and was actually the head boy at his school. This is to show that no child/youth is same in the case of radicalization. Some parents believe that their child is performing well at school and is well mannered so they will not be radicalized but it does not matter" Alluded Madam Shaban

□ *Deputy County Commissioner of Kamukunji Sub-County;*

- It is the responsibility of the public to bring forward any information on radicalization/recruitment activities in the community to security agencies or contact the 999 hotline, for confidentiality.

He quoted *"Ukiskia Sema Ukiona sema ukiambwa sema". [Translation: I you hear, pass information. If you see, pass information. If you are told, pass information]*

- Notably, some parents initially supported and encouraged their children to join radical groups and mislead/misinformed the police but once a young person dies in terrorist activities, the same parents start panicking and complaining about security in the community.
- Some of these recruited youths are illiterate and only have madrasa education, whereas others have higher level educations [degrees and masters' degrees]; but after meeting the recruiters, they all get brainwashed into the same beliefs and ideologies [whether literate or illiterate].
- It is imperative for the public to cooperate with security agencies. This is because, radicals/recruiters always plant their beliefs & ideologies in different groups and different regions [once they lose support in one area, they move to another area].
- On the matter of Communication flow; some information gets misinterpreted or changed once it reaches the right person. It is advisable for informants to go personally to the Security agencies instead of passing information through different or unclear channel[s].
- There are times when the government closes Mosques and Madrasas for security purposes, though currently this is not the case. If there comes a time that there will be need for a tight security again, the government will inform the community and would expect the community and the public to cooperate.
- The public should always adhere to/follow the rules and regulations of COVID-19 preventions [i.e. masks, sanitizers, social distancing etc.]. Notably, one cannot be able to know whether they/others are exposed or infected by the virus simply by looking. In the sense that there are no distinctive signs such as loss of weight and more, emphasizing that the new wave of covid19 does not show the flu like symptoms on every individual some people don't show signs or symptoms)
- Education institutions and Madrasas to adhere to the protocols and rules for COVID-19 in order to protect their own children, families and/or the community. This same adherence should be followed

by religious institutions [Mosques and Churches] when conducting prayers and worship.

- On Recruitment of youth into radical/criminal groups is majorly successful due to the limited employment and economic opportunities.
- Finally, on the matter returnees they should not to be scared. This is because there are programs on integration which has protocols that are followed and that the returnees [radicalized youth] are further educated and re-integrated into the community.

□ *OC Crime, Pangani Police Station*

- The cooperation of some organizations such as Dusk till Dawn for providing information/intel in radicalization and extremism in the community has been very strategic and impactful.
- There are great opportunities for communities to harness peace building interventions and on the basis of community policing and ensure confidentiality of messages shared with them.
- Notably, some parents/family members of the individuals that have been radicalized are often tempted by those radical groups. One of the methods is that the radical groups give money to the family. So the family feel like even though their child has joined that group they get to receive financial support from them. It is important that the family/parents to refuse such temptations and not to allow their child to take part in unlawful activities.

□ *OCPP, Eastleigh North, Pumwani*

- Such a forum is an eye opener as well as an important space for different stakeholders to converge and engage on peace Interventions and best modalities for community led policing. Any cases can be reported through community policing direct hotline 999 whereby Confidentiality is assured.
- However, there have been complaints as regards brutality and corruption by police. Currently, this is being addressed through strategic police reforms.

□ *Assistant County Commissioner of Eastleigh, stated the following:*

- The initiative by Agents of Peace is not only noble but also a game- hanger. Due to limited resource allocations by Government geared at building community level action through knowledge and awareness, PCVE has inherently been a challenge. However, AOP action is bridging the knowledge and information gap through community forums that are geared at building stakeholder partnerships, building awareness and relations as a measure to prevent radicalization.

Key Actions

On the basis of the day long deliberations, some key action point were drafted to be undertaken by each key stakeholder. These were;

- **Community:** The public should at all times share any information with the chief and OCS in their community.
- **Community:** The public should take the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures [SoPs] by Government and World Health Organization [WHO] seriously.
- **County Government:** Government to put measures in place such as Anti-terrorist campaigns and peacebuilding programs that help in combating terrorism.
- **County Government:** Government to facilitate employment opportunities e.g. census “kazi mtaani” to be given to youth to avoid them being lured into extremism.
- **Security Agencies:** Security Agents to protect actual informants who report suspicious activities.
- **Security Agencies:** The security agencies to undertake proper investigations in order to avoid false allegations against innocent people.
- **AoP:** AoP to conduct more forums to nurture positive relations between the community and police to avoid situations whereby communities are scared that the police might be cooperating with the radical groups/gangs.

- **AoP:** AoP and other partners to train imams on countering violent extremism and radicalization, to be introduced on community level as they are central to influencing positive community ideologies against CVE.

Key Achievements

Some of the key-wins of the forum were;

- *Stakeholder Convening:*

The forum was able to bring together key stakeholders on matters peace, security and CVE together to discuss pertinent issues that affect the society.

- *Raising Community Issues:*

Stakeholders articulated some of the ongoing processes, policy actions and programs that in one way or another have affected the community leading to complaint and poor social relations.

- *New/Positive Perceptions:*

At the end of the forum, there was improved positive perception by communities directed at the security agencies. This effectively means that, the communities are more open and willing to engage the police on matter peace, rule of law and security.

- *Awards:*

Finally, the participants to the forum were Awarded certificates of appreciation and awards by AoP.

Recommendations

The stakeholders should create more opportunities and spaces for dialogues and engagement with the communities, especially members of religious faiths and the youth. Such opportunities will enhance voices and minimise the exit option by focusing on what works and what does not work. That includes peacebuilding interventions and responses to radicalisation and violent extremism.

State actors should engage religious institutions and leaders in their interventions to mitigate radicalisation and violent extremism. Such engagements will facilitate a transition from over securitisation of violent extremism into a softer approach putting religious institutions and leaders at the centre of prevention and countering violent extremism efforts.

Religious institutions and their leaders are highly respected. Accordingly, there should be more engagement with religious leaders in interfaith peacebuilding activities, especially those interventions involving young men and women.

Pictorials





