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MEET ME AT THE MASKANI: A Mapping of Influencers, Networks, and Communication Channels in Kenya and Tanzania

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Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DM&E	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
DNH	Do No Harm
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILT	Institutional Learning Team
KII	Key Informant Interview
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SNA	Social Network Analysis
TVE	Transforming Violent Extremism
VE	Violent Extremism

1. Executive Summary

Radicalization across East Africa has increased in recent years.¹ Affecting both Kenya and Tanzania, both countries have focused national and regional efforts to prevent and counter² violent extremism. To inform these efforts, extensive research has been conducted in the region, especially on push and pull factors of violent extremism (VE). While knowledge of overarching push and pull factors, such as unemployment, corruption, drug trafficking, etc., is critical to understand drivers of violent extremism, an in-depth understanding of stakeholders and community members who have the power to influence others' decisions to participate in violent extremism groups is needed to inform more effective programming addressing this issue.

In response to this need, Search for Common Ground (Search) conducted research that aimed to map key influencers, networks and communication channels that drive and prevent violent extremism in at-risk areas of Kenya and Tanzania. Key questions revolved around the specific role of certain influencers (family, peers, teachers, etc.), and the communication tools and narratives used to communicate with and by at-risk populations. The research also sought to gain insight into the nexus between radicalization, mobilization and action, using the information gathered to identify key opportunities for civil society engagement to leverage influencers to prevent violent extremism.

Search developed a participatory mapping methodology based on social network analysis (SNA), in order gain insight into these issues. The research targeted at-risk populations in Tanzania (Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Zanzibar) as well as Kenya (Nairobi, Mandera, Kwale and Mombasa).³ It took place in April, and was validated in a civil society workshop in May 2017.

Methodology

The methodology of this assessment consisted of a mixed methods approach combining **1)** qualitative Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), with **2)** the use of a quantitative SNA tool in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). KIIs were held with 32 leaders from the following categories: religious leaders, traditional leaders/local administrators, school teachers/administrators and Civil Society Organization (CSO) leaders.

FGDs were held with a total of 255 men and women (both under and over 35 years older) who were considered at-risk for radicalization. Data collection was led by a team of six local researchers.

¹Anneli Botha (2013), 'Assessing the Vulnerability of Kenyan Youths', Institute for Security Studies Paper, available at <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/Paper245.pdf>.

²While "Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)" and "Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)" are mentioned here, Search for Common Ground prefers to use "Transforming Violent Extremism (TVE)" for their work in this area. This is explained in detail in "[Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder's Guide](#)": "Transforming violent extremism recognizes that while violent extremism exists, the reasons and motivators leading to an individual being drawn to violent extremist movements can be transformed into a different type of agency or engagement. This is distinct from countering violent extremism, which is reactive to extremist violence rather than aimed at altering the dynamics that motivate it."

³ Social Network Analysis is a mapping and measuring of relationships and flows between individuals, groups, and organizations (see <http://www.orgnet.com/sna.html>).

Key Findings

The key findings are broken down into four categories: **1) Influencers**, **2) Networks**, **3) Communication Channels** and **4) Civil Society and VE**.

Influencers

In this research, “influencers” were defined as those who at-risk individuals turned to for advice. Participants were first asked, “What types of frustrations do you have in your life?” *Poverty* and *unemployment* were the top frustrations mentioned. Overall, the frustrations cited echoed findings on push factors in the literature (poverty, lack of education, police harassment, corruption, etc.).

Once participants shared their frustrations, they were then asked who they turned to for advice (i.e. “influencers”), and what kinds of solutions these people suggested. Respondents most often turn to their friends and peers to discuss their frustrations. Friends and peers were mentioned roughly twice as many times as family members, and four times as much as religious leaders.

While participants indicated that they mostly spoke to family and friends about their frustrations, key informants (many of them community and religious leaders) mentioned religious and political leaders most often as the key influencers of those at-risk. The disconnect between at-risk community members and community leaders was notable in several findings. Validation meetings with researchers and practitioners revealed several explanations for this discrepancy.⁴ First, it was noted that religious and political leaders, who are often well respected in the community, are not the first people that individuals turn to with their frustrations because they do not want to show this group of people how they are struggling. Instead, they turn to people they can access more immediately. Related to the first point, the *indirect* nature of political and religious leaders’ influence is also an important factor for consideration. Two types of influence were mentioned here: influence through public speeches and messages, and influence by proxy wherein leaders influence a smaller group who then directly engages with community members (often playing the role of “friends”). Finally, several participants noted that the influence of these leaders might be overestimated within populations at high risk for mobilization, further underlining their marginalization from traditional channels of influence and guidance.

As the research is intended for use by civil society, we should note that civil society members were hardly mentioned as influencers by any participants. This means that at-risk individuals in these locations are not turning to CSOs to voice their frustrations or more importantly, to find solutions. There seems to be a “crisis of confidence” when it comes to CSOs; both community respondents and key informants noted that CSOs are not often trusted by these communities.

Overall, many participants (107) indicated that influencers did not provide any solutions. For those who did report solutions being proposed, the “solutions” were more general encouragement than practical actions. This means that many of these highly vulnerable individuals are left with few options: to simply

⁴ The sensitivity of these questions did raise concerns that individuals were simply reticent to name religious and political leaders as influencers of violence, but their underrepresentation across several types of influence indicated that they were actually less present in the minds of the respondents. Respondents also mentioned geographic places of importance such as mosques and government buildings, indicating that the sensitivities discussing these issues could not account for the notable differences between community responses and key informant responses.

endure their frustrations, to try harder to overcome them (without any concrete support or suggestions for how to do so) or to seek solutions elsewhere outside of their friends and family. With such limited options, they are left highly vulnerable to recruiters who can offer tangible solutions.

While the few solutions offered to participants were predominantly non-violent, some were violent. For example, “form a vigilante group to disrupt curfew order” or “stone the police patrol car” both indicated violence as a solution. Participants largely reported that friends and informal contacts most often advocate violent solutions. However, when key informants were asked who encourages violence in their community, their responses again differed. As noted above with regards to general influence, they claimed it was most often religious and political leaders (not peers and friends) who encourage violence in their community. Again, this discrepancy might be explained by the fact that certain religious and political leaders encourage violence indirectly, but also indicates a disconnect between what leaders think and the reality for community members. This notes a critical weakness in strategies intended to address VE that are informed by these leaders’ perceptions, and more exploration is needed to understand these differences.

Compared to those that propose violent solutions, the network of influencers who propose non-violent solutions is much larger and more diverse. Yet, while many influencers propose non-violent solutions to participants’ frustrations, these solutions are often not actionable for the recipient. Several recipients suggested to “work hard” or to persevere, which did not provide clear solutions to problems for community members’ challenges. This means that while many influencers may wish to encourage non-violence, and attempt to do so, they do not have the skills or capabilities required to do so convincingly.

Networks

We explored the spaces that are important to at-risk individuals and where they go to discuss their problems and seek advice. To better understand this, participants were asked to name ten places that were important to them. The three most mentioned were digital spaces (like Facebook and WhatsApp), consumer spaces (like shops and markets), and personal homes (of the participants themselves, family, friends, etc.) Overall, 13% of the spaces respondents mentioned were digital spaces.

Once participants identified the ten most important places in their lives, they were also asked in which of these locations they discussed their frustrations. Participants most often reported that they discussed their frustrations in their homes, mosques and maskanis.⁵ Other important spaces where participants discuss their frustrations are the market, school and college, hotels (where people meet up to chat and relax, not for lodging), Facebook and WhatsApp. Differences between men and women were pronounced. For men, common locations for discussing their frustrations were home, maskanis, football fields, and hotels (term used as noted above), whereas for women, it was most often “home.” CSOs were largely absent, reinforcing what was found in the preceding section: at-risk individuals in these areas do not turn to CSOs with their frustrations.

⁵ Maskanis are places where people gather informally to relax and be social with peers. A maskani is also sometimes referred to as a “Base”, “Baze” or “Camp” in some cases. They often have a particular name associated with them like “Maskani California”. However, there is some difference to the way that the term maskani is used in Tanzanian and Kenyan contexts. This will be explored later in the report.

Participants were also asked to rank the top five places they went the most often. Mapping the places that are the *most* frequented (top two ranked places) is important because it is in these places where deeper engagement might take place. Religious spaces, personal homes, and work were reported as the most frequented spaces. This means that while digital and consumer spaces are better for broader based engagement over time, religious and professional spaces are likely to be better suited for deeper engagement.

Communication Channels

The section explores the ways that at-risk individuals get access to and share information. At-risk individuals have a number of communication devices at their disposal. All but two of the respondents had a phone, 93 had a computer and 62 had a tablet. More than half of the participants (54%) reported spending more than two hours a day online. Further, 79% reported spending at least some time online per day. This is notable—even those considered “at-risk” (unemployed, underemployed, vulnerable youth, etc.) have significant access to internet.

Participants were asked what communication channels they used. Despite the fact that digital spaces were very important to participants, face-to-face conversation, radio and television were the most frequently mentioned communication channels, for both men and women. However, more men reported using Facebook and WhatsApp. Overall, while Facebook, WhatsApp, and other types of social media did feature in the network, they were less prominent than expected.

When disaggregated by region, the findings are very similar: in all regions in Kenya and Tanzania, face-to-face conversation, TV, radio and newspaper are key channels of communication for at-risk populations. However, in the Northeastern Region and Nairobi, Facebook featured much more prominently than in other regions.

When disaggregated by age, those under 35 use more diverse channels of communication. Face-to-face conversation, radio and TV are still the most important channels for them. But, they also use of Facebook, WhatsApp, and other forms of social media. Participants over 35, on the other hand, rarely reported using social media, preferring traditional communication channels: face-to-face conversation, TV, radio and phone calls.

Civil Society and VE

During the interviews with CSO leaders, a series of questions were asked in order to gain insight into the barriers to effectively addressing VE and possible ways to tackle these barriers. The two key barriers mentioned regarding CSOs were a lack of capacity among the CSOs (several comments were made that many CSOs are getting into this kind of work without a lot of experience) and a lack of cooperation among CSOs, as well as between CSOs and the government. These comments were also echoed during the strategic workshop.

Respondents explained that the lack of coordination between those working on VE in these areas lead to duplication and missed opportunities for learning. Participants underlined that the funding available for VE work has also introduced significant competition between CSOs, constituting a barrier to cooperation and leading to CSOs without VE experience obtaining funding to conduct VE programming. Many CSOs are doing this work in the same communities leading to duplication and inefficiencies. While there are

now County Action Plans on CVE in Kenya that support coordination of VE work, this is not yet happening in Tanzania.

Overall, while progress has been made in Kenya (and to a lesser extent in Tanzania) towards overcoming this barrier to more effective VE programming, there is still work to be done in both countries. To address these issues related to CSO capacities and coordination, key informants called for efforts to build CSO capacity as well as the creation of platforms to allow for information sharing and coordination among CSOs working on VE.

Recommendations

As this initiative aims to offer insight to CSOs about how to make programming more targeted and effective, we would highlight the following points for consideration while designing and implementing VE-related programs:

Current Gaps

1. Given the limited influence and credibility of CSOs noted by the participants, it would be worthwhile to reflect on how we are engaging as individual organizations and as a sector. Every organization could benefit from reflection around perceptions and approach, and then take steps to boost their capacity and credibility within the communities they are seeking to serve.
2. At-risk individuals are seeking advice and guidance to address their frustrations, especially from friends and family, but they are not accessing practical solutions from them. Focusing on empowering those trusted influencers (friends and family) with the tools they need to provide effective solutions, rather than seeking to engage directly and become a new influencer for at-risk individuals, could be an useful approach.

Where and How Can We Engage Better?

3. As maskanis are a key location where vulnerable young people discuss their frustrations, especially with their friends, programming could seek to leverage this type of atmosphere to create productive discussions of frustrations led by or with individuals prepared to offer constructive solutions.
4. Given that at-risk individuals indicated their homes and places of worship are the *most important* locations for them, CSO programming, which requires deeper and more sustained engagement, should be focused around these locations. Broader based programming seeking to target more people should target markets (consumer spaces) and social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) as these are the spaces *frequented by the most* at-risk individuals.
5. Despite the western fixation on “new” and social media, traditional forms of media and face-to-face interaction are still the most often used communication channels by at-risk individuals in these communities, particularly for deep engagement with issues they are facing. Therefore, when designing media programming, CSOs should focus predominantly on traditional channels to reach at-risk groups, while media programming platforms may be used to engage broader audiences to support community resilience to VE issues.
6. There are many narratives and stories being used in communities in Kenya and Tanzania that encourage non-violent behavior. CSOs should harness these narratives, drawing inspiration from

the stories, for use in their media programming. This should be prioritized over trying to discredit or “counter” those narratives, which advocate violence.

7. The two key barriers mentioned with regards to CSOs were a lack of capacity among the CSOs and a lack of cooperation among CSOs. Potential funding for VE work has introduced a lot of competition between CSOs, which both constitutes a barrier to cooperation and leads to CSOs without VE experience obtaining funding to conduct VE programming. This lack of coordination between those working on VE leads to duplication and missed opportunities for learning. Therefore, donors should make efforts to vet potential CSO grantees more extensively based on their experience and capacities with regards to VE. Donors, international NGOs, and other relevant actors should work to build CSO capacity in VE. Platforms should be created to allow for information sharing and coordination among CSOs working on VE, especially in Tanzania.

2. Background Information

Introduction

Radicalization across East Africa has increased over the last few years, especially driven by Al Shabaab, a Somalia-based militant group active across the region.⁶ While recently Kenya has experienced many attacks by radical groups (mostly linked to Al Shabaab), Tanzania has also grown increasingly vulnerable.⁷ This increase in both countries has resulted in additional focus being placed on national and regional efforts to prevent and counter⁸ violent extremism (VE) in these countries. To inform these efforts, extensive research has been conducted in the region, especially seeking to understand push and pull⁹ factors driving involvement in these groups.

However, recent research has also shown that categorization of violent extremism drivers into push and pull factors can be simplistic and not comprehensive¹⁰, and thus, there is a need to be more nuanced and creative in analysis and approaches. In addition, while knowledge of overall push and pull factors, such as unemployment, corruption, drug trafficking, etc., is critical to understand causes of violent extremism, an in-depth understanding of stakeholders and community members who have the power to influence others' decision to join violent extremism groups or activities is needed. This would enable organizations like Search for Common Ground (Search) and local civil society organizations (CSOs) to design more effective violent extremism prevention programming.

Methodology

In response to the need detailed above, Search conducted research with the following objectives:

1. To gain an in-depth understanding of key influencers, networks and communication channels at the local level that can drive or prevent violent extremism.
2. To explore the nexus between radicalization, mobilization and action, with a focus on understanding the role that inhibitors, catalysts and peer networks play in this process.

⁶ Anneli Botha (2013), 'Assessing the Vulnerability of Kenyan Youths', Institute for Security Studies Paper, available at <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/Paper245.pdf>.

⁷ Le Sage, Andre. "The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats." 2014. Report. Institute for National Strategic Studies

⁸ While "Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)" and "Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)" are mentioned here, Search for Common Ground prefers to use "Transforming Violent Extremism (TVE)" for their work in this area. This is explained in detail in "Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder's Guide": "Transforming violent extremism recognizes that while violent extremism exists, the reasons and motivators leading to an individual being drawn to violent extremist movements can be transformed into a different type of agency or engagement. This is distinct from countering violent extremism, which is reactive to extremist violence rather than aimed at altering the dynamics that motivate it." For more information see: <https://www.sfcg.org/transforming-violent-extremism-peacebuilders-guide/>

⁹ See Literature review (available on request).

¹⁰ James Khalil and Martine Zeuthen, "Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation," Whitehall Report 2-16.

3. To assess opportunities for civil society engagement to leverage influencers to prevent violent extremism in a localized and adapted manner.

The research began with an in-depth literature review¹¹ of research conducted on issues related to violent extremism in Kenya and Tanzania. This review was coupled with consultations with local and international civil society organizations (CSO) as well as government partners in order to determine the research that already existed and identify key gaps to address. Informed by the literature review and consultations, Search developed a participatory mapping methodology based on Social Network Analysis (SNA).¹²

Given the objectives of the research, the following research questions were selected, based on the gaps in research identified in the literature review:

Key Networks and Influencers

- What role does family play in shaping how people move towards or resist VE?
- What roles do women in the family play, in comparison to men?
- To what extent do friends influence people towards VE or to resist it?
- What role does the education system/networks play in pushing people towards VE as well to reject it?
- To what extent do teachers influence people towards VE or to resist it?

Communication

- How are communication tools and different mediums utilized to encourage or discourage radicalization and VE?
- What stories/narratives are most effective as push and pull factors for violent extremism?

Looking beyond religious frameworks: Testing the relationships between [radicalization], mobilization, and action

- What or who can prevent someone from perpetrating ideologically motivated violence?
- What or who can catalyze someone to perpetrate ideologically-motivated violence?
- How do peer networks impact mobilization/de-mobilization processes and perpetration/non-perpetration of violence, and vice versa?

Civil Society and VE

- What are the key barriers to effective discouragement of radicalization for local influencers working to prevent or counteract VE?
- How can local CSOs address these barriers in their support to these influencers?
- What lessons learned can be gathered from past or existing interventions?

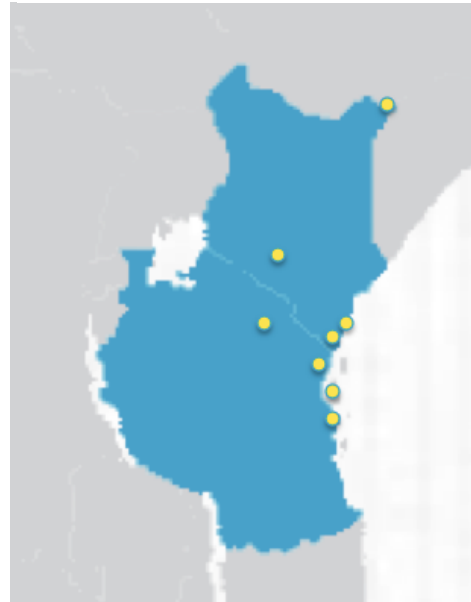
¹¹ Available on request.

¹² Social Network Analysis is a mapping and measuring of relationships and flows between individuals, groups, and organizations (see <http://www.orgnet.com/sna.html>).

Geographic Locations

The research targeted Kenya and Tanzania. Four locations were selected in each country, determined by their histories of attacks and violent extremist activity. For Tanzania they included: Arusha (Kaloleni, Lengata and Oloresha), Dar es Salaam (Kurasini, Magomeni and Mikocheni), Tanga (Mleni, Mafuriko, Amboni, Chumbageni and Barabara ya kumi na moja (Street No. 11)) and Zanzibar (Mombasa, Mlandege, Kisauni, Mwanakwerekwe, Rahaleo and Tunguu). For Kenya the research locations included: Nairobi (Eastleigh Section 1 and Majengo), Mandera (Mandera East and Lafey) and Kwale (Ng'ombeni, Waa, Diani, and Msambweni) and Mombasa (Likoni and Shika Adabu) in the Coast Region.

Figure 1: Research Locations



Timeframe

The literature review was completed in December 2016 and the terms of reference, recruitment of researchers, methodology and tools were developed between January and March 2017. A two-day workshop was held on March 23 and 24, 2017 in Mombasa, Kenya to orient the researchers on Search for Common Ground, the research questions and methodology, as well as the tools. During the workshop, the tools were tested, refined and then translated for use in each location. Data collection was carried out in both countries throughout April 2017. A three-day strategic workshop was held in May in Mombasa, Kenya, where the findings were presented, discussed and validated by a group of approximately 20 participants including CSO practitioners from the two countries, Search staff, and members of the research team.

Data Collection and Analysis

The methodology of this assessment consisted of a mixed methods approach combining **1)** qualitative Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), with **2)** the use of a quantitative SNA tool in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

1. Semi-structured KIIs were held with leaders from the following categories: religious leaders, traditional leaders/local administrators, school teachers/administrators and CSO leaders. The question guides were adapted for each type of key informant but contained many of the same core set of questions. For example, in addition to questions on influencers, networks and communication channels related to VE, the question guide for the CSO leaders included a series of questions focused on their experiences and lessons learned conducting VE programming in the area.¹³
2. FGDs using an SNA questionnaire with:

¹³ A full list of questions for the KII and FGD tools is available upon request.

- Young men (18-35)
- Young women (18-35)
- Older men (35 and up)
- Older women (35 and up)

As noted above, the FGD tool was designed from an SNA perspective to create a database of relational data. The questionnaire began with an introduction, request for consent and icebreaker. From there the participants were asked questions about their background (age, gender, religion, education level, occupation, etc.). They were also asked about their access to devices and amount of screen time (as a foundation for questions on communication channels). Conversation was then designed to flow into the places and spaces that were most important to participants, using a mapping technique to allow participants to comfortably engage in the discussion. Last, a series of questions were asked about where they talk about their frustrations, with whom, what solutions they give, etc. Finally, they were asked questions about the information channels they use.

Sampling

Key Informant Interviews

Overall, four KIIs were planned in each location, one with someone from each category, for a total of 32. See Table 1 below for counts of KIIs from each location.

In Kenya, the planned four KIIs were exceeded in Nairobi and Mandera, where identifying and reaching key informants proved relatively simple. While in the Coast Region, four KIIs were conducted in Kwale, but only two took place in Mombasa due to competing priorities for the time available. In Tanzania, the planned four KIIs took place in Tanga and Zanzibar, but in Arusha and Dar es Salaam only three and one, respectively, were conducted. Heavy rains made it difficult to find and meet key informants, hence the single interview in Dar es Salaam (though FGDs were not affected). While an effort was made to include women in the sample, this was not often possible given that most people who fill these roles in the targeted communities are men.

Table 1: KII participants

Tanzania	
Arusha	3
Dar es Salaam	1
Tanga	4
Zanzibar	4
Kenya	
Kwale	4
Mombasa	2
Nairobi	8
Mandera	6
Total	32

FGDs

For the FGDs using the SNA questionnaire purposive sampling of individuals at-risk for participation in VE was employed.

In Kenya, 16 FGDs were conducted, four in each location (with varying amounts of participants). In Tanzania, 12 FGDs were conducted: three in Tanga, three in Zanzibar, two in Arusha and four in Dar es Salaam. Heavy rains and sensitivity of the subject under study made it difficult to reach the planned number of FGDs in Arusha, Tanga and Zanzibar. Despite using well-established local networks people were, as was expected, very suspicious of the consultants. In some cases, people agreed to participate, and then changed their minds after hearing the questions.

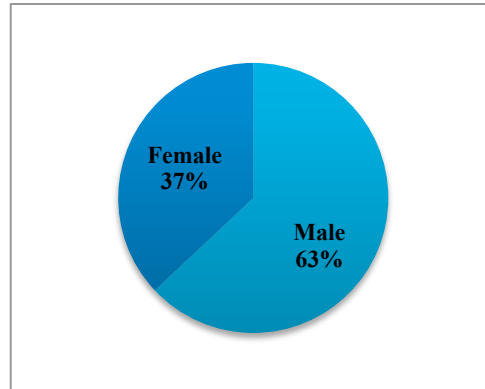
Mapping of Influencers, Networks, and Communication Channels in Kenya and Tanzania

For this reason, the number of actual participants varied by FGD. Finally, 255 individuals across Kenya (161) and Tanzania (94) participated in the FGDs using the SNA questionnaire (see Table 2). Of these, 159 participants were male (63%) and 95 female (37%) (see Graph 1). 210 of the participants were under 35 (see Table 3), for 85% of the total (see Graph 2).

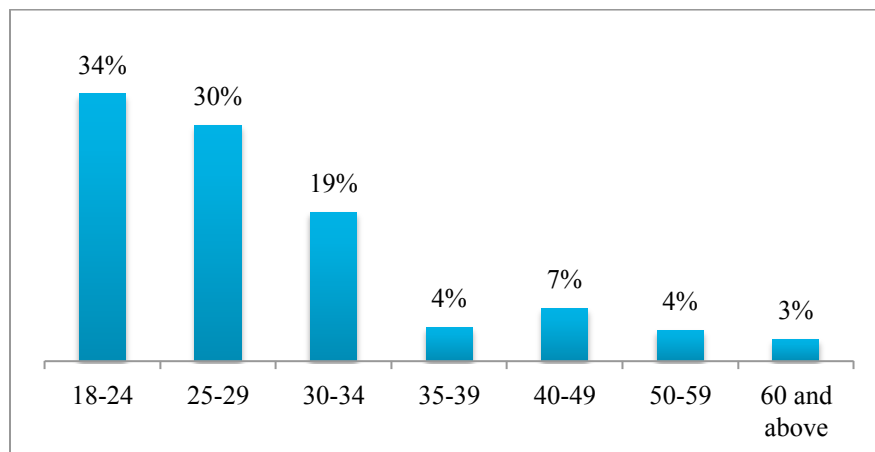
Table 2: FGD participants

Tanzania	
Tanga	24
Zanzibar	20
Arusha	17
Dar es Salaam	33
Kenya	
Kwale	32
Mombasa	32
Nairobi	43
Mandera	54
Total	255

Graph 1: Participant gender, percentage

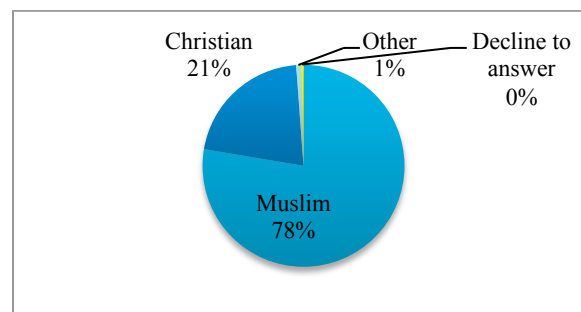


Graph 2: Participant age, percentage



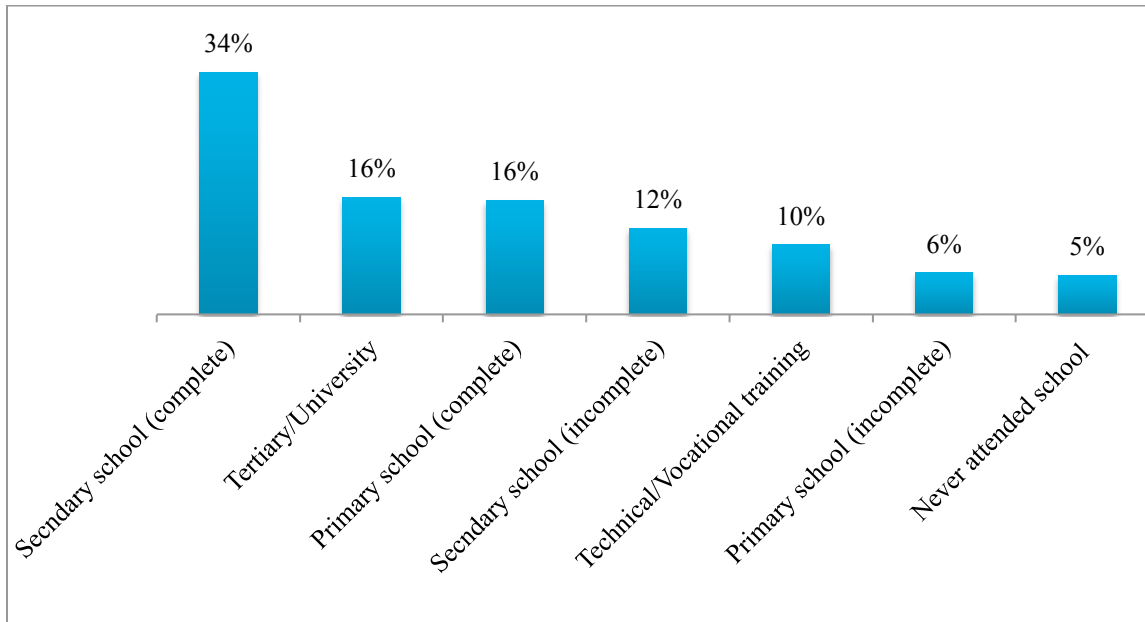
Overall, the vast majority of participants were Muslim, but roughly one in five were Christian. The majority of Christian participants were Tanzanian.

Graph 3: Participant religion



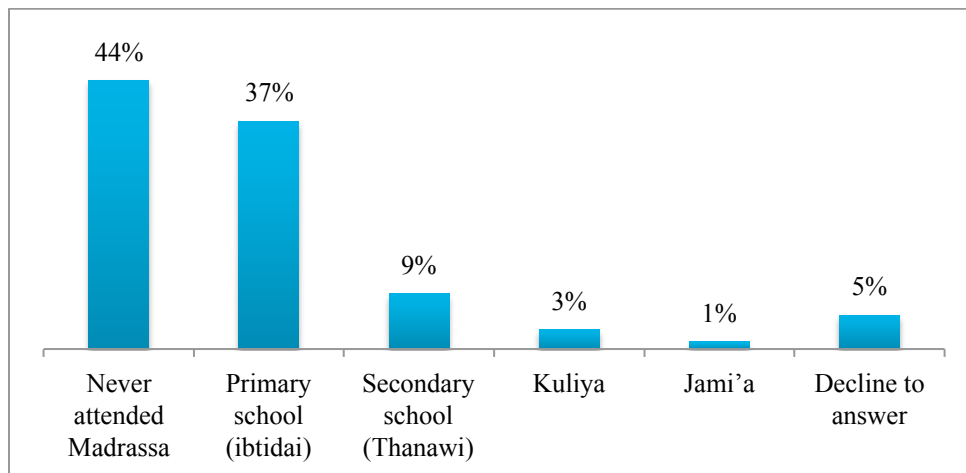
Participants' level of education varied, with 50% having completed secondary school or higher and only 5% having never attended school. See Graph 4 below for more details.

Graph 4: Participant education level



Participants were also asked about their attendance at *madrassa*¹⁴ – 44% had never attended *madrassa*, while the rest had attended some *madrassa* schooling or declined to answer (see Graph 5).

Graph 5: Participant *madrassa* attendance¹⁵

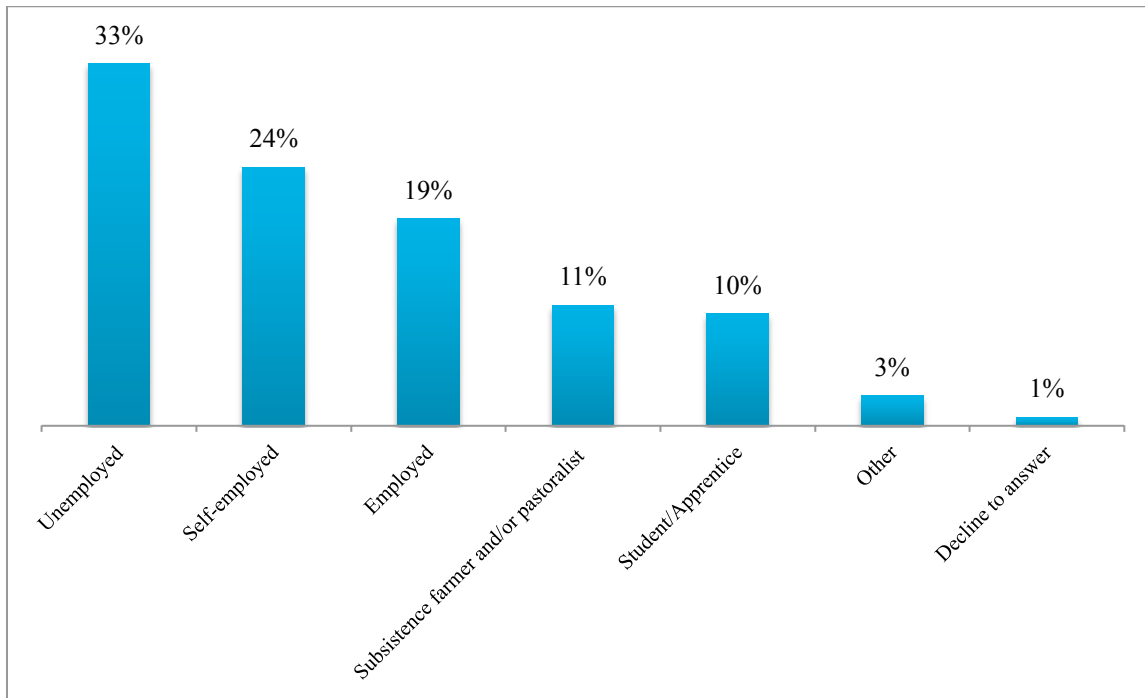


Finally, 33% of participants were unemployed and 10% students/apprentices, and an additional 24% were self-employed. This group, totaling 67%, are likely not earning a regular/stable income.

¹⁴ Islamic religious school.

¹⁵ Kuliya means “college” and Jami’a means “university.” Those who finish high school (Thanawi) go to Kuliya (College) then join Jami’a (University) for degree programs of Islamic education.

Graph 6: Participant occupation



Analysis

KII data was organized in Microsoft Excel to facilitate the identification of patterns and a global view of responses. The SNA data was translated and transcribed into Microsoft Excel. It was cleaned using OpenRefine. The data was then analyzed using Microsoft Excel (for standard graphs) and UCINET (to produce network visualizations). Netdraw was used to refine the network visualizations.

In addition to data analysis, the research was presented in a strategic workshop, bringing together the research team, key Search staff and civil society partners in Mombasa, Kenya in May 2017 to discuss the research findings and identify main entry points and opportunities for intervention.

Research Team

Data collection was conducted by six researchers, two in each location: the Northeastern Region/Nairobi (Kenya), Coast Region (Kenya) and Tanzania. Each team had a Lead and an Assistant Researcher, both with extensive experience in research and evaluation in conflict and post-conflict settings, an in-depth local understanding of the context (the researchers were from their respective areas of coverage), and experience conducting research on violent extremism. To facilitate access to communities and gain buy-in for this sensitive research, some of the researchers worked with local colleagues who were familiar with each hyper-local context and helped to identify at-risk individuals and to make them feel comfortable with the researcher and their participation.

In Kenya, two teams were recruited, due to the considerable differences in the culture and language between the Northeastern Region and Nairobi (Eastleigh) and the Coast Region (Kwale and Mombasa).

In Tanzania this was not necessary as Swahili is understood in all the research locations, and both researchers were from Zanzibar, which was the location presenting the most specific difficulties and challenges. They were therefore able to navigate all locations with ease.

The methodology and tools were developed by Search Director of DM&E Adrienne Lemon and Search Regional DM&E Associate Olivia Russell. Ms. Russell led the research, analysis and report writing, in collaboration with Research Fellow Omar Salem.

Security and Do No Harm

Security and ensuring Do No Harm (DNH) were very important in conducting this research, given the sensitivity of the topic and target groups. This was a key concern throughout the design of the methodology and tools as well as the fieldwork. Often, when conducting SNA, individuals will be asked specific questions and specific answers will be expected. For example, SNA is often used to understand relationships in organizations or businesses. So, research participants might be asked questions like “Who do you talk to in your department?” or “Who do you talk to in other departments?” These questions would be seeking specific responses, such as a name of a person or their specific position.

However, in this research, it was not safe to ask individuals to provide specific names and locations in this way. Therefore, the approach and tools were adapted to encourage responses that were *types* of individuals (ex. Mother, Sister, Teacher) and *types* of locations (Home, Mosque, Maskani). In many cases, individuals did provide the specific name of the location (ex. Maskani California). In these cases, when the data was cleaned the general type of location was retained as the code (ex. Maskani).

Additionally, the research process began with a workshop where tools were refined to be conflict sensitive and to present questions in a way that would not make participants anxious or uncomfortable. For example, demographic questions on attributes considered sensitive (specifically, ethnicity) were tailored to each location, or removed if necessary.

During the workshop, the importance of ensuring personal safety was stressed. Researchers were asked not to conduct any interviews where they felt considerable risk to their own safety or for the safety of the participants for any reason.

Finally, in each location local colleagues were hired to help navigate the local context and aid in the identification of at-risk individuals. They were selected based on familiarity of the context, the trust the researcher had in them, and their contact and knowledge of these networks and those at-risk in the community. They often remained in the room throughout the FGD to help put the respondents at ease and assure them that the researchers could be trusted.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations noted to this research. The first was that it was challenging in a number of cases to reach at-risk individuals and convince them to participate in the research. Despite the efforts to ensure security and DNH, it was still a challenge to get at-risk individuals to agree to participate in the research, especially in Tanzania. People, including key informants, in all research locations in

Mapping of Influencers, Networks, and Communication Channels in Kenya and Tanzania

Tanzania were suspicious of the researchers, which was the reason for hiring local colleagues to support trust and relationship-building between researchers and community members.

The youth in some FDGs in Tanzania were also initially not at ease, even after being reassured by the presence of the local colleagues who facilitated relationships between researchers and community members. While this dynamic was still present in Kenya, it posed less of a challenge than in Tanzania. In large part, the research design aimed to overcome these obstacles, seeking to facilitate discussion, reduce skepticism and discomfort on behalf of participants, and ensure valuable information could be obtained without the need to reveal too much personal detail about direct experiences with VE.

Additionally, logistical constraints due to weather, timeline and budget for this research limited the flexibility in scheduling interviews. Thus, some interviews did not take place due to timing. However, the perspectives of key informants have been well represented overall in the research and provided useful insights to current approaches to addressing VE and the challenges faced within the region.

3. Findings

This section presents the findings of the research. It is organized into four sections: **1) Influencers, 2) Networks, 3) Communication channels and 4) Civil society and VE.**

The first sub-section will present data on **influencers** of at-risk individuals. Influencers in this research were understood to be those who at-risk individuals turned to for advice. This section begins with a discussion of vulnerability and key frustrations of the at-risk individuals who participated in this research.

The second sub-section on **networks** presents the spaces that are important to these individuals and where they go to discuss their problems and seek advice. This section is highly interconnected with the preceding section. Both seek to understand the role of family, women, peer networks/friends, and schools (classmates, teachers, etc.) as influencers with regards to VE.

The third sub-section on **communication channels** explores the ways that at-risk individuals get access to and share information. It also discusses key stories and narratives, which are used to both encourage and discourage participation in VE groups.

Finally, the sub-section on **civil society and VE** reflects upon the work civil society is currently conducting in these areas to address VE. It focuses on the barriers they face, the lessons learned in their work, and how the barriers identified can be addressed. This discussion will feed directly into the conclusions and recommendations.

Influencers

Who is at-risk?

Influencers are the key to gaining insight beyond push and pull factors, and beginning to understand who has the capacity and access to influence at-risk populations. However, to discuss influencers, it is useful to begin by discussing those being influenced. Who are the individuals at-risk for involvement in violent extremism? In the literature review, it emerged that those who were unemployed/underemployed (especially youth), orphans, Somali-Kenyans, victims of counter-terrorism policies/activities (and those whose family members have been victims), and Muslims (in both Tanzania and Kenya) were particularly at-risk. During research, it was noted that recent recruits to Islam with little exposure to religious texts and other practicing Muslims marked a key group at-risk within the larger Muslim community.

Key informants in Kenya and Tanzania largely supported the literature, listing the following at-risk groups:

- Youth: including young men, educated youth that cannot find jobs, unemployed youths, school drop-outs;
- Drugs addicts/sellers;
- Victims of extrajudicial killings;
- Low income earners: underemployed, prostitutes;
- Those with negative home life: including children from dysfunctional families/single parent children, street children/orphans.

Overall, every single key informant mentioned youth with no notable differences between Kenya and Tanzania, or the locations. While this largely confirms the literature, it also helps to illuminate several key points. First, with the exception of “unemployed young men” none of the responses were gendered. While there is often a perception that these groups and activities are predominantly engaged in by men, it seems that, according to key informants, other criteria of risk are more fundamental. While more men may end up involved in these kinds of activities, women and girls are still vulnerable to the extent that they fit other criteria of vulnerability.

Drug addicts were mentioned often by key informants and said to be particularly vulnerable due to their desperation for money to fund their addiction. This highlights a key criteria of vulnerability not often discussed.¹⁶ While drugs are often associated with crime and criminal gangs, drug addiction is not often seen as a key vulnerability to participation in VE. What is particularly interesting about this is that key informants stressed the *degree or severity* of vulnerability of those suffering from addiction. While addicts represent a smaller subset of the population, those who do suffer from addiction are extremely vulnerable, perhaps making them a particularly attractive or “easy” target to recruiters.

As one key informant from Mandera explained, “A large percentage of the drug addicts have disappeared and cannot be traced by their parents and relatives. Some have called their parents from Somalia from the OB reports that I have seen.” Another key informant from Mandera explained, “Somalis, as a community, tend to brand serious drug addicts as outcasts and they rarely receive help. Parents will never want to be seen to have children who are extreme delinquent, thus opportunity from others seems the best alternative.” Workshop participants also stressed the fact that many of those who are the most vulnerable are not necessarily “radicalized” but rather are encouraged to participate in violence by the incentive of a short-term financial pay off.

Finally, key informants stressed how those growing up in dysfunctional families are particularly vulnerable and that very little has been done to address this. One key informant from Nairobi said, “They are vulnerable to violence because of lack of good parenting.” A religious leader from Tanga explained, “They say, *‘Asiyefunzwa na wazeewe hufunzwa na ulimwengu’* – He who is not taught by his parents, the world will teach him,” stressing the important role that parental guidance plays.

These insights have implications for programming. While there is currently programming that seeks to address unemployment and poverty, there is a gap where addiction, family and home life after often not targeted, according to key informants. Therefore,

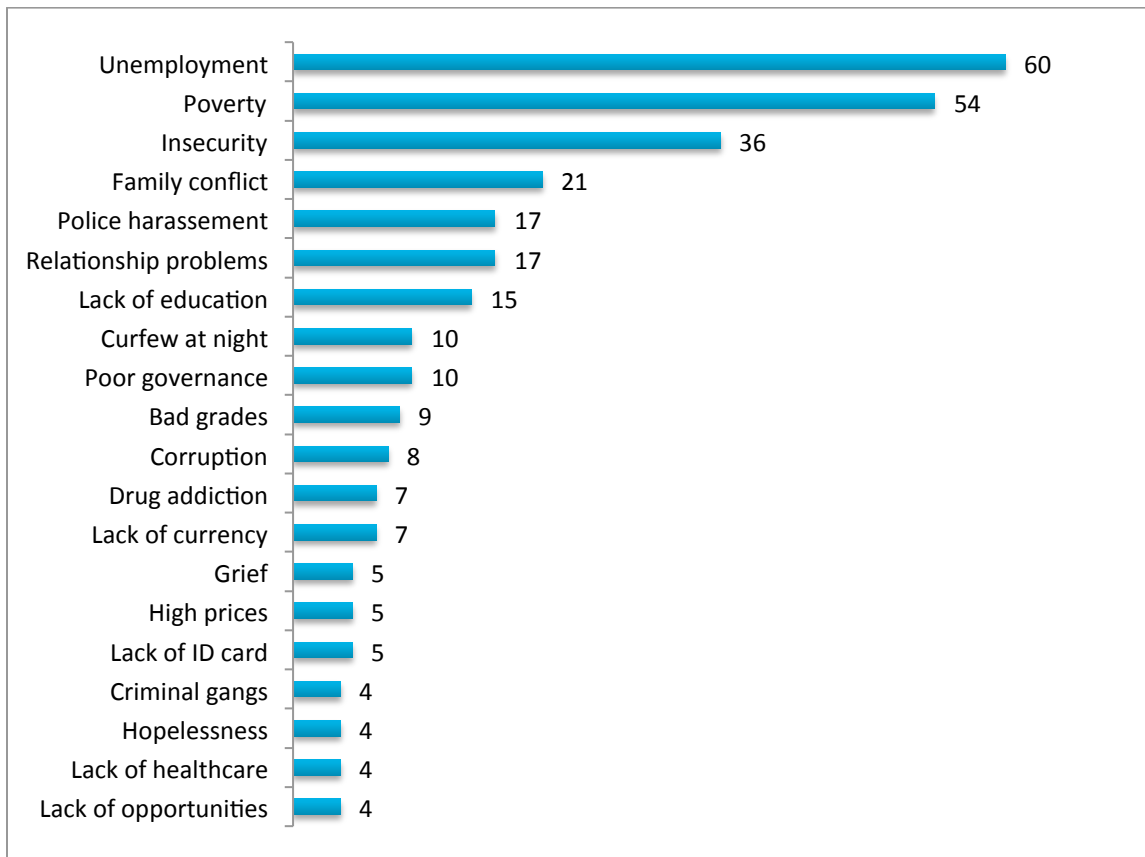
- 1) VE programming should include referrals to drug counseling for at-risk individuals in order to mitigate this particular risk.**
- 2) More VE programming is needed to target negative home life and parenting, including mentorship programs.**

¹⁶ This vulnerability was not discussed in the literature review.

What are their frustrations?

One of the key topics explored in the research was the source of frustrations and social isolation for people at-risk for participation in violence. Once participants were asked about their frustrations, they were then asked who they turned to for advice on addressing their frustrations (these people were understood as “influencers”), and what kinds of solutions these people suggested. Questions were open-ended to allow the respondents to express their frustrations without pre-determined categorizations, and coded after data collection. The graph below presents the most frequently mentioned frustrations¹⁷ by participants.

Graph 7: Participant frustrations



The graph shows that poverty and unemployment were the top frustrations mentioned by participants, which echoes push factors highlighted in the literature. Many other frustrations mentioned were also directly linked to push factors identified in the literature (poverty, lack of education, police harassment, corruption, etc.). The frustrations were largely similar across ages and genders. However, whereas insecurity and poverty were mentioned equally by both men and women, more men than women mentioned unemployment. Additionally, curfews and police harassment were mentioned almost

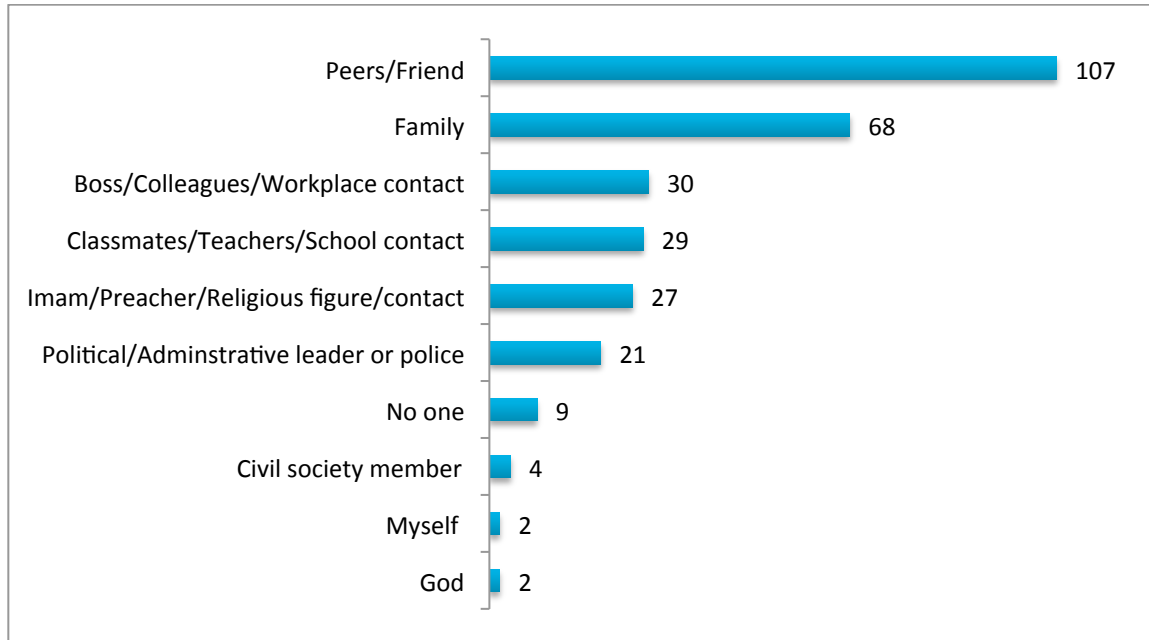
¹⁷ The categories represented in the graph were created based on hundreds of different, individual responses. Each response was cleaned, and assigned a code. Then, codes were grouped by commonalities, and assigned an aggregate code like “unemployment” or “poverty”.

exclusively by men. Top frustrations of unemployment, poverty, and insecurity were largely consistent across different all age groups.

Who do they turn to for advice?

Researchers asked questions to understand who at-risk individuals turn to for advice, and therefore, who has the potential to influence them. Participants responded with more than one person in many cases. The graph below presents the most mentioned influencers¹⁸ for all participants.

Graph 8: Influencers



Graph 8 above shows that at-risk individuals most often turn to their friends and peers to discuss their frustrations. Friends and peers were mentioned roughly twice as much as family members. Work colleagues and supervisors were mentioned roughly as often as classmates/teachers and other school contacts, as well as religious contacts. The categories of “No one”, “Myself, and “God” are all similar in that they do not constitute potential “influencers” in the way the others do, with the potential to offer externally generated solutions. Instead, these three categories indicate those who were more inclined to turn inward for reflection on frustrations.

Notably, civil society members were only mentioned four times by participants, indicating that CSOs are not currently a resource for at-risk individuals. In response, several CSO members acknowledged a “crisis of confidence,” explaining that CSOs are not trusted by these communities.

¹⁸ These categories were created based on hundreds of different responses. Each response was cleaned, and then assigned a code, and finally the codes were grouped and an aggregate code was assigned. For example, “Family” includes all responses noting “my sister”, “brother” “cousin”, “grandparents”, “sibling”, etc.

This data poses the question: how can CSOs working in VE gain the trust of the communities they seek to influence? It seems that there is work to do with at-risk communities, as well as with local leaders.

CSOs should consider how they can boost their credibility as well as focus on empowering those who are already influencers of at-risk individuals.

This was also echoed in a number of KIIs in Tanzania when asked about CSO work targeting VE, they said things like “I have a reservation with CSOs. I do not much trust them,”¹⁹ or, “To be frank I do not put so much faith in CSOs. The efficiency and effectiveness of CSOs mainly depends on who run them.”²⁰ Finally, a CSO leader from Zanzibar said, “CSOs need to get the right CVE knowledge. People are getting into CVE because there is money flowing from donors, but they do not have expertise.” This was mentioned more in Tanzania, likely due to the fact that programs addressing VE are newer there. Local CSOs have not yet had opportunities, or funding, to educate themselves about VE work or recruit those with experience.

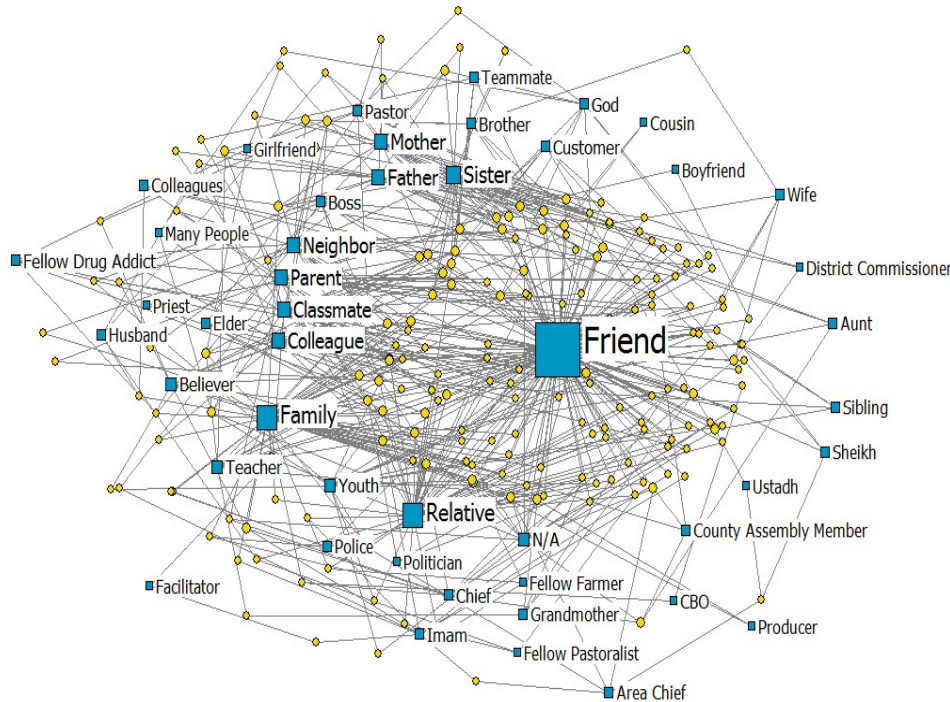
Additionally, it is clear from the data that communities do not turn to police to discuss their frustrations. One workshop participant underlined this saying, “We already have a fear of the police/security apparatus – so it is not surprising that [at-risk individuals] don’t open up or turn to them – we need to build trust (community and police engagement).”

Graph 9 below presents the data on influencers, as a network created with UCINET. The yellow dots represent each research participant. The size of the yellow dot (which varies slightly if you look closely) represents how many participants responded with the same list of people. The blue boxes represent the types of people they indicated they speak to about their frustrations. The larger the box is, the more participants mentioned that type of person. This network represents the same data as Graph 8. However, it is disaggregated so it is possible to see each type of person mentioned.

¹⁹ KII, Religious leader, Tanga.

²⁰ KII, Religious leader, Arusha. These kinds of statements mainly came from Tanzania. Another, also from Arusha noted that CSOs can be very helpful, “if not politicized.”

Graph 9: Network visualization of influencers



This network visualization expands on the story told by Graph 8. At-risk individuals often turn to their friends to voice their frustrations. The importance of family is also visible here. Participants mentioned their parents, sister, husband, aunt, grandmother, etc. The mention of relatives and other extended family members demonstrates that non-nuclear family members also wield influence.

When responses are broken down by region (the Northeastern/Nairobi, Coast Region and Tanzania) the influence of friends is consistent. Family members are also key influencers across all three regions. However, relatives seem to play a more pronounced role in Northeastern Region/Nairobi, which may be due to the importance of clan for Somali respondents in these locations. When disaggregated by age and gender, influencers remain largely the same. Both men and women, over 35 and under 35 report turning to friends and family to discuss their frustrations most often.

What is a “friend”?

Given the observed importance of friends and peers as influencers for at-risk individuals, it is important to reflect upon what they mean by “friend.” Friend is quite distinct when contrasted with “family” or positions of authority like “Teacher”, “Administrator”, “Imam”, etc. Yet, being a teacher or family member of someone, does not necessarily preclude them from being considered a “friend”. Additionally, “friend” can serve as a catch-all term for any number of informal contacts and acquaintances. One example offered during the workshop was that someone might meet a recruiter online or in person who befriends them to slowly gain influence over them and advocate violence. This example underlines that these responses do not provide important details about how, when and where at-risk individuals meet the friends who encourage them towards violence. This is an important question and should be the subject of continued research with those who have been previously recruited or approached for recruitment.

Key Informant Responses

The key influencers mentioned by the key informants were as follows:

- **Religious:** Sheikhs/Imams, Religious leaders, Madrassa Teachers, Preachers
- **Political:** Politicians, Opinion leaders, Political leaders
- **Peers:** Peers, Friends, Fellow pastoralists, Older friends
- **Family:** Parents, Elders, Family, Relatives
- **Other:** Businessmen, Diaspora, Wealthy People, Neighbors, Online bloggers, CSOs, Teachers

While participants indicated that they mostly spoke to family and friends about their frustrations, key informants mentioned religious and political leaders most often as the key influencers of those at-risk. Friends and peers were also mentioned, but not as often. What could explain this discrepancy?

During the course of the strategic workshop, this was discussed in-depth. One possible explanation offered was that at-risk individuals do not like to turn to religious and political leaders with their frustrations because leaders are well respected, and individuals would be less likely to have access or to want to reach out to leaders about daily struggles. The workshop participant said, “People talk to friends about very intimate things. They are the ones who they feel comfortable confiding in.”

Other workshop participants discussed the possibility that while at-risk individuals turn most often to family and friends for advice, they are still influenced by religious and political leaders, *indirectly*. Examples were given from both Tanzania and Kenya where recruiters for violent groups were dispatched by politicians or religious leaders to communities to recruit vulnerable people. Finally, it is also possible that at-risk population’s distance/disconnect from these leaders is part of what makes them vulnerable to recruitment, underlining their marginalization but which is not recognized sufficiently by the leaders in their communities. These different answers could explain the discrepancy in responses between at-risk individuals and key informants.

Finally, FGD participants were also asked about who confides in *them* about their frustrations. The responses to this question largely mirrored those to the question about who *they* talk to about their frustrations: friends and family. Again, friends were the most often mentioned. This means that at-risk individuals, and their friends and family, are largely turning to each other to discuss frustrations. These conversations are taking place between and among family members and friends. But questions surround this dynamic between friends and family members. What kind of solutions are their friends and families proposing? Do they receive good advice? Do their friends and family advocate violent or non-violent solutions? The next section will take a closer look at the solutions being proposed by these influencers and consider the implications for VE programming.

Solutions

After they identified those with whom they discuss their frustrations, participants were asked about the kinds of solutions these people proposed to them to address their frustrations. The top ten types of solutions proposed are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 3: Solutions proposed by influencers

Solution	Count
No solution proposed	107
General encouragement	17
Work ethic	12
Perseverance	10
Education	6
General advice	5
Pray	5
Collaborate with security administration	3
Engage in community activities	3
Cooperate with the police	2

Overall, the majority of influencers who people talk to about their frustration are not able or choose not to provide solutions at all (107). This is a crucial insight: *while at-risk individuals are opening up to their friends and family about their frustrations, they are not receiving practical advice.* They are left without solutions to address their deepest frustrations.

For those that did report that solutions were proposed, reported responses that were more *encouragement* than solutions. Some reported simply being told to “Work hard” (Work ethic), or “Don’t lose hope” (Perseverance). However, this kind of encouragement is not the same as actionable solutions. For those who were proposed practical solutions, the solutions were often were around how to deal with police, how to address lack of income/poverty, how to address grievances (ex. Demonstrate, protest, approach political

leaders/chief, etc.).

Overall, there were not patterns of solutions based on gender or age: those of both genders and all ages were consistently given no solution, general encouragement, told to work hard, etc. The one exception was that men were slightly more likely to be told to “work hard” while women were slightly more likely to be told to get an education.

In Table 5 below solutions related to dealing with the police and security forces are presented. This cluster of solutions is highlighted to shine light on the fact that many of the solutions around police interaction with at-risk individuals are advocating self-control of the at-risk individual (right column), rather than concerted actions to take to address the situation sustainably (left column). While advice on self-control can be helpful to reduce violent incidents and avoid harm, it places the onus on the at-risk individual to avoid harm, rather than the security apparatus or government to protect them and treat them equally. This means that at-risk populations are being advised on how to cope with the state of affairs, rather than address it proactively or sustainably.

Table 4: Solutions related to dealing with the police and security forces proposed by influencers

Concerted Action	Self-control
Refer problems to the police or administration	Obey curfew and police
Collaborate with security administration/police	Don't resist police
Advice on dealing with police	Never disobey curfew
Go to court	Never resist arrest
	Never to rush to crime scenes when attacks happen
	Stay indoors during violence

Overwhelmingly, participants noted that the solutions provided by these influencers (generally speaking, their friends and family) are not practical. This means that many of these individuals are left with few options: to simply endure their frustrations, to try harder to overcome them (without any concrete support or suggestions) or to seek solutions elsewhere outside of their friends and family (or other influencers they have turned to). With such limited options, they are left highly vulnerable to recruiters who can offer tangible solutions. For example, if their frustration is related to unemployment, extremist organizations can offer a “job” as a fighter. If their frustration is insecurity or police harassment, extremist organizations can offer protection and avenues for revenge.

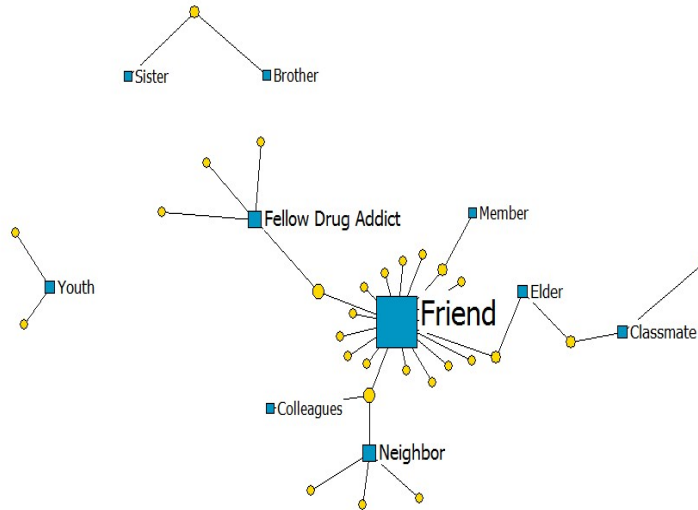
During the course of the strategic workshop the inability of influencers to offer concrete solutions was discussed at length. Workshop participants stressed the need to address this gap in **agency**. Key influencers need to be trained and supported to provide concrete responses to help at-risk individuals feel that they have options other than turning to a VE group.

Violent solutions

While the vast majority of the solutions mentioned by participants were non-violent, some were violent. In order to better understand who has the potential to influence at-risk individuals towards violence, participants were asked if any of the people they talk to about their frustrations made them, “feel like violence is an acceptable solution.”

When compared to the full network of influencers (Graph 9), the network of influencers advocating violent solutions is very small. This is most likely because there are simply not a lot of people advocating violence. However, it is also possible that some participants were afraid to mention those who do.

Graph 10: Network visualization of influencers advocating violent solutions



Graph 10 shows that it is often friends, peers and informal contacts who advocate violent solutions to address frustrations. Fellow drug addicts were also mentioned by several people, reinforcing the point made in the first section that those addicted to drugs might be particularly vulnerable. Overall, it seems at-risk people are opening up to their friends and family, but it is their friends, predominantly, who are making them feel like violence could be an acceptable solution.

While it is certainly possible that some of those who proposed violent solutions were recruiters themselves, there were also those who proposed more general violent solutions like, “form a vigilante group to disrupt curfew order,” “stone the police patrol car,” or simply “use violence.” One participant reported that he was recommended to “Join Al-Shabaab to make quick good money.” However, while a number of participants reported that some people encourage violent solutions (see Graph 10), only four actually gave examples of these solutions (those cited above).

When key informants were asked who encourages violence in their community, their responses differed somewhat. They claimed it was most often religious and political leaders who encouraged this.²¹ This echoes the previous discussion on influencers: while key informants feel that religious and political

²¹ In Zanzibar, Tanzania the “diaspora” were noted as influencers towards violence, and “Clan elders” and “warlords” in Mandera, Kenya.

leaders are the ones who encourage at-risk individuals towards violence, it is their friends that are most directly encouraging them, according to the FGD participants.

During the course of the strategic workshop, this discrepancy was discussed. Participants offered an additional possibility for the difference between responses from at-risk individuals and key informants on those who encourage violence. They said that, in addition to the fact that religious and political leaders may have less direct contact with at-risk individuals (hence, they do not show up in their network of influencers), at-risk individuals may also be more hesitant or uncomfortable to mention these people as those who encourage or advocate violence.

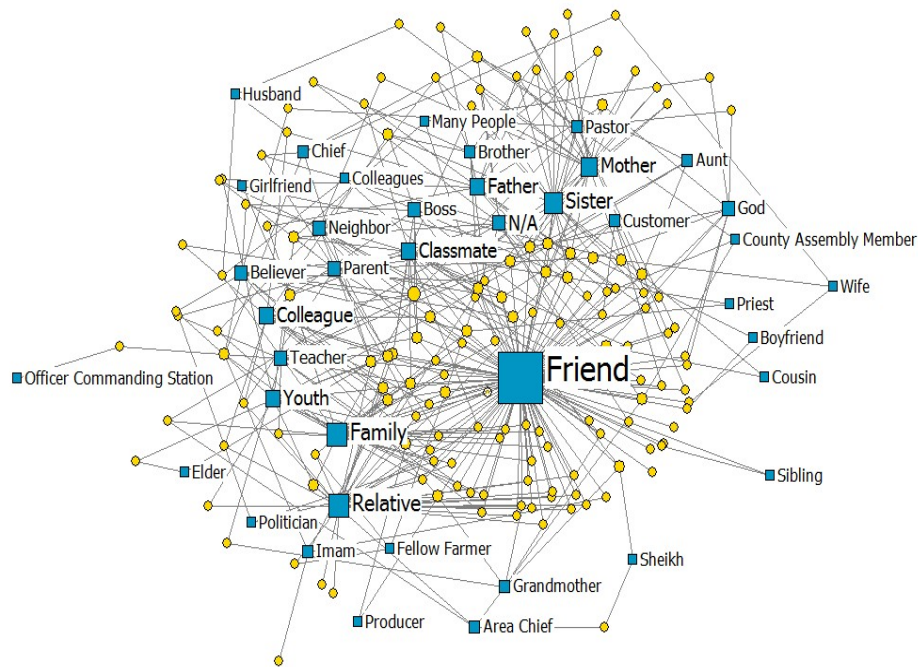
Despite the fact that key informants placed more importance on political and religious leaders as influencers, they did recognize the importance of peers and friends. As a teacher from Nairobi explained, “Birds of the same feather flock together. In this regard, friends persuade friends to join bad camps so that they get a good number of people in their company for them to commit violence in different areas.”

Another key informant, a social welfare officer from Tanga, echoed this very closely saying, “Birds of a feather fly together. The fact that the youth spend much time together and have the same mentality and thinking ability, they influence each other much more easily than anyone coming out of that age category. This group can influence their colleagues both positively and negatively.” Here the key informant captures the dual sense of this influence, both towards violent and non-violent solutions. The latter is explored in the following section.

Non-violent solutions

Compared to those that propose violent solutions, the network of influencers who propose non-violent solutions is much bigger. Additionally, the network shows that while friends are often the ones who propose violent solutions to at-risk individuals, it is also friends that most often propose non-violent solutions (see Graph 11 below). However, while many influencers propose non-violent solutions, it is important to remember that, as demonstrated in preceding section on solutions, these solutions are not always actionable. This means that while many influencers may wish to encourage non-violence, and do so in general terms, they do not appear to have the skills or capability required to do so effectively by proposing concrete, actionable solutions.

Graph 11: Network visualization of influencers advocating non-violent solutions



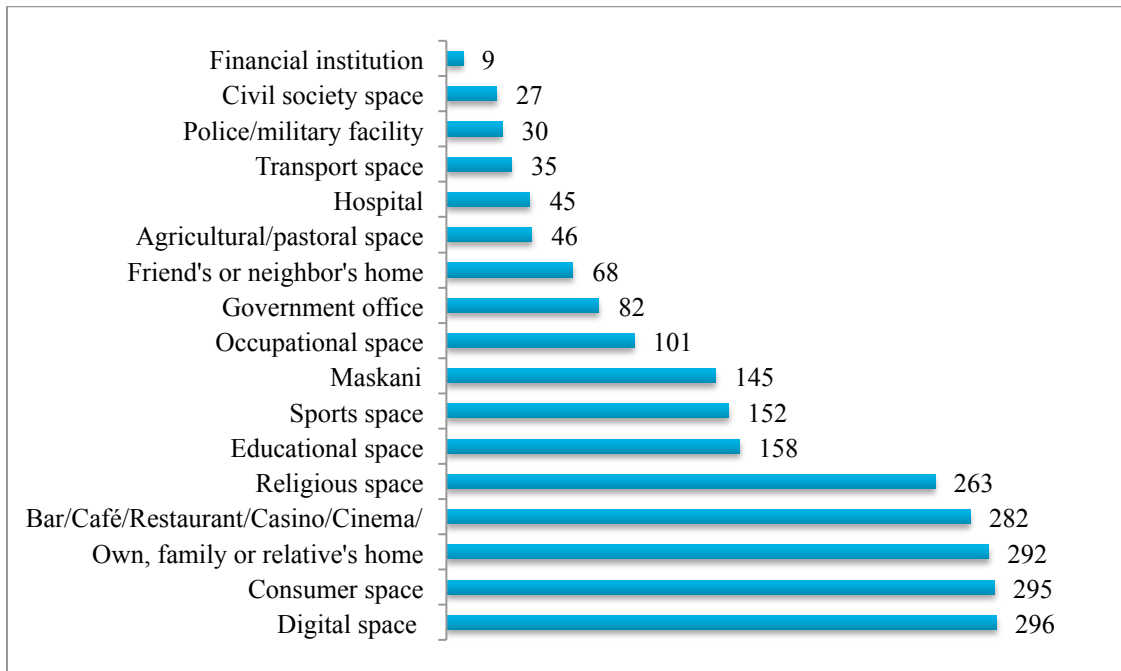
The role of friends as influencers for both violent and non-violent solutions has specific programming implications. CSOs might design peer-to-peer support programs, empowering people to help their friends with practical, non-violent solutions, rather than those that are violent or ineffective.

Networks

This section focuses on the key spaces that are important to at-risk individuals and where they go to discuss their problems and seek advice. To better understand this, the FGD guide began by asking participants to name ten places that were important to them. Graph 12 below presents the places most often mentioned by participants, grouped by category. The three most mentioned were digital spaces (like Facebook and WhatsApp), consumer spaces (like shops and markets), and personal homes (of the participants themselves, family, friends, etc.) The prevalence of digital spaces here is noteworthy. Overall, 13% of the spaces respondents mentioned were digital spaces, predominantly Facebook and WhatsApp.²²

²² See “Communication Channels” for more on the platforms and channels used by respondents to communicate.

Graph 12: Important spaces



Once participants identified the ten most important places in their lives, they were also asked about their frustrations and in which of these locations they discussed their frustrations. Graph 13 below presents the network visualization of these responses. Intuitively, many respondents named their home as one of the most important places. However, the mosque and maskani were mentioned by nearly as many people. Other important spaces where participants discuss their frustrations are the market, school and college, hotels, Facebook and WhatsApp.

Finally, maskanis are different for men and women. Women do not frequent them as often, as they are public places and women do not spend as much time out of the home (see Graph 14 and 15 below). When disaggregated by age, participants under 35 and those over 35 shared three key locations in common: home, maskani and mosque. Differences between men and women (under 35) were pronounced. For men, common locations were home, maskani, football field, hotel (restaurant/hotel/bar) whereas for women, many more selected home or friends' houses.

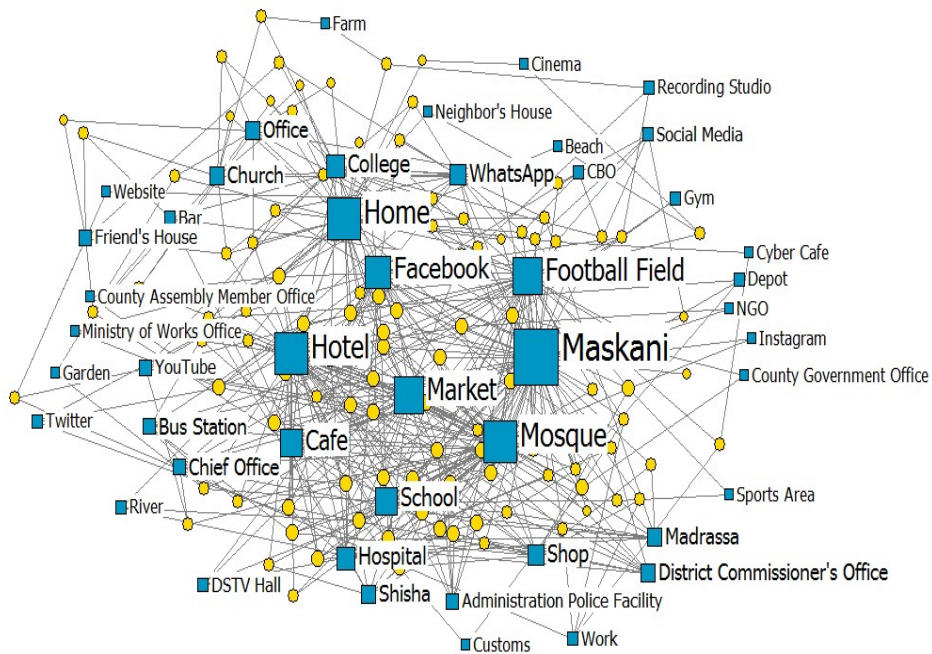
Overall, these locations are important to CSO programming because it is in these locations that people are opening up about their frustrations and often looking for advice. They represent important potential entry points for CSOs. Therefore, **CSOs should explore creative programming that targets at-risk individuals where they come together informally to be social: in homes and maskanis as well as at the mosque.**

The fact that maskanis were mentioned so often may function as an indicator for the amount of time that at-risk individuals spend idle. This issue was discussed by a number of key informants who felt that talent cultivation and recreational activities were key to reaching and influencing these at-risk individuals. A youth leader (key informant) in Nairobi cited a successful program that took place in Eastleigh and focused on talent cultivation:

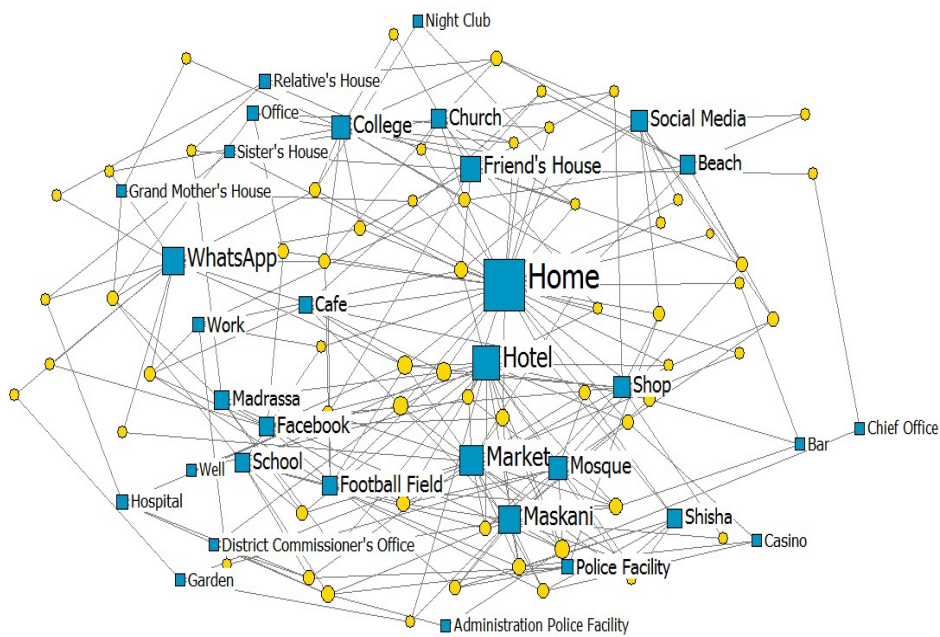
...the program identified youths with talents such as arts and music. After the launch of this program many youths who were members of the dreaded Superpower gang that constantly terrorizes residents have immediately found interest in it and joined. Today Eastleigh youths have formed a music and arts group called the Stars of Eastleigh (Xidigaha islii), and compose different songs on a weekly basis. To make a living they perform live shows in restaurants, shisha joints and weddings.

While this is just one example, it provides a possible entry point to reach and constructively engage at-risk groups.

Graph 14: Spaces where men under 35 discuss their frustrations

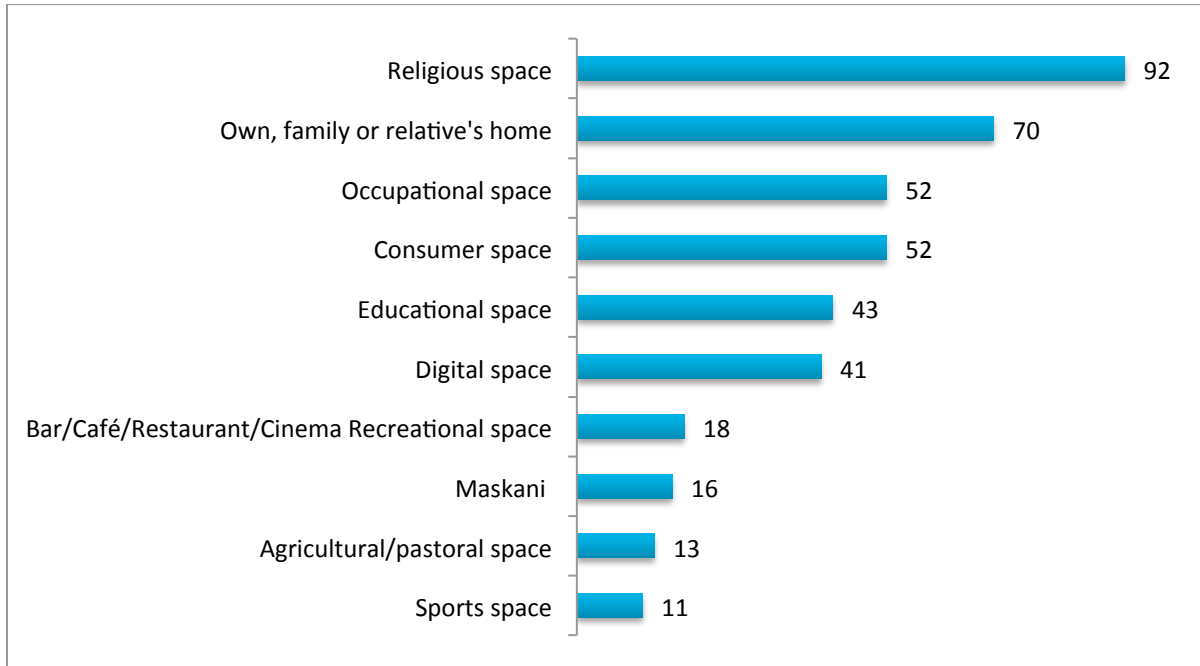


Graph 15: Spaces where women under 35 discuss their frustrations



After participants were asked to name ten places that were important to them, and then to identify in which places they discussed their frustrations, they were asked to rank the top five places they went to most often. Mapping the places that are the *most* frequented by at-risk individuals is important because it is in these places where deeper engagement might take place.

Graph 16: Top two most frequented spaces



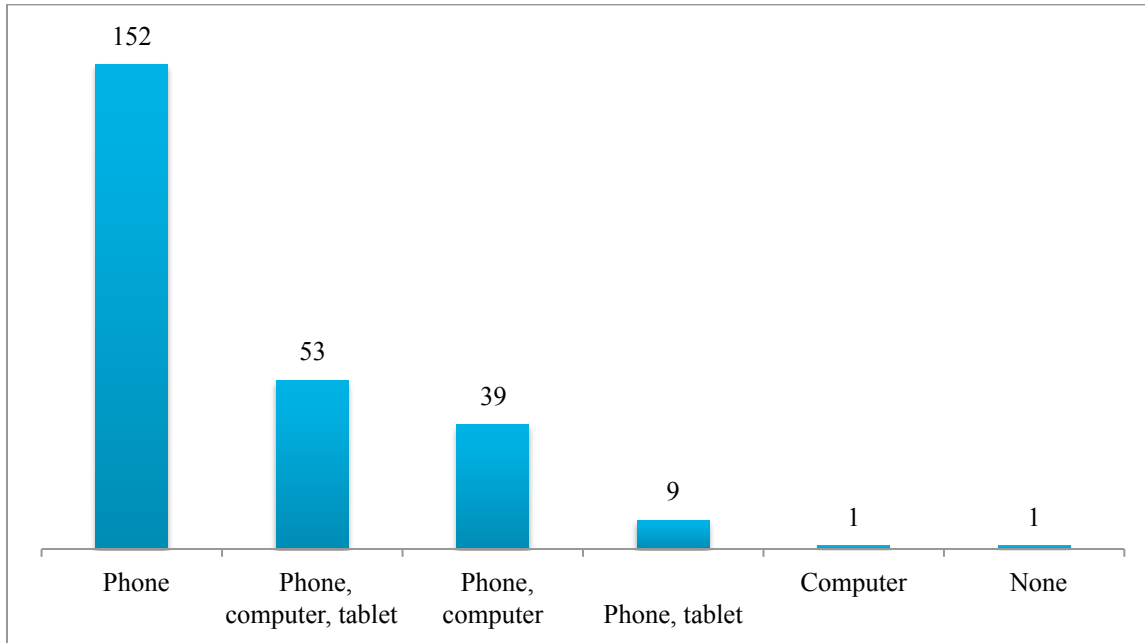
In Graph 16 above you can see that religious spaces like churches and mosques, personal homes, and occupational space (place of work, farm if the person is a farmer, etc.) are the most frequented spaces. It is important to note here that in Graph 12 it was digital space, consumer space and then personal homes that were *most often mentioned* as places which were important to the participants. But, when it comes to the *most frequented important places*, digital and consumer spaces are replaced by religious and occupational spaces.

This may have implications for where different types of engagement should take places with at-risk individuals. It may be that **CSO programming which requires deeper and more sustained engagement should focus around homes and places of worship, while broader based programming should target markets (consumer spaces) and Facebook and WhatsApp (social media).**

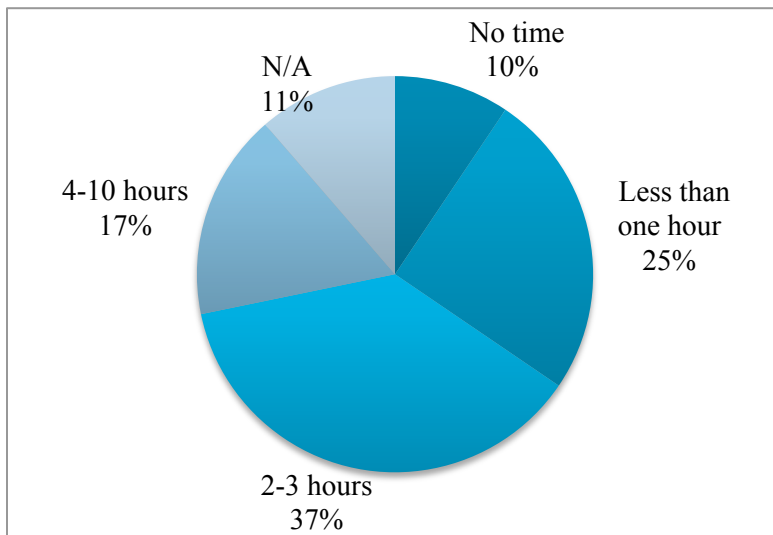
Communication Channels

Beyond influencers and networks, this research aimed to better understand how at-risk populations in these areas communicate. The research began by gathering information about the communication tools respondents had at their disposal: devices. All but two of the respondents had a phone.²⁴ 93 had a computer and 62 a tablet (see Graph 17 below).

Graph 17: Participants' device possession



The data collected on spaces suggests that the digital realm is important to many participants, and they possess many devices to communicate online, but how much time are they actually spending online? More than half of the participants (54%) reported spending more than two hours a day online. Further, 79% reported spending at least some time online per day (see Graph 18 below for further details).



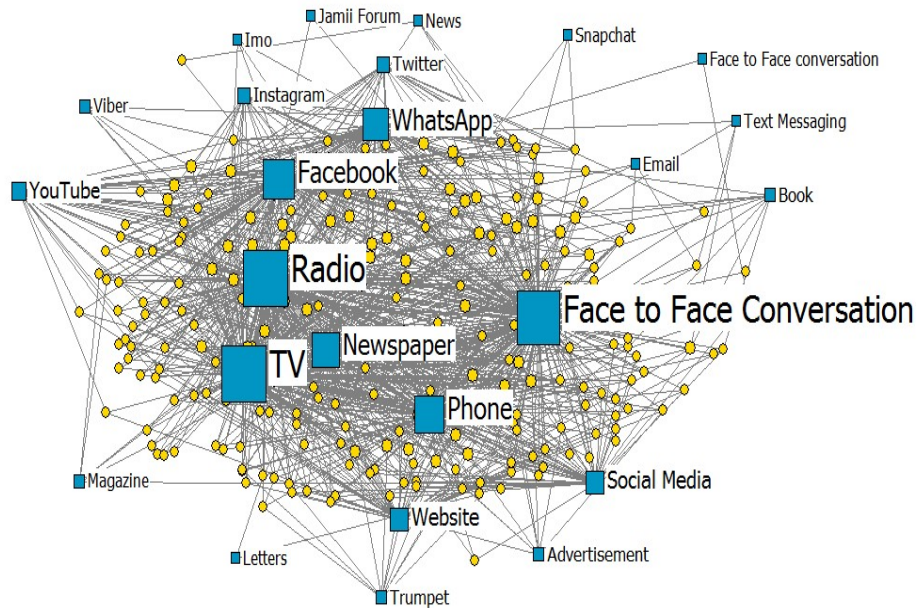
Graph 18: Participant screen time

From the data above we can conclude that these at-risk individuals have the tools and time to connect online, as well as through their phones. But, what communication channels are they actually using? Graph 19 below presents the responses from participants when asked this question. Despite the fact that digital spaces were reported as very important to participants, and the fact that they

²⁴ Data was not collected on whether the phones were “smart” or “dumb.”

have both access to devices and spend a considerable amount of time online, *face-to-face conversation*, *radio and television* are still the most frequently mentioned communication channels. While WhatsApp, Facebook, and other types of social media do feature in the network, they are less prominent than expected or often treated in VE-related programming.

Graph 19: Communication channels used by participants

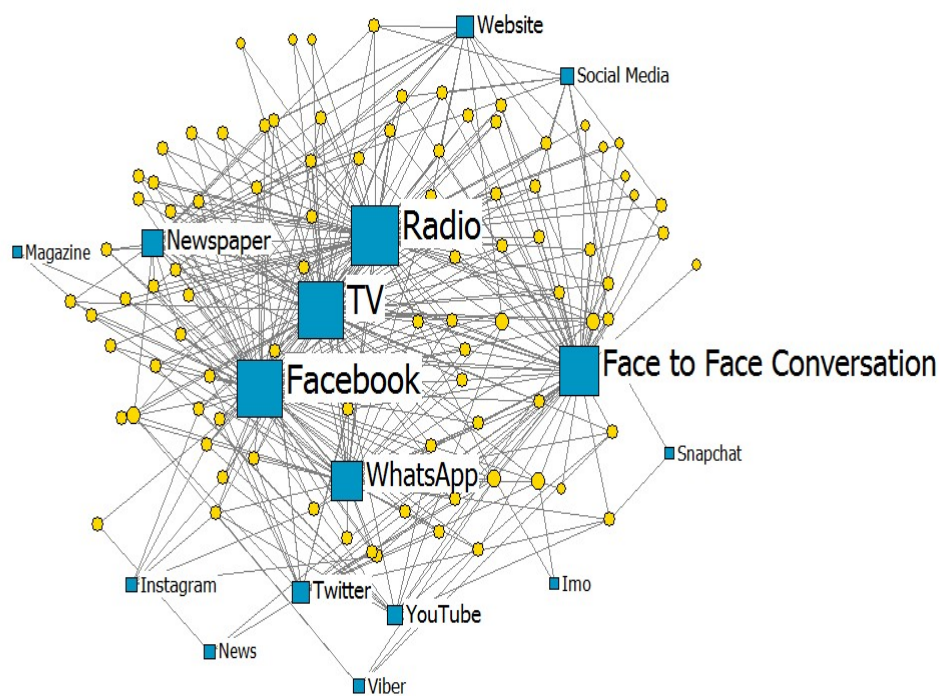


This finding was echoed in the strategic workshop. Workshop participants were surprised by the number of research participants who indicated digital spaces were important to them and the amount of time they spent online. Workshop participants found this finding—that radio and face-to-face conversation are still the most important communication channels—to be in line with their understanding from the field. Some offered potential explanations for this. One participant, speaking of Tanzania, indicated that while online communication had become more and more popular, it decreased as people began to fear being tracked digitally in the wake of the Cybercrime Act of 2015²⁵.

When disaggregated by region, the findings are very similar: in all regions in Kenya and Tanzania, face-to-face conversation, TV, radio and newspaper are key channels of communication for at-risk populations. However, in the Northeastern Region and Nairobi, Facebook featured much more prominently (see Graph 20 below). In fact, in these areas, Facebook was mentioned by more participants than face-to-face conversation. Together with the fact that WhatsApp also features prominently in this network, it seems that these digital platforms have more importance in these regions than the others.

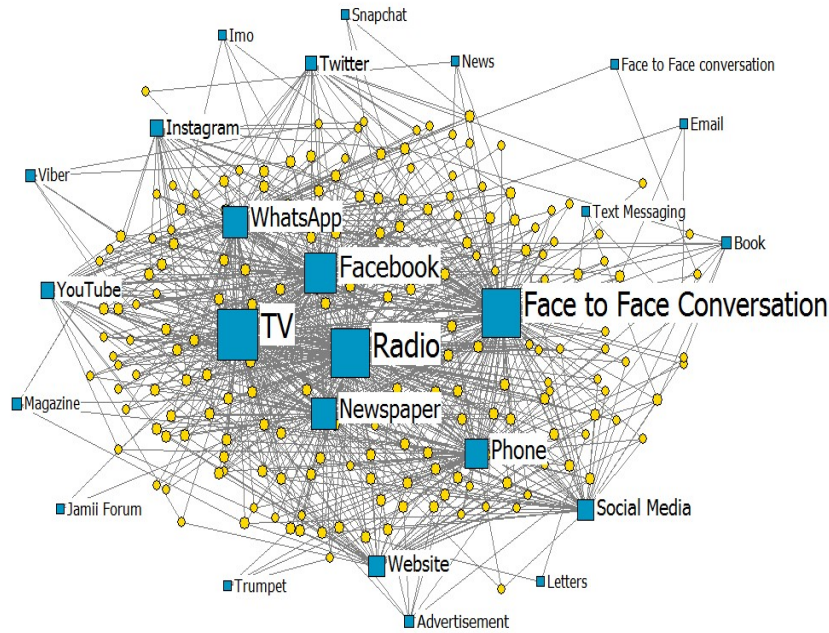
²⁵ See [Cybercrime Act of 2015](#).

Graph 20: Communication channels used by participants (Northeastern Region and Nairobi)



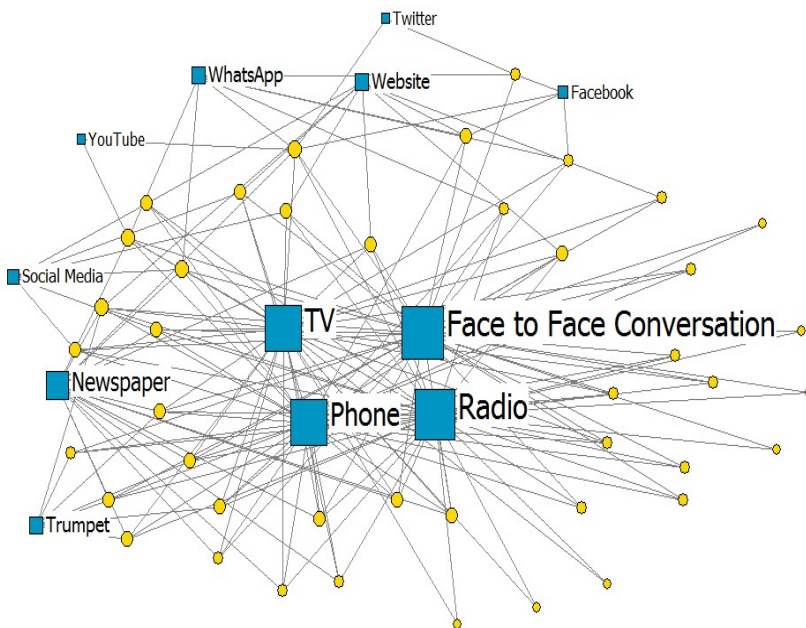
When disaggregated by age, we find that, as might be expected, those under 35 use more diverse channels of communication. While face-to-face conversation, radio and TV are still the most important channels; they report a higher use of Facebook, WhatsApp, and other forms of social media as compared to the older age bracket.

Graph 21: Communication channels used by participants under 35



Participants over 35 on the other hand, rarely reported using social media. The channels they use are also less diverse, as shown in Graph 22.

Graph 22: Communication channels used by participants over 35



When comparing women and men, their responses were similar in that both sexes reported using face-to-face conversation, TV, and radio. However, more men reported using Facebook and WhatsApp. During the strategic workshop, the difference between men and women's use of communication channels was discussed. Participants expected to see more women indicating the use of WhatsApp and more men Facebook. While this was not clearly visible in the network visualizations, workshop participants agreed this was often the case as women prefer to use WhatsApp for more private conversations where they can be more open, whereas men are comfortable discussing diverse issues both privately (WhatsApp) and publically (Facebook).

Overall, this section provides insights into what communication channels can be used to reach at-risk communities. Despite increasing global focus on the importance of social media and the internet in violent extremism (especially in recruitment), in Tanzania and Kenya to reach at-risk communities, programming should still consider traditional forms of media (Radio and TV), as well as face-to-face interaction, and not just focus on digital platforms.

Narratives

Understanding how at-risk populations communicate is important to gain insight into where to reach them and to share information for programming. But, this research also sought to further learn more about the narratives being used to both encourage and discourage participation in violence. This insight will help to ensure that programming, especially media programming, focuses on the kinds of stories and narratives that will likely be more effective in discouraging participation in violence.

During the KIIs, the respondents were asked about the stories and narratives that encourage people to commit violence. The responses were quite varied, but can be grouped into the following themes:

- **Social/Political:** Peer pressure, sense of belonging, ethnic suspicion, marginalization, oppression (*dhulma*), exclusion, hopelessness, protection of land/control, political narratives (general), tribe ideology, clan supremacy, social injustices
- **Religious:** Radical religious interpretation, *jihad*, *Umma* ideology, religious stereotyping (of the “other”)
- **Economic:** Financial motivation, unemployment, uneven distribution of national resources, corruption, inequality
- **Historical:** historical injustices/grievances
- **Security Forces:** revenge (for deaths), extrajudicial killings, police harassment, denial of identity cards, arbitrary arrests
- **Other:** stories of VE “heroes” who are now wealthy and famous

These narratives were largely consistent across the regions and two countries.

One key informant from Nairobi mentioned a narrative related to VE “heroes” who joined a group and now are wealthy and famous, and can send money back to their families. These “success stories” were

said to provide powerful incentives, often coupled with promises of financial compensation (financial motivation). Another example from Arusha highlights how Islam is being radically interpreted to influence youth to commit violence, “A common hadith ‘He who witnesses an evil, let him remove it with their hands,’ is often misinterpreted to justify violence.” During the course of the strategic workshop CSO participants stressed how this narrative can be particularly effective on recent converts to Islam. They said that recent converts could be prone to manipulation because they often possess a limited understanding of the holy texts and fewer resources for guidance.

Overall, these narratives are important to note because they link directly with key push and pull factors identified in the literature, translating them into recruitment strategies. VE can only be fully addressed by tackling the underlying factors that push people towards violence.

To support this approach, key informants were also asked about the stories and narratives that convince people not to commit violence. The responses can be grouped into the following themes:

- **Economic encouragement:** Promise of skill development, promise of economic opportunities, economic empowerment, stories of successful individuals from humble beginnings/difficult backgrounds, promise of jobs, unity, need for cooperation and development
- **Social/Psychological/Religious:** Knowledge that they are being exploited by the leaders, importance of dialogue, oneness of the Somali community, moderate religious interpretation
- **Deterrence:** Negative outcomes of those recruited, religious narratives on punishment for wrongdoing, harshness of the law in dealing with perpetrators of violence, impact of violence on the family and community
- **Alternatives to violence:** Suggestion of legal avenues to address injustices, the need to preserve peace

These narratives were also largely consistent across regions and generally mirrored those used to convince people to commit violence. For example, while respondents referenced radical religious interpretations utilized to encourage violence, alternative interpretations were referenced that discourage violence. Additionally, many narratives mentioned were about deterrence, explaining that bad things that could happen if you participate in violence.

There are many narratives and stories being used in these communities in Kenya and Tanzania which encourage non-violent behavior. **CSOs should harness these narratives and draw inspiration from these stories for use in their media programming. Rather than trying to discredit or “counter” those narratives, they should offer alternatives, which address the same underlying push factors.**

There were, however, were some “positive narratives” not aimed at deterrence. For example, in Eastleigh, Nairobi, narratives of successful individuals from humble beginnings/difficult backgrounds served as an

alternative²⁶ to those elevating so-called “VE heroes” who had become wealthy and famous from their involvement in these groups. A CSO leader gave the example of the story of Victor Wanyama, “...a player in the English Premier League who made it from Eastlands (Nairobi)... near the slums.” His story was offered as encouragement to others from difficult backgrounds.

Civil Society and VE

During the interviews with CSO leaders, a series of questions were asked in order to gain insight into the barriers to effectively addressing VE and possible ways to address these barriers. The two key barriers²⁷ mentioned related to CSO capacity and cooperation.

First, it was asserted that CSOs seeking to engage in VE work in these areas are doing so without enough experience. Secondly, there was said to be a lack of coordination between those working on VE in these areas, leading to duplication and missed opportunities for learning. This was echoed in the strategic workshop by one of the participants, who explained:

VE work has introduced a lot of competition between CSOs. Everyone is doing PVE and CVE in the same communities – there is community fatigue and money wasted because we are all working on the same things at the same time. We need to coordinate – between CSOs and the government. How do we leverage the existing structures? Everyone wants to do things their own way. People are duplicating things.

There are now County Action Plans on CVE in Kenya. One participant explained, “For Kwale, we are mapping out who is doing what in the four sub-counties and who they are targeting.” This is allowing them to determine who is missing in terms of the targets. The participant said, “Now there is no way you can come into Kwale and do CVE work without aligning yourself with the action plan.”

To address the barriers related to lack of CSO capacities and coordination, key informants called for efforts to build CSO capacity as well as the creation of platforms to allow for information sharing and coordination among CSOs working on VE.

However, this is not yet happening in Tanzania. “You have CSOs that claim to do VE programs, but if you talk to them, they know very little about the issue,” said one participant. “They have trouble knowing what program to introduce. They can get the money – but they don’t really know what to do with it. CSOs also see each other as competitors and this creates problems.” There was mention of some coordination between CSOs in Tanzania, but only those funded by the US government. The general consensus was that while progress has been made in Kenya (and to a lesser extent in Tanzania) towards overcoming this barrier to more effective VE programming, there is still work to be done in both countries.

²⁶ SFCG’s experience has shown that to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent radicalization, it is more powerful to push forward positive narratives than it is to develop counter narratives or to emphasize the negative value in extremist narratives.

²⁷ Only some of the barriers mentioned are discussed here. While other barriers were certainly mentioned during the course of the KIIs, those selected here were most important, and over which CSOs have control. As this report is focused on informing CSO and Search’s strategy in the region, it is important to stay focused on actionable points.

4. Conclusion

Overall, this research sought a better understanding of key influencers, networks and communication channels at the local level that drive or prevent violent extremism. This understanding was to be used to assess opportunities for civil society engagement to leverage influencers to prevent violent extremism in a localized and adapted manner. The data shows that the most important influencers for at-risk individuals in these locations are their peers and family members. Spatially, participants most often reported that they discussed their frustrations in their homes, mosques and maskanis. While digital spaces are increasingly important, face-to-face conversation, radio and television are the most important communication channels for at-risk individuals in these areas.

Overall, CSOs and CSO staff were largely absent from the findings as influencers or spaces where frustrations are discussed, indicating that at-risk individuals in these areas do not turn to CSOs with their frustrations, looking for solutions. Instead, friends play a particularly central role either discouraging or encouraging participation in violence. However, they are not the only ones who can discourage violence. The network of potential influencers who can and do discourage at-risk individuals from participating in violence is much larger than those that encourage it. Despite the wide array of spaces and channels available to potential influencers to be employed towards non-violence, they are largely unprepared to do so. They are typically not equipped to offer concrete and actionable solutions, and often are only able to provide general encouragement.

This means that many of these highly vulnerable individuals are left with few options: to simply endure their frustrations, to try harder to overcome them (without any concrete support or suggestions for how to do so) or to seek other, possibly violent, solutions elsewhere. With limited options, they are left highly vulnerable to recruiters or friends who can offer concrete but violent solutions. CSOs must work to tackle this deficit: building capacity of key influencers in key spaces to ensure that at-risk individuals are able to at least envision future solutions that address their grievances without involving violence.

5. Recommendations

As this initiative aims to offer insight to CSOs about how to make programming more targeted and effective, we would highlight the following points for consideration while designing and implementing VE-related programs:

Addressing Current Gaps

1. Given the limited influence and credibility of CSOs noted by the participants, it would be worthwhile to reflect on how we are engaging as individual organizations and as a sector. Every organization could benefit from reflection around perceptions and approach, and then take steps to boost their capacity and credibility within the communities they are seeking to serve.
2. At-risk individuals are seeking advice and guidance to address their frustrations, especially from friends and family, but they are not accessing practical solutions from them. Focusing on empowering those trusted influencers (friends and family) with the tools they need to provide effective solutions could be a useful approach, rather than trying to engage and become a new influencer in the environment.

Where and How Can We Engage Better?

3. As maskanis are a key location where vulnerable young people discuss their frustrations, especially with their friends, programming could seek to leverage this type of atmosphere to create more controlled discussions of frustrations led by or with individuals prepared to offer constructive solutions.
4. Given that at-risk individuals indicated their homes and places of worship are the *most important* locations for them, CSO programming which requires deeper and more sustained engagement should be focused around these locations. Broader based programming seeking to target more people should target markets (consumer spaces) and social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) as these are the spaces *frequented by the most* at-risk individuals.
5. Despite the western fixation on “new” and social media, traditional forms of media and face-to-face interaction are still the most often used communication channels by at-risk individuals in these communities, particularly for deep engagement with issues they are facing. Therefore, when designing media programming, CSOs should focus predominantly on these channels to reach at-risk groups, while media programming platforms may be used to engage broader audiences to support community resilience to VE issues.
6. There are many narratives and stories being used in these communities in Kenya and Tanzania that encourage non-violent behavior. CSOs should harness these narratives, drawing inspiration from the stories, for use in their media programming. This should be prioritized over trying to discredit or “counter” those narratives that advocate violence.
7. The two key barriers mentioned regarding CSOs’ effectiveness were the lack of capacity and a lack of cooperation among CSOs. Potential funding for VE work has introduced significant competition between CSOs, constituting a barrier to cooperation and leading to CSOs without VE experience obtaining funding to conduct VE programming. This lack of coordination between those working on VE leads to duplication and missed opportunities for learning. Therefore, donors should make efforts to vet potential CSO grantees more extensively based on their

Mapping of Influencers, Networks, and Communication Channels in Kenya and Tanzania

experience and capacities with regards to VE. Donors, international NGOs, and other relevant actors should work to build CSO capacity in VE. Platforms should be created to allow for information sharing and coordination among CSOs working on VE, especially in Tanzania.