

**A**  
**LEARNING AND WORKING REPORT**



**COMMUNITY PEACE FORUM AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**REPORT SUBMITTED TO**  
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## **1.0 Introduction**

AoP convened the Community Peace Forum on the 15th of October 2020 which was held at the Taj Sultan in Eastleigh, Kamukunji Sub-County. The Forum's theme was 'Community roles on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, crimes and drug at grass-root levels' with specific focus on the young people within the society. The focus on young people was to identify the issues that lead them to be attracted to crime, drugs and radical groups in society, particularly young men. There was also focus on what the community, including the madrassa teachers, community elders and both governments can positively impact the youth. The heart of the conversation was linking collective religious hatred that has been weaponized and the use of religion to fuel the fire. Analysis was carried out on how this, overlaps with national, racial and ethnic hatred. The conclusion drawn was that one's faith should be a source of peace, charity and compassion not hostility and hatred.

Strategically, during the community forums and in partnership with Community leaders and government security agencies, AoP conducted a sensitization, public outreach and awareness on coronavirus to vulnerable populations including elderly people and distributed hand sanitizers and facemasks to control the transmission of the virus. The main goal was to reach as many community members as possible and educate them the reality of the virus and equip them with the right and relevant information on COVID-19, to empower them to make better decisions and change their behaviors to protect themselves and others.

Due to increased transmission or spread of the virus within the community in Eastleigh, the government executed a two-week cessation of movement in and out of Eastleigh, Nairobi, Kenya on Wednesday, May 6 2020. That was a direct negative impact not only on residents of Eastleigh but thousands of business people who operate in bustling little business hub. The lockdown or cessation of movements into and out of Eastleigh not only affected Somali community but also other workers from Majengo, Kibera, Huruma and other slums who walked Eastleigh every morning for menial jobs. There was a heavy presence of security officers in all parts of Eastleigh, with roadblocks mounted at all major entry points to prevent movement in and out of the densely populated area inhabited mostly by natives of the Somali community. The closure of businesses, including expansive malls, restaurants and markets will affect mostly small traders who have a hand-to-mouth livelihood. Those engaged in hawking, house chores, loading and cleaning services will suffer a severe economic impact.

## **2.0 Key Highlights on the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya □ The Economic**

The Lockdown, curfew and stay-at-home directives by the President have really affected the economic status of the country. Many workers in the informal sector have been unable to earn an income. Many businesses have also had to shut down as the majority of the workforce has been directed to work from home. The most affected are those in the hotel and restaurant industry and quite a number of the staff have been put on unpaid leave and salaries have been reduced.

Kenya's gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to slow up substantially in 2020 due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic growth projection remains highly uncertain and the outcome will hinge on how the pandemic plays out internationally and within Kenya, along with policy actions taken to mitigate the situation. The latest World Bank Kenya Economic Update (KEU) predicts growth of 1.5 percent in 2020 in the baseline scenario, with a potential downside

scenario of a contraction to 1.0 percent, if COVID-19 related disruptions in economic activity last longer

The hardship from the crisis would disproportionately befall the poorest and the most vulnerable households in Kenya. Many of these depend on farming (for the rural), self-employment and informal wage (for the urban). Protecting their earnings and reaching households through cash transfers is considerably more challenging due to a nascent system of social safety nets, lack of proper physical address system, and updated welfare registers.

### **□ Travel and Tourism Industry**

The travel and tourism industry throughout the world has been adversely affected by the pandemic in a number of ways. Airlines have been grounded, hotels have closed, and strict travel restrictions have been imposed by nearly all countries. According to the UNWTO estimates, the pandemic has dealt an unprecedented blow to the travel and tourism sector by drastically reducing international tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 to a mere fraction of what they were in the first quarter of 2019. Available data points to a double-digit reduction of 22% in the first quarter of 2020, with arrivals in March down by 57%.

This translates into a loss of 67 million international arrivals and about USD 80 billion in receipts. The losses to be suffered by airlines and especially mega carriers by the end of this year may be unfathomable. Current scenarios point to declines of 58% to 78% in international tourist arrivals for 2020, depending on how quickly the pandemic is contained and the duration of travel restrictions and shutdown of borders. Whatever the scenario, the prospects look bleak and the recovery of the industry may take a long time. According to the UNWTO Panel of Experts, the likely time for recovery of international demand may be in 2021.

Industry analysts and experts around the world are of the view that domestic demand would recover faster than international demand. The industry faces major challenges ahead, starting with the unknown duration of the pandemic and travel restrictions, in a context of a global economic recession. Countries around the world are implementing a wide range of measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and to stimulate the recovery of the travel and tourism sector. All worldwide destinations have introduced travel restrictions in response to the pandemic, with Kenya, a top tourism destination in Africa included. The overall result of all these travel restrictions was total disruption and paralysis of international travel and tourism industry worldwide.

### **□ The Education System**

Before the onset of the covid 19 pandemics, Kenya had a well-structured system of education. The primary and Secondary school calendar ran from January to December. The terms comprised of three months of fully learning and a month in-between for holidays. The syllabus was structured for nine months. With the free primary and lessened school fees in the secondary schools, public schools received the largest enrolments, with teacher learner ratio of 1:35.

On the flip side, Private schools have outshone public schools for the longest time possible. This is owing to the fact that the learners' enrolment in private schools is lower, and teachers have enough time and resources to work contentedly wherefore great outcomes. To reduce the spread of the virus, the Government closed all learning institutions in Kenya. Learning institutions were expected to

implement online instruction using technology and the Internet. Teachers were advised to prepare work for the learners to do at home. However, nearly 80% of school children in Kenya lack access to Internet or cannot afford the cost, this limited the amount of e-learning available to learners. Only close to 25% of learners and especially living in urban settings could access virtual classes amidst challenges of connectivity to parents with insufficient education to assist their children at home.

#### **□ Health Care**

The government's immediate action has focused on strengthening the health system which faces an extraordinary challenge to contain the spread of COVID-19 and care for the infected. Further health policy measures such as working from home, travel restrictions, the closure of schools, the suspension of public gatherings, and a nightly curfew, are necessary to delay the spread while the country ramps-up investment in its healthcare systems. Nonetheless, they are also quite costly to the economy by reducing social interaction, production and demand across all sectors.

### **3.0 Highlights of other social issues affecting Easliegh Community**

The speakers advised the youth and presented their opinions on the causes of radicalization and what one should do in instances where one finds themselves among radicalized groups. The session then moved to open discussions and dialogue where the youth were encouraged to speak on the issues and challenges they are facing or have faced without hesitation or fear. Some of the core issues discussed during this session were;

- Drugs being sold in bars, chemists and shops to the youth. Administration was requested to investigate and shut down these operations.
- The need for fields and sports equipment to engage the youth.
- The ignorance on the consequences of use of drugs.
- The community has individual responsibility to ensure that there is peace. They should report to the local law enforcement any activities/individuals that is suspicious or unlawful.
- Parents were urged to participate, be attentive and guide their children.
- Lack of education is a key factor in promoting radicalization and terrorism. Those recruited by radical groups are ignorant of the religion of Islam and use it to justify the group's political and personal agendas.

Discussions also addressed the triggers of radicalism. It was noted that, the victims are usually not targeted to a specific religion, race or nationality. Recruiters use unemployment, injustices, to justify what the extremists want the individuals to join. According to a study by the University of Maryland on Terrorism and Radicalization, one is encouraged to; have inter-faith dialogues, approach the local law enforcement, have the proper knowledge of the religion, have reliable sources of information.

It was noted that the youth and community at large, fear coming forward with information to law enforcement because there is no trust and assurance that they will be safe and will not face repercussions. On this issue, the Religious leaders were requested to include in their Friday prayers

(Khutba) and Sunday church service, the issues of radicalization, crime prevention and drug/substance abuse.

Mr. Tobias Okoth who serves as the Assistant County Commissioner (Kamkunji Sub-County) recognized that religious leaders have a really important role to play in the Prevention of Radicalization and Countering Violent Extremism. He urged the youth to look at the people they associate with as the issue of wrongful arrest due to their association/relationship with suspects. He asked the youth to report any unlawful activities.

Further, Mr Tobias spoke of the issue of converts to the religion of Islam, being easy targets for radicalization and violent extremism. He urged the Muslim community to modify and oversee that the converts should be taught the right teachings of Islam. He suggested for continuation of such engagements so that the youth can have a platform where they can state their issues and be heard. He emphasized on the seriousness of COVID19 and urged people to follow and uphold the protocols and measures put in place by the ministry of health in fighting and preventing infection form COVID19.

### **Conclusion**

It is critical, therefore, for the country to scale up available social assistance programs to provide poor households with food, water, and other basic supplies to cope with the crisis. It is also important, to customize COVID-19 spread containment measures to reflect local context and peculiar constraints faced by government such as limited fiscal space, and much less operational capacity to respond to help households and firms weather the crisis. It is also important for Community Based Organizations to contribute to the society by assisting with implementing the of the Government's directives and to ensure they are aware of preventive measures in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The community forum closed with a vote of thanks given by Ms. Sylvia Mathenge, the Head of Programs at Agents of Peace and Mzee Hussein the representative of the Kamukunji Sub-County Peace Committee. The attendees then proceeded to have lunch and departed on their own accord.

# Pictorials

