Countering Radicalisation in Communities: The Case of Pumwani, Nairobi

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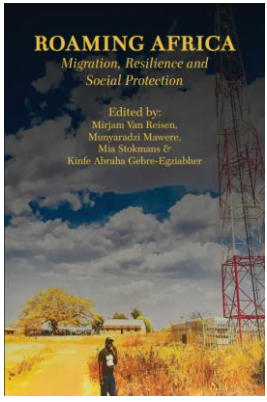

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Reginald Nalugala

Introduction

The Nairobi suburb of Eastleigh, located next to Pumwani in Kamukunji Constituency, is nicknamed 'little Mogadishu' and hosts a thriving Somali community living in Kenya, including many businesses. In recent years, Kamukunji has been associated with violent extremism, following attacks by the Somali-based terror group Al-Shabaab. Al Jazeera summarised the most recent attacks as follows:

> *2013: In September 2013, al-Shabab fighters stormed Nairobi's Westgate Mall, firing indiscriminately at shoppers and killing 67 people in a siege that lasted 80 hours.*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *2014: In November 2014, members of Somalia's al-Shabab armed group hijacked a bus in Kenya and killed 28 non-Muslims on board.*
>
> *[…]*

When the community in Pumwani realised that its mosque had been infiltrated by Al-Shabaab it tackled the problem at the community level, involving youth in the solution. It found social exclusion to be a root cause of radicalisation, as it gave rise to disorientation and frustration. The high-handed security approach taken by the authorities was also found to be counterproductive, increasing the sense of exclusion felt by youth. Collaboration between leaders of different faiths and listening to the problems of youth formed the basis of a new approach. By providing youth with a future through education and income-generating activities, while involving them in leadership, the community was able to counter radicalisation at it roots and reignite pride in the community.

April 2015: Al-Shabab launched an assault on Garissa University College in Kenya, killing 148, mainly students.

January 2016: Fighters from the Somali armed group assaulted a Kenyan-run military base for African Union peacekeepers, killing scores of Kenyan soldiers.

January 2019: Two explosions and gunfire heard at an upscale hotel complex in Nairobi, Kenya's capital. (Al Jazeera, 2019)

An Al-Shabaab spokesman explained to Al Jazeera why the attacks were carried out: "What happened … we did in revenge for what the non-believer government has done to innocent Muslims" (Al Jazeera, 2019). The attacks were found to be connected to one of the mosques in in Pumwani, Riadhaa Mosque (International Crisis Group, 2014; Anzalone, 2012; UN Security Council, 2013; Murunga, 2012; Anderson, 2014). The mosque had been infiltrated by Al-Shabaab through its Kenyan branch, a group known as Al-Hijra (formerly the Muslim Youth Center), and became the epicentre for the radicalisation of youth in Kenya (Anzalone, 2012).

This chapter reflects on ways to counter the radicalisation of Somali migrants and refugees in Pumwani ward in Kamukunji Constituency, Nairobi, Kenya. The study on which it is based is set in the context of perceived exclusion as a result of migration within Africa. Push factors such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, political and economic marginalisation are commonly believed to be the underlying root causes of radicalisation (Hassan, 2012). In addition, many scholars have pointed out that the social exclusion of youth feeds into the recruitment strategies of terrorist group (UNDP, 2019; Chin, 2015; Costanza, 2015). At the same time, certain positive characteristics and benefits 'pull' vulnerable individuals to join such groups, including a sense of belonging, the strong bonds of brotherhood that are created, desire for reputation building, and other socialisation benefits (Hellsten, 2016). Political drivers are also present, but not usually discussed (Hegghammer, 2007). Once inside the criminal networks, youth often find that are unable to leave. It is from this perspective that this chapter seeks to explore a preventative model that can be applied to prevent vulnerable youth from joining violent extremist groups.

Kenya is taken as a case study to investigate the factors contributing to youth radicalisation. In particular, the study looks how the Kamukunji Community Peace Network (KCPN) in Punwami ward tackled the problem of radicalisation by involving youth in addressing their own issues and providing a different narrative on migration, and on Kamukunji in general, as a place they could be proud of. The main research question is: *What are the factors identified by the KCPN as leading to the radicalisation of youth in Punwami and what was their approach to prevent youth from being recruited by violent extremist groups.*

Radicalisation in Kenya

In developing countries and fragile states, powerful transnational criminal networks constitute a direct threat to the state itself, not through open confrontation, but by penetrating state institutions through bribery and corruption and by subverting or undermining them from within (Gastrow, 2011). Governments that lack the capacity to counter such penetration, or that acquiesce to it, face the threat of state institutions becoming dysfunctional and criminalised, and the very foundation of the state being undermined. As a result, more and more youth migrate across borders to other countries and continents to escape the situation, and those who cannot find what they seek join gangs, criminal organisations and terrorist networks (Gastrow, 2011).

The 2019 study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Journey to Extremism in Africa,* underscores that one of the main drivers of extremism in Africa is lack of inclusion (on the inclusion of youth, see also Chapter 21, *Where are the Youth? The Missing Agenda in Somalia's Constitution*, by Istar Ahmed). This is a move away from the much publicised narrative calling for prevention mechanisms, based on military options and security (UNDP, 2019). In his opening remarks, Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, said: "I am convinced that the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, of human rights and with economic opportunities for all, represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism" (UNDP, 2019). The report makes

the connection between violent extremism and lack of the attainment of development goals. These findings unequivocally underscore the relevance of economic factors in radicalisation, as multidimensional poverty leads to multifaceted grievances (UNDP, 2019, pp. 5–6).

This understanding has profound policy implications for preventing the recruitment of especially African youth by violent extremist groups. Bashir (2016) and Mulata (2015) conducted extensive investigations into the factors that contribute to the radicalisation of youth in Kenya. Some of the main factors that emerged from their research were high unemployment, the marginalisation of certain regions, idleness, the false interpretation of religious teaching, and poverty. They also blamed poor governance, government repression in the form of counter-terrorism measures, and radicalised religious environments. In addition, the media was found to play a role through irresponsible reporting, fuelling discrimination and lighting the embers of radicalisation, and globalisation comes into play, as youth see other youth being brutalised or praised for atrocities committed. This view diverges from the popular belief, supported by some studies, that radicalisation is strongly driven by religion (Mills & Miller, 2017; Crone, 2016). The failure of authorities to listen to the complaints of local communities creates a fertile breeding ground for extremism and terrorist activities.

In East Africa, Kenya is considered one of the key countries that is threatened by forced migration, trafficking, and recruitment by criminal gangs and violent extremist groups. Since 2008, Kenya has experienced a dramatic rise in violent extremism, with youth being recruited into crime and terror networks. Between 1970 and 2007, the country experienced 190 terrorist attacks, an average of five per year; since 2008, the average has escalated to 47 attacks a year. The overwhelming majority of these incidents have been attributed to Al-Shabaab (Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke & Humphrey, 2016; Allan, Glazzard, Jesperson, Reddy-Tumu & Winterbotham, 2015). During the same period, there has been massive youth radicalisation, an increase in drug trafficking, the proliferation of guns from the warring regions, and increased migration across borders. Safety, security and

rule of law in Kenya have been tested (Finn, Momani, Opatowski & Opondo, 2016; Villa-Vicencio *et al.*, 2016). Gastrow (2011) presents a vivid account of the situation in his reported titled, *Termites at Work. A Report on Transnational Organized Crime and State Erosion in Kenya.* The author refers to a conference by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Programme for Eastern Africa in 2009, which identified inadequate levels of awareness and institutional capacity to counter illicit trafficking, organised crime, and terrorism in the region (Gastrow, 2011). At the conference, the executive director of UNODC said that "in Eastern Africa, warning lights are flashing: we must respond immediately" (cited in Gastrow, 2011, p. xii). In response, ministers from the 13 East African countries pledged their support for the programme. A few weeks after the conference, the UNODC executive director followed with a briefing to the United Nations Security Council in New York, in which he revealed that East Africa had become a receiver and transit zone for "30 to 35 tons of Afghan heroin", which was being trafficked into the region (Gastrow, 2011). He said that the region was "becoming a free economic zone for all sorts of trafficking: drugs, migrants, guns, hazardous wastes and natural resources". The report underlined the urgent need to strengthen governance in East Africa based on the rule of law (Gastrow, 2011). The threat posed by organised global crime in countries like Kenya is too serious to ignore (UNDP, 2019; Gastrow, 2011).

Nearly a decade later, the report, *Journey to Extremism in Africa* (UNDP, 2019) revealed startling new evidence to show that security-driven responses are often counter-productive and have been applied insensitively. These security-driven measures have not focused on rule of law and state accountability, citizens' participation and protection, human rights compliance, or the accountability of state security forces to uphold these rights. The report identifies that the measures to strengthen security have overlooked key aspects, such as the ability of citizens living in high-risk environments to access justice and human rights, and the need for capacity building to support local community run programmes.

The report also points out that without community-based programmes it may be impossible to fight violent extremism. Fuelling exclusion, the government runs the risk of perpetuating criminal power structures, which are overt drivers of recruitment by violent extremist groups in Africa. The report emphasises the need to reinvigorate state legitimacy through improved governance and accountability. This means moving away from an over-concentration on security-driven interventions to improved quality of life and better service delivery. Where the state is weak, citizens should be empowered to contribute to human development at all levels (UNDP, 2019; Rink & Sharma, 2018). Youth returning from migration are particularly vulnerable and, if not managed well, could be a threat to state security and the economic wellbeing of the community (Kana & Dore, 2014). Gielen (2015) observed that the role of the community they came from is crucial in building networks of help in the de-radicalisation of youth who want to reform after leaving terror groups (Dahl & Zalk, 2014). Therefore, communities are encouraged to embark on anti-radicalisation processes (IOM, 2019; Bizina & Gray, 2014) and build strong relations with different groups in communities (Nalugala, 2017).

Theoretical framework

This study uses the theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991; 2011) and the concept of a human rights culture by Rorty (1998) as lenses through which to analyse the radicalisation of youth in Pumwani by violent extremist groups.

Theory of planned behaviour and social norms

Much of the literature on criminal and terrorist organisations has focused on the security aspects, but what is not discussed is the contribution of social norms to explain the participation of the youth in such groups. The theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991; 2011) takes social norms, as well as attitudes and perceived behaviour, into account when explaining behaviour. It links behaviour to intended behaviour. The theory started in 1980 as the theory of reasoned action, to predict an individual's intention to engage in a

behaviour at a specific time and place and was intended to explain all behaviours over which people have the ability to exert self-control.

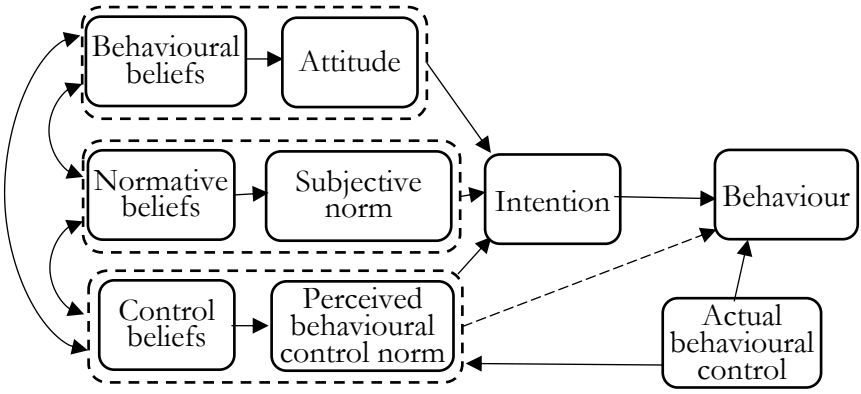

Figure 9.1. Theory of planned behaviour
Source: Ajzen (1991)

According to Ajzen (1991; 2011), a planned behaviour is a function of intention. Intention is built on the relationship between three factors: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Intended behaviour is related to the three constructs. Firstly, individual attitude relates to the example of a vegetable vendor wanting to change our attitude about his products so we will actually buy them. Attitudes, combined with social norms and perceived control and norms, actually predict our intentions. The second is social norms. Our social values are the things that we perceive our social environment deems important, such as equality, honesty, education, effort, perseverance, loyalty, faithfulness, conservation of the environment, and many other concepts. Beliefs are judgments about us and the world around us – they are usually generalisations. The third factor is perceived behavioural control. The factors affecting behavioural control fall into categories according to the type of instructions given and by who (Kupp, Schmitz & Habel, 2019), and the perception of what one can or cannot do. Perceived behavioural control can also lead directly to positive behaviour, because if you perceive that you must do something positive you will generally do it (Ajzen, 1991; 2011; see also Kupp *et al.*, 2019;

Blackman, Buick, O'Flynn, O'Donnell & West, 2019). The question of who controls who, and how, raises the question of rights in different narratives within a given community and its culture. This brings us to the concept of a human rights culture and it relevance to our topic.

Human rights culture

Richard Rorty, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), brings into the discussion a theoretical framework around human rights, rationality, and sentimentality. He talks of finding an alternative feature of what he calls 'humanness' (Tartaglia, 2011). As Rorty observes, "Traditionally, the name of the shared human attribute which supposedly 'grounds' morality is 'rationality' and 'human rights culture" (Rorty, 1979, p. xx). For Rorty, the human rights culture is what is left of human rights when we give up the idea that there are natural rights grounded in some aspect of our humanity itself. This is the idea underpinning the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which remains as relevant today as it was on the day it was proclaimed in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly. The extraordinary vision and resolve of the drafters produced a document that, for the first time, articulated the rights and freedoms to which every human being is equally and inalienably entitled, declaring that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (UN General Assembly, 2016).

The commitments made by party states in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are in themselves a mighty achievement. This Declaration promises to all the economic, social, political, cultural and civic rights that underpin a life free from want and fear (UN General Assembly, 2016). In 2015, the UN General Assembly reviewed the 1948 UN Charter on Human Rights. Part of the conclusion endorsed by the General Assembly states that human rights are the inalienable entitlement of all people, at all times, and in all places – people of every colour, from every race and ethnic group, whether or not they are disabled, citizens or migrants, no matter their sex, their class, their caste, their creed, their age or sexual orientation. This means that governments of any nation that ratified the 2015 declaration should

ensure that all human beings, whether refugees, migrants or citizens, enjoy equal rights. However, for Rorty, there are certain rights that are culturally specific. He argues that a given society can surrender to what is universally called human rights, but at the community there is always a human rights culture (Rorty, 1979).

In 'Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality', volume three of his *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers*, Rorty sets out three pragmatic ways one can apply rationality and human rights culture to human rights (Rorty, 1998). The first argument is based on 'foundationalist' philosophers like Plato, Aquinas and Kant, who tried to find premises that were true for all human beings. They developed a moral philosophy that argued that human beings were capable of having moral intuitions and justifying those moral intuitions independently. However, Rorty was unable to find such foundations; instead he purports that our moral community determines what is morally good, and we cannot go beyond our language and our historical conditions to find moral 'truth-in-itself'. Rorty says that:

> *The most philosophy can hope to do is to summarize our culturally influenced intuitions about the right thing to do in various situations. The summary is effected by formulating a generalization from which these intuitions can be deduced… That generalization is not supposed to ground our intuitions, but rather to summarize them.* (Rorty, 1998, p. 171).

The second reflection is based on Rorty as a pragmatist and is not about proving moral truths, but finding what works. This aspect of a human rights culture is about how best to fulfil the utopian vision sketched by philosophers like Plato, Aquinas and Kant; for instance:

> *If the activities of those who attempt to achieve this foundationalist sort of knowledge appears to be of little use in actualizing this utopia. That is a reason to think there is no such knowledge. If it seems that most of the work of changing moral intuitions is being done by manipulating our feelings rather than by increasing our knowledge, that is a reason to think there is no knowledge of the sort that philosophers like Plato, Aquinas, and Kant hoped to get.* (Rorty, 1998, p. 172)

Therefore, appeals to reason and knowledge carry little weight, according to Rorty. His argument focuses on what works. His conclusion is that "the emergence of the human rights culture seems to owe nothing to increased moral knowledge, and everything to hearing sad and sentimental stories" (Rorty, 1998, p. 172). This implies that those who use terrorist activities to hurt others, do not care that the victims are human beings. Their mind is set on what they see as the right thing to do. This conclusion forces Rorty to argue that:

> *It does little good to point out to the people I have just described that many Muslims and women are good at mathematics or engineering or jurisprudence. Resentful young Nazi toughs were quite aware that many Jews were clever and learned, but this only added to the pleasure they took in beating such Jews. Nor does it do much good to get such people to read Kant and agree that one should not treat rational agents simply as means. For everything turns on who counts as a fellow human being, as a rational agent in the only relevant sense – the sense in which rational agency is synonymous with membership in our moral community.* (Rorty, 1998, p. 177)

The conclusion here is that hurting or killing another is not a problem if it is in line with the popular view. In this sense, rationality is superseded by adherence to cultural norms and views.

The third aspect by Rorty explores the manipulation of sentiments, through sentimental education and the promotion of cosmopolitan utopias. Rorty states that we should remain profoundly grateful to Plato and Kant, "not because they discovered truths but because they prophesied cosmopolitan utopias" (Rorty, 1998, p. 173); but if we put foundationalism behind us, we could "concentrate our energies on manipulating sentiments, on sentimental education" and that would be the best way to promote such cosmopolitan utopias. For Rorty:

> *That sort of education gets people of different kinds sufficiently well acquainted with one another that they are less tempted to think of those different from themselves as only quasi-human. The goal of this sort of manipulation of sentiment is to expand the reference of the terms 'our kind of people' and 'people like us'.* (Rorty, 1998, p. 176).

This means that local community leadership is fundamental in imparting the right education to its population, especially the youth. This corresponds with what the ethicist Annette Baier called a 'progress of sentiments', whose progress is towards increasingly seeing the similarities between ourselves and others, instead of the differences (Baier, 1991, see also Baier, 1987). It is Baier's work *Progress of Sentiments* that pushed Rorty (1998), as an anti-foundationalist, to critique the popular notion that 'bad people' are just deprived of moral knowledge (Rorty & Baier, 1995). Instead, he argues that a well-functioning human rights culture results from two conditions, 'security' and 'sympathy'. By 'security', Rorty means:

> *…cultivating conditions of life which are sufficiently risk-free as to make differences from others not so essential to one's self-respect, one's sense of worth. And by 'sympathy' I mean the sort of reactions Athenians had more of after seeing Aeschylus's The Persians than before, the sort that whites in the United States had more of after reading Uncle Tom's Cabin than before, the sort we have more of after watching television programs about the genocide in Bosnia.* (Rorty 1998, p. 180).

Research methodology

The study presented here is an ethnographic case study of Pumwani ward in Kamukunji Constituency carried out from January to July 2019. Kamukunji Constituency is located in the suburb of Eastleigh and has five wards, namely: Pumwani, Airbase (close to Eastleigh Airport), California, Eastleigh North and Eastleigh South (Gachie, 2019). Pumwani ward was selected for this study because of the experience of this community with violent extremism and migration. Following the civil war in Somalia that broke out in 1991, many Somali people sought asylum in the Somali-inhabited enclaves in Kenya, such as Pumwani, as migrants or refugees. The Somali community is known for its entrepreneurial spirit and the migrants quickly established themselves in the business sector, investing over USD 1.5 billion in the Eastlands (Shire, 2019; UNHCR, 2019; Kenya/Somalia, 2019). According to UNHCR (2019), Kenya currently hosts over 257,000 Somali refugees, with an estimated 22,000 people living and working in Nairobi, particularly in Eastleigh.

This study is based on discussions and interviews conducted over six weeks with the KCPN, which is formed by the leaders of all the five wards to run activities to divert the attention of youth away from criminal gangs and radicalisation leading to violent extremism. For the study, the researcher immersed himself in the community, including by participating in community meetings and holding conversations and interviews with community leaders and other members of the community. The researcher built trust through intermediaries who introduced him to the community, and by regularly visiting the site and participating in community meetings and conversations (held in Swahili and English). Notes were taken of the meetings, which were analysed and compared.

The social environment in Pumwani ward is dominated by the large, and beautiful, Riadhaa Mosque. After the attacks in 2014, the Government of Kenya accused the leadership of the mosque of encouraging extremism. The leadership took responsibility to investigate the situation and discovered that local youth through the mosque were in fact involved in violent extremism, which had been infiltrated by Al-Shabaab. This study investigates the work of organisations, such as KCPN, including with interfaith groups and other community-based organisations actively working in Pumwani to support and guide the youth to prevent them from being radicalised. The KCPN was established in 2014 and officially registered as a community based organisation in 2016. From his interractions with KCPN leaders, the researcher learnt that there are other organisations actively involved in improving the situation in Kamukunji, including the Muslim Youth Alliance, Life and Peace Institute, Centre for Christian Muslim Relations in Eastleigh, and Foundation for Somalia. The next sections present the results of the research.

The rise of extremism in Riadhaa Mosque

The most startling revelation of the study, and perhaps the major driver of radicalisation in Punwami, was the relationship between the youth and the elders managing the Riadhaa Mosque. The mosque had

been taken over by youth prior to the attacks, and the elders had been pushed out. In trying to understand why this happened, the KCPN came to the following conclusion:

> *First, the elders were infiltrated by radicals who misguided the youth into joining terror groups eight years back. The period 2009–2014 saw many youth join Al-Shabaab. The Mosque had become a recruitment centre. Those who refused to agree were eliminated. Second, the elders were also not all supporting radicalisation. But now they were infiltrated by leaders with a different ideology. Third, the fear of police and fear of revenge from Al-Shabaab pushed the youth to unite and think of how to tackle the social challenges they faced. Fourth, The desire for a positive narrative could only succeed if the youth controlled the mosque, they thought.* (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019)

Control of the mosque also meant control of its funds: "The mosque generated a lot of revenue from well wishers. The youth leadership thought by controlling the Mosque, they would succeed in managing funds" (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019).

Omar and Salim Juma, who worship at the mosque, explained that the issue driving the conflict was that the money donated to the mosque was presumed by the youth as not being used to fight poverty. What was seen as lack of equal resource distrubution was a great driver of youth radicalisation and crime. So the KCPN and the mosque leadership looked for an amicable way that the youth and the elders could work together to solve these issues. Reconsidering the way the mosque was led was a priority for KCPN when it was established in 2014:

> *KCPN suggested equal representation to enhance good governance in the Kamukunji Constituency. The youth might have thought of the mosque as having money they should use for their short term objectives, but the KCPN proposed long-term projects. The result was the formation of a credit lending entity to support the youth in borrowing money for business. While the mosque handled Muslim youth, the local faith-based groups were also encouraged to help other youth through their church. Those who were coming back from frontline engagement with Al-Shabaab were*

induced into corrective and healing programes. One such programe is Kumekucha (a new dawn). (Orantes, Organizing Secretary and Youth Football Coach for KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019).

The community organisations realised that the youth felt left out and they wanted to be heard. The problems of the youth included:

> *…lack of employment, extreme poverty, fragmented families, environments of moral break-down, drug and alcohol abuse and petty crime, lack of education support, lack of law and order, and lack of community collaboration and leadership to resolve these issues.* (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019)

These problems gave rise to frustration and disorientation. The mosque leaders, decided to start income-generating activities as a way of countering extremism. The KCPN Chairman shared:

> *There have been different narratives about the mosque and its leadership. But from my point of view, l say that the youth felt that the time had come for the leadership to respond to their needs. From 2008 to 2012 the leadership of the mosque was preaching about the bad things that the youth were experiencing in Kamukunji Constituency. They highlighted the poverty situation, broken homes, police brutality, and no identity cards which meant one could not get employment, unemployment. And now the issue of Al-Shabaab giving hope to the youth has became part of the narrative.* (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019)

The leadership in the mosque was offering the possibility of joining Al-Shabaab, with the potential of having something to live for, a strong community and a goal in life: "Going to Somalia offered great opportunity, the leaders would say. No need to suffer but go to Somalia and join the Jihadi army, no papers, no identity card no police brutality" (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019).

However, the reality of joining Al-Shabaab did not give youth what was promised, and although many youth were disappointed, it was also very difficult to leave the group:

Once in Somalia, life was unbearable. Those who wanted to return found it extremely difficult. If they escaped and came back then they would be followed and killed. Spies were planted all over to flush out the returnees. If not killed by the security agents, then Al-Shabaab would use its own networks to kill deserters. So, for some, it was better to escape to Yemen, the Arabian Peninsular or to Europe… (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji Ward, 15 July 2019)

The security approach taken in Kamukunji further aggravated the situation:

The whole situation was guided by poor intelligence without the local community being part of the process. The interrogations by the security agents were so brutal that they exacerbated the situation. This played into the Al-Shabaab propaganda, instilling the sense that the youth were not wanted by the government. This promoted the alternative that it was better to fight and die as a Jihadi than to be beaten by the security forces. This pressure from the security agents saw many sympathisers join the Al-Shabaab movement. Some of the recruits came from public universities. The most well publicised was that of the Jomo Kenyatta University graduate with an engineering degree and a law student who was behind the 2015 Garrisa University Good Friday attack. (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019)

The security approach based on repression was counterproductive and when the KCPN was established it sought to develop a new approach.

Establishing new social norms

The KCPN identified six critical areas to work in to promote alternative social norms (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019):

- Security action that is based on desirable legal and social norms
- Interfaith dialogue and the involvement of community leaders
- Providing new role models of success to the youth

- Creating pride about Kamukunji Constituency as a historic place
- Embedding education in a comprehensive development approach
- Promoting youth participation in leadership

First, the KCPN engaged in meetings with police and security forces to point out that their approach was counterproductive and that unless the youth in the community themselves were engaged, the problem of terrorism could not be addressed. It was emphasised that the security actions should be based on behaviour that would give an example to the youth and that was coherent with values that would promote security.

The KCPN leaders decided that it was important to locate the problem within the community and closely worked with local leaders, who had much support. They contacted local Member of Parliament, Yusuf Hassan, himself a victim of violent extremism. During the 2013 election campaigns a group of people threw a grenande at his feet tearing his leg muscles to shreds. He had to undergo multiple corrective surgeries on his leg. Another leader working with KCPN is a famous former footbal player, Orantes, who is inspiring to the youth and provides an important role model. He engages the youth in news platforms about Kamukunji Constituency. Orantes and others have been involved in improving the image of Kamukunji by looking at its rich history.

In order to address the religious extremism, it was critical for KCPN to counsel the youth on faith. In order to do so, an interfaith programme was established to strengthen understanding and knowledge within and between the different faiths. KCPN partners with St John's Community Centre to provide leadership training and counselling. St John's also provides rooms in which both boys and girls can do their homework. KCPN works with the Programme for Christian-Muslim relations in Africa (POCMURA), Christian Muslims Interreligious Relations Network and local faith based

groups (within mosques and Christian churches) to advocate for interreligious dialogue.

The young energetic Director of KCPN, Mr Juma Salim, told the researchers:

> *Youth recruitment into violent extemism was tearing the community apart. Everyone looked at the Somali community as the breeding ground. The animosity was growing and hatred was burning inside everyone like twigs sprayed with petrol to burn. It was just a matter of time and the whole community would be at war with each other. This is when the community leaders from the Muslim and Christian fraternity started inter faith dialogue. From inter faith dialogue emerged the elders community from both faiths.* (Salim Juma, Director of KCPN, interview Kamukunji, 17 July 2019)

The elders of the different faiths now meet regularly, including the leaders of the Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox faiths. This has had an important impact:

> *We realised that there is a lot in common between our faiths. We started to understand that there is more in common than there are differences. There is no reason for us as leaders to create division. In fact we started to counsel understanding of the different faiths, and this also helped to increase knowledge of the own faith and a more pastoral approach to faith was the result.* (Muslim religious leader, interview, Kamukunji, 17 July 2019)

Due to the work on creating inter-religious understanding, the approach to education also needed to be revised:

> *The community was forced to re-think how knowledge is imparted to the youth. The single system of education, where Madaras was the only system, was negotiated and the syllabus expanded to include other disciplines. Also, Madarasas expanded so that children from other faiths could learn together.* (Salim Juma, Director of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 17 July 2019)

KCPN leaders established that out of every 10 radicalised youth joining violent extemist groups, 2 were well-educated sympathisers. It

was, therefore, critical to identify a response that would embed education in a comprehensive development programme. KCPN actively prepared and appointed youth leaders to lead the organisation, supported by elders of the community. Salim Juma is one of the youth leader, and works closely with other youth to lead the organisation. Girls and young women are also actively engaged as leaders in the organisation. On 1 August 2019 this led to the establishment of a further decentralised approach launched by KCPN, through the "formation of Kamakinji sub-county countering violent extremism network". The meeting was attended by sub-county leaders of different faiths (W, personal communication including photograh with Mirjam Van Reisen, WhatsApp, 1 August 2019).

Omar, one of the community leaders, a Muslim studying at Tangaza Catholic University in Nairobi, echoed Salim Juma's input. He testified as follows:

> *Due to the educational programme [University in the Slums Programme in Huruma], my mind has been opened and I have started seeing different realities about life, I did not know about. For instance, I did not see how different faiths could collaborate to fight extemism. But the exposure at Tangaza University slums programme and workshops at St John's Community Centre, Pumwani, showed me that it is possible to learn from one-another. This has changed my mind about the Muslim faith in relation to other faiths.* (Omar, community leader, interview, Kamukunji, 17 July 2019)

Kamukunji has an important heritage. Established by white colonists on the bank of the river outside the histotic city of Nairobi, it has been a place of resistance. The freedom fighters used to meet in this area and people would assemble to take hope and inspiration from their speeches. The word '*kamukunji*' actually means 'assembly'.

Freedom fighters like Kenyatta, Tom Mboya and Achieng Aneko lived and worked in Kamukunji in the 1950s. The house of Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of Kenya and father of the current

president, is located at the centre of Kamukunji. This important legacy was promoted to give youth a sense of pride and direction.

During a tour to see the important locations in the area, I was introduced to more places of political importance. Since the introduction of multi-party democracy in Kenya, Kamukunji has been associated with change. The famous Sabasaba Rally on 7 July 1990 was addressed there. In July 1990, Kenya experienced a momentous political development that not only shaped the present political scene, but also laid a strong foundation for the 2010 Constitution. In early July 1990, former Cabinet ministers Kenneth Matiba, Charles Rubia and Raila Odinga were arrested and detained for demanding the re-introduction of multi-party democracy. Despite a ban by the government, thousands of Kenyans marched in defiance of a previously unchallengeable regime to make their way to Nairobi's Kamukunji grounds to press the case for democracy. The marchers were led by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Masinde Muliro, Timothy Njoya, James Orengo, Paul Muite, Gitobu Imanyara, and Martin Shikuku, among others – famously known as fathers of democracy in Kenya (Oluoch, 2013).

Since July 1990, this gathering place, 'Kamukunji', has been used by politicians to launch new ideas in society. If one wants to be a national leader, he/she must address a 'kamukunji', a gathering of people, there. It is considered necessary to garner political support in Kamukunji if one is to rise to leadership in Kenya.

Programmes to transform the youth

Lack of protection is still one of the key concerns that youth express: "The pain and fear we have is for disappearances" (Participant, focus group dicussion, Kamukunji, 17 July 2019). Asked about such disappearances, one participant in the focus group discussion explained: "Security forces may come and lift you from your bed and you will never be seen again. You never return. We never hear from you again. We just don't know what happened to you" (Parcipant, focus group discussion, Kamukunji, 17 July 2019).

In order to counter this fear, KCPN felt it had to come up with a clear approach to strengthen citizens' rights and governance accountability in the Kamukunji area. To this end they set up regular meetings with relevant government authorities, including the police and security-related administration. This has helped to build trust and to fund ways of improving communication when problems arise (Jairo, Chairman of KCPN, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019).

In order to strengthen citizens' rights, the following key approaches have been developed by KCPN:

- Youth have been offered training on the Kenya Constitution and the law on marginalisation and anti-social behaviour. The organisation Kituo Cha Sheria provides legal aid education and has offered training as a key to changing youth's understanding of their rights. Legal aid programmes have also been established to support youth and to help them when their rights are violated by the security or police forces or other authorities.
- In order to deal with trauma, which is at a high level among members of the community, the project Kumekucha has been established to help youth and families to deal with the death of young people, through what they call a resilience framework. There are 282 families in this programme, which means these families have each lost relatives through crime or violent extemism.
- KCPN has introduced the Chichanue Initiative to counter crime and extremism. At the start of 2019, the project brought together 310 participants to discuss ways of countering extemism through income-generating activities and other initiatives.
- Some of the economic activities developed with the youth are motorbike transport, public toilets and hotshowers for a fee, miraa 'khat', games like ludo, spare-parts shops, open home industries like making baskets, and technical skills like plumbing and maintenance.

- New activities have been developed to support leisure activities to help build community spirit including football teams, running (including marathons), and training in DJing, music producing/promotion, dancing, photography, and social media, etc. Their most famous dance troupe is called FBI (Focus Beyond Initiative). The dancers from FBl won the national competition and are now competing in the US for the world title. KCPN feel encouraged by this group. It is a good example of their own endeavour to bring hope to the youth in Kamukunji Constituency.
- A young leader, Whitney, has been empowered to establish a programme for single mothers who are very young, and there are many of them (W, personal communication with Mirjam Van Reisen, WhatsApp, 1 August 2019).

Majengo Slum in Pumwani has been a known for prostitution since before World War II. Women are stigmatised and often traumatised from the violence they have experienced. This affects the youth. KCPN came up with a strong empowerment strategy. Women of all ages were organised into cooperatives to run transport. Women now operate minibuses, known as 'Matatu', as public transport. They also have motorbike riders working for them. One of the women leaders, called Fatima, explained that some women also had trained as events organisers, which could meant they could work setting up wedding receptions, political rallies, or fundraisers. In some wards, the women manage table bankings The Alamat Sacco for savings and credit lending is doing very well. With Kenya leading on mobile phone banking, the women have been very successful in credit lending. Khadija and Mueni are some of the women involved in event organising and credit lending. They acknowldge the good work done by KCPN. They say that youth in their community are busy now.

Part of the fight for a wider space for democracy in Kenya is to give youth opportunities in education, which would prepare them for the workforce as well as for leadership. With KCPN on the ground, youth are going to university and acting as role models in Pumwani. For instance, Whitney is an engineering student at the Kenya Institute of

Highway Engineering. She passionately emphasied that: "Youth need an enabling environment in order to thrive. KCPN has embarked on building this space for youth" (Whitney, engineering student, interview, Kamukunji, 15 July 2019). Girls like Whitney are rallying other youth to go to school.

Conclusion

After the terror attacks by Al-Shabaab hit Kenya, the community in Kamukunji Consistency found itself fighting radicalisation within their own community, with Riadhaa Mosque as the epicentre. This chapter investigates the approach of the community-based Kamukunji Community Peace Network to counter the radicalisation of its youth. The theoretical framework for the study was provided by the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; 2011) and the concept of a human rights culture (Rorty, 1998).

In order to achieve results, KCPN had to conduct an in-depth analysis of the problems that had led to the situation in which many of the youth were lured by extremist groups, supported by the local mosque, which had been taken over by radicalised youth. KCPN reconstructed the history of what had happened, but also listened to the youth about the problems that had resulted in their radicalisation. After identifying the frustrations and problems of the youth, KCPN set out a comprehensive strategy. It brought in youth leaders to direct the programmes, supported by elders in the organisation, and famous people and people of standing as positive role models for the youth.

KCPN found that the violence committed by police and security forces to curb security challenges was counterproductive and exacerbated the marginalisation of the youth, who felt that they were not entitled to rights – which were there on paper, but not in reality. Rorty emphasises that rights are only available if there is a human rights culture supporting such rights. In discussions with the authorities, these problems were confronted and legal aid organisations were brought in to make sure that youth had access to justice and were knowledgeable about their rights.

An important component of the approach taken by KCPN was to strengthen social values among youth in the community through interfaith dialogue, which has helped the religious leadership to provide a common foundation for the community, based on a shared understanding of what people from different faiths have in common, rather than divisions. KCPN's approach also focused on providing youth with positive examples and a positive image of their community and its history. These narratives about the important legacy of Kamukunji have strengthening a positive identity associated with the place.

To tackle problems of marginalisation, a comprehensive approach was taken to provide education and livelihoods, as well as to support community organisation, including for women and girls. Today Kamukunji is thriving and, despite its challenges, has strong social cohesion; it is no longer seen as a breeding ground for radicalisation. In this chapter, I have argued that while the government could control crime through security enforcement, it was unable to prevent the radicalisation that occurred in Kamukunji. In Kamukunji, the local community stepped in to organise ways of managing behaviour among the youth by strengthening social norms. The elders and youth leaders were enabled to direct how the youth behaved at work, school, mosques and churches, and during leisure. By strengthening shared social norms, the KCPN directed the behaviour of youth in new and positive ways, which has been more effective than the repressive security approaches, which merely exacerbated the problem.

Establishing strong social norms, through which youth find a place to contribute to the community and provide leadership for transformation, has been the key to addressing the problems of youth and providing them with a sense of participation in, and responsibility for, the community. By strengthening education on their rights and providing support to protect these, the norms based on the protection of human rights of people, from all faiths, were strengthened. The role of the community elders in supporting youth leaders to take responsibility for the protection and promotion of such rights has also helped to strengthen the accountability of the

Kenyan government and security forces for respecting and upholding these rights. While this may not always be the reality, the result has been strong norm setting in a rights-based approach, which has led to a rights-based culture of dealing with tensions and conflict. The youth in Kamukunji are now the owners of their future, and proudly hold the legacy of this historic place in their hands, associated no longer with violence, but indeed with *kamukunji*, the 'assembly'.

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