



Stakeholder-Partnership Engagement as a Counter Terrorism Strategy in Wajir County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Terrorism continues to threaten the security of many counties in Kenya, mainly those along North Eastern regions, particularly Mandera, Garissa and Wajir counties, who are vulnerable to terrorist strikes. This study examined stakeholder-partnership engagement in countering terrorism in Wajir County, North Eastern Kenya. The study applied Social Learning Theory and Data was collected from a sample size of 109 respondents comprising security agencies, community members, civil society, and religious leaders. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The findings suggest that the stakeholder partnership engagement is an effective strategy in countering terrorism, especially if there are coordinated efforts by all stakeholders involved. Considering people from diverse backgrounds enhances trust as witnessed among them. The study concludes that forums and workshops help in understanding the nature of adversaries facing stakeholders in countering terrorism in the region. This is crucial in enabling the counterterrorism intervention to comprehensively address the local problem. The study recommends that there is need to embrace various forms of community outreach with stakeholder engagement to help various security agencies, such as the police, to manage terrorism activities at the borders and within the country.*

Keywords: *Stakeholders, Partnership, Engagement, Counter Terrorism, Kenya*

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1. Introduction

Terrorism and national security are complex and intertwined issues that pose significant challenges to countries around the world, including Kenya as the country has faced various threats from terrorist organizations and extremist groups operating both domestically and regionally. One of the most prominent groups is Al-Shabaab, an Islamist extremist organization based in neighboring Somalia. Al-Shabaab has carried out numerous attacks in Kenya, targeting civilians, security forces, government officials, and infrastructure. These attacks have resulted in loss of lives, injuries, and damage to property, causing fear and insecurity among the population. The militant group Al-Shabaab, based in neighboring Somalia, poses the most significant terrorist

threat to Kenya. Al-Shabaab has carried out numerous attacks in Kenya, targeting civilians, government officials, security forces, and infrastructure. One of the deadliest attacks occurred at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi in 2013, resulting in the loss of over 60 lives.

Kenya's long and porous border with Somalia has facilitated the infiltration of Al-Shabaab militants into the country. The group has exploited ethnic and clan ties across the border, as well as smuggling routes, to conduct attacks and recruit supporters within Kenya. Kenya has experienced instances of radicalization and recruitment of its citizens by extremist groups, including Al-Shabaab and, to a lesser extent, the Islamic State (ISIS). Recruitment often targets marginalized communities, youth disillusioned with the government, and individuals susceptible to extremist ideologies.

The Kenyan government has implemented various counterterrorism measures to address the threat posed by terrorist groups. These efforts include enhanced border security, intelligence-sharing with regional and international partners, counter-radicalization programs, and military operations against Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Terrorism continues to threaten the security of many counties in Kenya, mainly those along North Eastern regions, particularly Mandera, Garissa and Wajir counties, who are vulnerable to terrorist strikes. Notable cases include terrorist attacks in 2015 at Garissa University killing 148 people, majority being students. Moreover, counties in the region have grappled with frequent attacks by Somalia based terrorist group, Al-Shabaab, because of its proximity and largely porous border with Somalia. Consequently, this makes it easy for the militants to enter Kenya. A recent report by Global Terrorism Database (GTD) shows that terrorism incidents worldwide have decreased by 43% since their peak in 2014 (GTD, 2019).

Despite this positive global outlook, terrorist activities (radicalization and violent extremist) remain a major challenge in Wajir County. Furthermore, a study by National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Interpeace (2021) show that notable cases of terrorism incidents perpetrated by Al-Shabaab in Wajir county include a 2019 passenger bus attack, when 10 non-locals were killed; a June 2019 IED attack on the road between Khorof Harar and Konton that killed 12 police officers. There were also terrorist attacks in 2018 targeting Qarsa primary school killing three people and since then, Somalia based terrorist group has continued to carry out attacks in the county.

In response to increasing attacks, the Government of Kenya adopted several strategies, besides military, including Nyumba Kumi initiative (community policing) and employing the services of National Police Reservists (NPR). This was aimed at enhancing intelligence gathering and increasing patrols along the borders by NPR (Mogire, Mkutu & Alusa, 2017). However, the recurrence of terrorist attacks challenges the effectiveness of the employed approaches with continued calls for unique strategies. The County borders Somalia to the east, Ethiopia to the north, Mandera County to the north east, Isiolo County to the south west, Marsabit County to the west and Garissa County to the south. Certainly, this explains county accessibility to terrorist attacks.

The continued commitment to address terrorism is evident when Kenya developed National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) which was replicated to counties. In fact, Wajir County has operational strategy, which incorporated nine pillars (education; security; politics; media and online platforms; psychosocial factors; legal and policy framework; training and capacity building; faith-based

and ideology factors; and arts and culture) provided by NSCVE. According to Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (2020), the CVE efforts in Wajir County have not sufficiently taken root in the county due to a number of challenges. Responding to the fast and constantly evolving threat of Violent Extremism (VE) in Wajir county requires appreciation of resilience practices that emphasize community adaptation and collective action.

Furthermore, these increasing efforts by the government attracted scholarly attention to those who examined the terrorism problem in Wajir County. For example, Adow, (2020), in a study of youth involvement in terrorism challenged policy makers to consider adopting multiple approaches in addressing issues that incentivize youth being recruited into terrorism. He suggested that partnership between and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can contribute to increasing community knowledge on effects of terrorism ideologies. Opon, and Gacheru, (2023) concur, arguing that it is time government identifies appropriate channel through which the community can be empowered through a selected number of personnel in every village who will have an eye for profiled and suspected terrorist among other ordinary citizens. In brief, the authors seem to suggest a wider partnership between security agencies and other stakeholders, including the community, to realize effective counter terrorism in the region.

Most importantly, this shift towards a stakeholder model of counter-terrorism positions or interpellated 'ordinary' citizens into the role of stakeholders in the contemporary struggle with terrorism. Vaughan-Williams (2008) in calling for direct participation of community in the national security enterprise through the reporting of suspicious behaviour, participation in inter-community dialogue mechanisms, the undertaking of emergency training and so forth the new security topography seems radically to have transformed what it means to be a citizen. This widespread demand for citizen participation has been couched not simply in terms of an individualized act of utility maximization such that the participants will themselves receive tangible benefits.

In the fight against terrorism, government-civil society organizations (CSOs) relationships are considered by Coston (1998) both inevitable and desirable. Accordingly, this typology helps state actors to form healthy relations that are beneficial to society in providing services that neither the state nor the market can do. Brinkerhoff (1999) argues that a well-organized partnership between the state and CSOs helps in effectively delivering services, capacity building and various forms of technical expertise in addressing social challenges.

For instance, Soomro, (2023) argue that community-based organizations (CBOs) contribute to resilience to violent acts of terrorism by contributing financial or materials to local residents to violent acts of terrorism programs and by contributing supplies to affected people.

This demonstrates that countering terrorism requires all-inclusive approach (stakeholder partnership) which consequently leads to increased stakeholder awareness of terrorist violence amongst various segments of societies (Jarvis, & Lister, 2010). Additionally, Ambrozik, (2019) found community stakeholders participating in collaborative CVE governance networks is best explained by a community stakeholders' interest in CVE, capacity to participate, and exposure to facilitation.

2. Literature Review

Stakeholder partnerships are critical for effective terrorism prevention, as addressing the complex and multifaceted nature of terrorism requires collaboration among various actors with diverse expertise, resources, and perspectives. Coston (1998) argues that the government should partner with other stakeholders such as civil society to effectively address issues of terrorism. However, some argue that government-civil society may concentrate preserving civil society's autonomy and view such alliances as a threat to the core principle of civil society's principle. For example, in Nigeria government Military Joint Task Force and the revived Multilateral Joint Taskforce with its neighboring countries aimed at countering terrorism and extremism in the region.

It is noted that government agencies, including law enforcement, intelligence services, defense forces, and homeland security agencies, play a central role in terrorism prevention efforts. They are responsible for identifying and disrupting terrorist plots, investigating terrorist activities, and apprehending perpetrators. Governments also develop and implement counterterrorism policies, strategies, and legal frameworks to address the root causes of terrorism and enhance national security.

Available literature confirms that effective counter terrorism intervention programs consist of early intervention, de-radicalization, disengagement, and reintegration and rehabilitation (Neumann, 2016; Sinai, 2017). In this approach, coordinated, diverse strategies at the micro, and macro levels are needed, along with a variety of counterterrorism partners and strategies. These actions must be thorough, threat-focused, and suited to the current situation while also being long-lasting (Ahmed et al, 2018; Van den Bos, 2018). There is growing stream of literature that maintain that coalitions or stakeholder partnership plays an important role in the war against terrorism because they offer crucial information that they cannot gather alone, and they can isolate terrorist groups from their sources of international support (Rasmussen, 2021). This narrative has been confirmed by Bhulai and Fink (2016), in their study on strengthening regional cooperation to prevent and counter violent extremism in South Asia. Chaliand and Blin, (2016) opine that it is important to note that by focusing on the problem of terrorism some countries such as Netherlands and the USA apply different

strategies in fighting terrorism. For instance, the USA appears to consider it necessary to carry out severe actions and to adopt an aggressive strategy that includes finding, apprehending, and eliminating terrorists.

For collaboration purposes, civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, religious institutions, and grassroots organizations, are important partners in terrorism prevention. They play a crucial role in building resilience, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the underlying grievances and vulnerabilities that contribute to radicalization and violent extremism. Civil society organizations engage in various activities, including community outreach, education, advocacy, and providing support to individuals at risk of radicalization.

International organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and regional organizations, play a key role in facilitating cooperation and coordination among countries to combat terrorism. They develop and promote international legal frameworks, norms, and standards related to counterterrorism, provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to countries, and facilitate information sharing and collaboration among member states. In a study of strategies used in Ghana's war on terrorism, Prah and Chanimbe (2021) found out that the security officers adopted several strategies. For example, they utilized Gardner's multiple intelligence (interpersonal and spatial-visual) officers in civilian combat gear taking temporary shelter in the community and were able to walk around in plain clothes interacting and collecting information from members of the community. Also, security software was put in use at border checkpoints to quickly identify potential terrorists and find any smuggled products. As part of preventing new and diverse terrorism, Ghana conducted training programs for stakeholders engaging in counterterrorism both at international and local level for the officials to understand how to unearth emerging trends in terrorism (Prah, & Chanimbe, 2021).

In similar note, Mulinari (2019) argues that engaging diplomatically with anyone who voluntarily chooses to defect from terrorism or rejects terrorism ideologies is an important step done to advance peace and stability. The other approach is considering giving them amnesty, presidential pardon and if there are adequate reasons to confirm their improved behavior while at prison, can reduce sentences period. Sloan (2002) investigated whether USA can meet terrorist threat by locating counter-terrorism strategies within the local context. What motivated Stephen Sloan is the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), attacks as in the case of 9/11 which could lead to greater loss of lives and disruption of civil order. The study found out that it was mainly integration at all levels that would help USA effectively develop proactive measures that collects counter-terrorism intelligence from different segment of

the population. Indeed, by concentrating even local levels in intelligence in areas targeted by terrorists, it provides opportunity to mobilize public through existing programs to help them identify potential threats posed by terrorists.

As terrorism continue to threaten security of nations, there emerges involvement of women and girls in carrying attacks, yet they have been ignored in counter-terrorism strategy. There is evidence to suggest that women provide advantage to terrorist group who require resources or publicity to advance their cause. Many people view gender as untapped resource and are willing to include women in counterterrorism. For instance, inclusion of women was evident in the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in a workshop held in May 2014 in Turkey and later in October 2014 in Austria have become the foundation for the strong call of women or inclusion of gender in the fight against terrorism (Canton, 2021).

Drawing on the history of fighting terrorism, Sloan (2002) emphasis that the best way towards defeating terrorism can be to detach and restrict their activities and destroy them using intensive and sustained actions. Therefore, economic sanctions and political pressures have been used to regulate some state promoters who have exhibited little impact on the individual group that may sustain an independent present. Conversely, considering general expanse and the complexity of some of the international terrorist group; this requires government to identify the terrorist suspects, try to locate where they operate and subsequently destroy their capabilities to design and function.

United Nation (2019) observes that there have been acts of terrorist attacks since 1975 in Kenya, but the recent attacks have become deadly. Consequently, the results are many deaths due to increasing number of violent terrorist attacks in the country. This led to Kenya's focusing on training and equipping of security agencies on counter-terrorism strategies. For example, US Anti-Terrorism Assistance Department equipped and trained police officers, custom and immigration officials to help them detect and investigate terrorism incidents (Buigut & Amendah, 2016). Some of the terrorism cases such as Westgate by Al-shabaab and Garissa as well as Mpeketoni have increased national security anxiety. To ensure security is not pushed high in the national agenda, several counter-terrorism initiatives have been taken to confront and ultimately put to end terrorist attacks. This leads to indiscriminate raised and often target suspected individuals as part of the measures to prevent more attacks.

Despite recent studies on terrorism focusing on international context, their cell groups locally have been an unending feature of Africa. In fact, it is most African countries mostly affected by terrorism or extremism. The AU's counterterrorism strategy is the continent's extension of UN resolution 1373. AU further states that

in Kenya's context, prevention of terrorism act offers how to confront terrorism. Most importantly, the act seeks to counter terrorism activities at all levels by ensuring terrorist suspects are arrested and prosecuted if they commit terror related offences that target Kenyans and foreigners within Kenya's soil.

At the most extreme level, state and sub-state actors might have a stake in maintaining war and chaos because it gives them more chances to reap and conceal gains and thereby support the numerous patrimonial networks that give them legitimacy. There is a propensity to associate politics with areas of higher disorder, be they war or crime in conditions of resource depletion, when there are no other effective ways to maintain neo-patrimonialism. To get or keep a piece of the pie, violence is required. In this way, an opportunity for reward and a necessary resource are created out of disorder, and there is no incentive to push toward a more institutional ordering of society. The inherent escalation dynamic of basic survival politics necessitates the use of violence and terrorism as a logical consequence. Few people have a choice but to take a side and defend their interests with violence as resources diminish and competition becomes increasingly violent.

The "regional peace-keeping mission sanctioned by the African Union with the endorsement of the United Nations in Somalia" is the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). It is approved to help temporary legislative designs, carry out a public safety plan, train the Somali security powers, and help establish a solid climate for the conveyance of philanthropic guidance (Mikael, 2013). As a feature of her obligations, AMISOM likewise upholds the National Legislature of Somalia's powers in their fight against Al-Shabaab aggressors (Lavanya, 2016)." According to Mogire et al. (2017), the Kenyan politicians perceive counterterrorism as an imperialist tool that the US was using to pursue its global security agenda. Kenyan politicians and prominent members of civil society further believed that the US was the driving force behind the development of counterterrorism measures because the US government viewed Kenya as a strategic location for its counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa.

In any democratic society, it is the government's responsibility to reduce disparity in public service and development by offering equal opportunities. This has given rise to the debate on the relationship existing between terrorism, economic and development performance. Accordingly, a dominant view put forward by scholars is that transnational terrorism is largely attributed to level of poverty and underdevelopment witnessed in most Africa countries (Tyson, 2001). As well, democratic organizations and high income reduce incidents of people engaging in terror related activities. It is also reported that most states with less economic freedom are likely to witness more terrorism cases (Gassebner & Luechinger, 2011). Elsewhere, Lai (2007) notes that countries with more economic disparities are likely to witness more attacks or people joining terrorism

organization compared to advanced/civilized. In fact, underdeveloped societies are more likely to harbor terrorist groups which developed societies are targeted by the terrorist groups. (Krueger & Laitin, 2008). Additionally, Kurrild-Klitgaard, Justesen and Klemmensen (2006) argue that there is no relationship between education or poverty and terrorism but rather factors only influence political outcome. In a study, Moore (2001) analyzed causes of political underdevelopment in most Muslim states involved in terrorism. They found that terrorist organizations exploit unemployed youth and anyone facing harsh life conditions. Recent studies show that some terrorists have come from broken families which are economically impotent.

In some cases, terrorism can be seen as systematic extension of political failure in a country. When people attempt to seek service from the government and fail to get the government's attention to their issues, they use violence as a response mechanism. However, the conventional opinion among conservative academics studying terrorism "perceives terrorism as inherently involving violence or the threat of violence. Since a belief system needs at least contain some element of dogmatic proof or validation of violence in order to be useful to terrorism, the idea of a non-violent theology that helps terrorists" seems somewhat contradictory because it might lead to non-violent (Richards, 2015). Crenshaw (2011) argues that after the September 11 event, terrorists demonstrated their capacity to threaten international peace and stability. On that note, they presumed that most of them working in the field thought that an agreed definition would accompany notorious acts, any discussion on the concept of terrorism. She also asserts that instead of the enemy's moral character, why not have a neutral definition of the concept that would generally capture all acts of terrorism.

In more concrete terms, notable progress on counter-terrorism response has been consistently changing from centralized to a more relatively devolved where terrorist threats are more unstructured. According to Gadarian (2010) this is evident when there is a lower level of smaller groups. In fact, the absence of notable groups can confine themselves to people who are enthusiastic about recourse to violent attacks. However, more resources can be used to advance democratic institutions and support more effective strategies. A fundamental change of lawlessness and alienations that empowers some leaders to terrorize people motivates groups such as Al-shabaab and Al-Qaeda to have significant following. This implies that a proactive is needed to prevent any violent terrorists in future.

Given the devastating causes and threats posed by the terrorists, the need for a holistic approach to counter the crime of terrorism calls for a sustained fight against it by the UN Security Council in fall 2001. After September 11 the Security Council adopted resolution 1373 and urges member states to react to the crime of terrorism with tough measures within the ambit of their domestic

laws, but the resolution avoided the definition of the concept. It is worth noting that with this, it is hoped that key skills of the security sector agencies and other key stakeholders shall be enhanced in order to smoothen the coordination of national counter terrorism efforts. This study, therefore, aimed to analyze how stakeholder engagement can enhance national security in a country and enlighten and stimulate the National Security council and other key policy makers to develop stronger policies that will help to step up policy that will enhance and support multiagency approach to countering terror.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Social learning theory, a psychological theory, assumes that people learn to be aggressive through observations of what others are doing to achieve a goal or rewards as a result of committing behaviour. Although it was first developed to explain criminal behaviour with individuals learning behaviour, this theory has found its way to terrorism fields. In the 21st Century when terrorism acts became prevalent in most countries around the world, social learning theory was used to examine and explain how people recruited to join terrorism accept and learn from a religiously or politically motivated terrorist organization (Hughbank, & Hughbank, 2009). In literature, it is shown that agents of the terrorism organizations actively befriend, recruit, and later exploit the recruits to assist the organization attack anyone opposing their ideology (Spalek, & Lambert, 2012).

This study argues that stakeholder partnership engagement is based on deterrent approach to counter terrorism, which theorizes terrorism at the individual level. From the deterrent perspective, terrorism is the result of cost benefit calculations made by individual rational actors. In other words, the assumption that people commit terrorism when the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs or risks (rational choice) informs our counterterrorism strategy.

The argument is that the shared platforms among all stakeholders in the community tend to deter individuals from being recruited into terrorism because there will be increased information of the consequences of participating in the acts. Therefore, this reinforces the arguments found in the stakeholder theory literature, in which relationships are based on the following principles: knowledge and information sharing, mutual trust, involvement in the decision making process and alignment of stakeholders' interests in engaging in any activity (Langrafe et al. 2020). Stakeholder groups can contribute with their own knowledge, skills, and experience to increase the exchange of ideas with organizations and reduce the likelihood of dissatisfaction among one or more groups (Esterhuysen, 2019; Ngah, & Wong, 2020).

3. Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method research design, and this allowed the study to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Through a survey, data were gathered from security agencies, community based, and faith-based and human rights CSOs mainly Wajir Peace and Development Agency (WPDA), Kenya Ni Wajibu Wetu, and Malaika Foundation. Wajir East subcounty which borders Somalia was purposively selected. The study site has four wards: Waberi, Korof Harar, Township and Barwaqo.

The study population included members of the public, three government agencies, and three CSO executives. The stratified sampling technique was used to select individuals from the organizations as part of the sample. In total, a sample of 120 was used and to ensure the study achieves a high response rate, only individuals within the study area at the time of data collection were considered. Five research assistants who are natives were employed to assist in data collection. As a mitigating measure considering the sensitivity of the topic, research assistants were trained on how to handle respondents and also ensure they understood the aim of the study. Only

research assistants with smart phones were employed because the questionnaire in soft copy using Google forms. During the study all ethical considerations were given priority.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 State-Community Partnerships in Terrorism Prevention

State community partnerships a significant element in combating terrorism in any country. In this study, we find that communities in Wajir County, especially those along the border with Somalia are susceptible to radicalization and violent extremism because of their proximity.

During the study it was revealed by the respondents that state holder partnership can help achieve the goals of national security. Various stakeholders (community members, civil society, religious leaders, security agencies and other government agencies) revealed the existence of forums and workshops targeting to prevent further terrorism activities in the region shown in Figure one below.

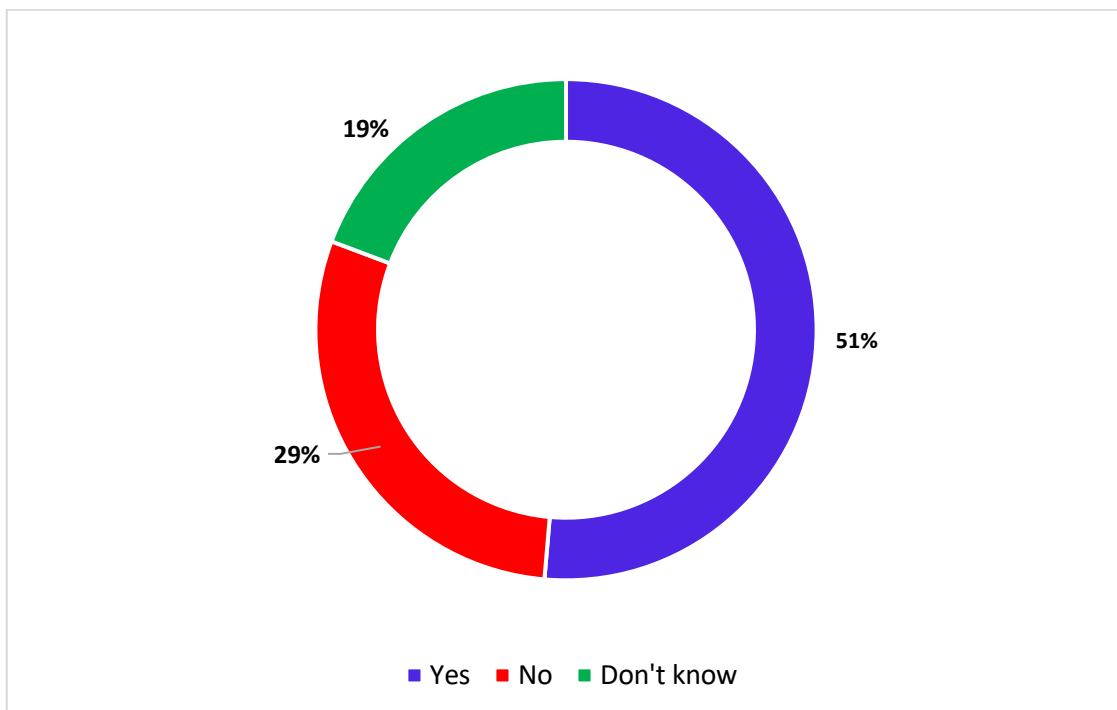


Figure 1: Stakeholder Partnership in Combating terrorism

Analysis above shows that fewer (29%) of the respondents noted that they had not encountered or were unaware of stakeholder forums and workshops with 19% not understanding about them. This implies that despite advocating for such partnership most respondents were not well informed to enable them to participate fully. For example, forums and workshops could have taken place, but the organizers might have ignored publicity or sensitization to all stakeholders. As majority of the

respondents noted, stakeholder -partnership engagement is already adopted in the region as part of the counterterrorism strategy. Most certainly, this is attributed to the fact that terrorist threat endangers larger population, hence counter terrorism is usually implemented through national security structures (military, police, border controls and immigration officers) including the private sector (private security and

banking system) as well as community members (Crelinsten, 2014).

Although 31% of the respondents observed that the cooperation between security agencies, community members, civil society, religious leaders, and the private sector is not effective in addressing terrorism in the region, majority 51 % believe there has been positive impact of the stakeholders' engagement in reducing youth recruited to join Al-Shabaab and decrease in frequency of attacks. Besides, active participation by community members especially the youth in the counterterrorism is something notable compared to previous years.

In an interview with a religious leader, the youth prefer sharing information with civil society who would pass the information to security agencies for action. This is attributed to the youth level of trust on the police and the military:

...you know cooperation between various stakeholders is good. I can tell you the youth in

this area are willing to be part of the success stories in the fight against terrorism, but they fear police and military can compromise their security. The locals prefer talking to members of civil society, especially working at village level because they believe they have the capacity to relocate them in case of any problem, Interview, Nov 20, 2023

The study highlights distinctive of each stakeholder in the counterterrorism, for example, while police and military play law enforcement part, civil society and religious leaders raised awareness of the threat of violent extremism, give voice to marginalized and vulnerable peoples, including victims of terrorism, promote religious education and inter- and intra-faith dialogues while at the same time support the youth. This study also assessed the effectiveness of stakeholder partnership-led strategies as a counterterrorism strategy and how it affects national security in Kenya. Table 1 provides a summary of the results of the descriptive statistics for the usage variable.

Table 1: Stakeholder partnership

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
There are several awareness/education forums organized by stakeholders to address terrorism in this region	2%	12%	7%	44%	35%	100%
A shared intelligence-led antiterrorism approach has become effective in addressing cases of terrorism	9%	12%	12%	37%	30%	100%
Multi-security operations have always been initiated and has led to reduction of terror attacks in Lamu	0%	5%	2%	40%	54%	100%
Government has developed several legislations	12%	12%	23%	30%	23%	100%

Source: Author, (2022)

The findings indicate a strong agreement among respondents to the ideas that stakeholders in Lamu West sub-County had organized several awareness forums/education programs to address terrorism cases. As shown in Table 1 above, intelligence led approach was mainly favored by most respondents as an effective measure to counter terrorist attacks in the region. For example, while the majority (67.4%) were in favour, 20.9% could not agree on the effectiveness of the approach arguing that the very nature of intelligence gathering raises many issues associated with adherence to the rule of law which might hinder its effectiveness. In an interview, respondents pointed to about six awareness sessions conducted within the region led by civil society such as Haki Africa together with government agencies,

“I attended three such forums and it targeted mainly youth who are seen as the main target of Al shabaab terror group. It was informative because I remember how they demonstrated to us how youth were being recruited and how we can help in identifying those people are likely to cheat our youth into joining terror group” (S.J,

Aribo, Personal Communication, April 19, 2022)

Similarly, there were peace caravans throughout most parts of the county, and this aimed at enlightening the public against terrorist activities, “for 2 days, a convoy of vehicles with anti-terrorism messages traversed here while playing peace songs. There were people with microphones who explained to the people damages that terror groups could do to the people and people seemed to appreciate what was being done then”. It is thought that whether lack of knowledge is a driver in itself on terrorism attacks, there is general agreement among scholars and practitioners that education is very important tools to get to youth and hence it can be used to resolve push and pull factors which may influence young people to join violent extremism.

According to Paraskevas and Arendell (2007), the communicate element of the plan should involve specialized notice and awareness procedures both internally (among the organization's stakeholders) and externally, and not just marketing and recovery initiatives (media and various target markets). The security role is focused on the quick restart of these

procedures and the protection of both employees and clients. An interview with security officer confirmed this stating gathering of information by police helped in preventing many attacks in the region as some suspected Al shabaab groups were arrested.

I appreciate the role of intelligence we adopted as we were able to arrest individuals who we later learned they were planning some attacks in the villages” Another security officer adds, I agree our intelligence work well for us but cooperation between the security agencies and the public needs to be strengthened because at times, the public might withhold crucial information for fear of being victimized” (J.K. Kamau, Personal Communication, April 20, 2022).

This implies that stopping terrorist attacks depends on reliable intelligence, and that gathering intelligence necessitates some degree of concealment by its very nature. In some instances, disclosing clandestine intelligence-gathering techniques or the amount of what is already known or unknown compromises the operation's effectiveness and endangers lives (Lewandowski, Carter & Campbell, 2018). The findings also show that 11% of the respondents could neither agree nor disagree with the statement about effectiveness of intelligence-led-approach as a counterterrorism strategy. Understanding intelligence's potential as well as its limitations appears to be a path away from wild conjectures and towards responsible data collecting and analysis. Reliable and timely intelligence is crucial in the fight against terrorism. The true meaning of tactical and strategic prevention is made feasible by it.

Intelligence gathering, which is seen as endangering counter terrorism members' integrity as demonstrated by one security officer, “people will begin to question your integrity in handling sensitive information”. Another respondent who had attended several forums and was in a committee to handle issue within the community added that:

First, my role in the team can be affected if I was to engage in information / intelligence gathering because that is not my main area of expertise. I received the information but that is fine because it is a volunteer giving me the information. I do not want to be in frontline in intelligence gathering. Interview, Nov 19, 2023

The study findings show that shared forums and workshops gave security officers and community members an opportunity to understand various roles handled by each stakeholder.

An interview with respondents revealed that sustained efforts through engagement led to community members became confident in approaching security agencies (military, police) that could be used in the counter terrorism. Further, interviews revealed that sustained

stakeholder engagement in the region led to community members becoming confident in approaching security agencies with information that could be used in counter terrorism. It is clear that engaging transparent and openly is very important in the counterterrorism process.

The study findings also show that one of the key challenges highlighted by respondents was ensuring that individuals engaged were representative of the various groups that constituted the counterterrorism committee in Wajir County. This challenge was compounded by historical civil society-police relations which had been strained following earlier accusations of human right violations in the process of handling individuals suspected of terrorism in the area. One of the respondents describes:

Imagine groups who have always been suspicious of each other now required to work together as part of the stakeholder engagement. I am aware at times; the problem of terrorism has united us but how will the groups manage their previous issues which almost affected their relationships? Stakeholders coming together to fight terrorism is good, but I hope their previous life won't affect its effectiveness. Interview, Nov 20, 2023

The study also found that stakeholder engagement efforts had led to the initiation of a number of projects aimed at tackling precursors to youth radicalization such as belonging, educational success and alienation. For instance, sporting events among the youth, engaging in youth camps organized by a local Mosque, and educational initiatives in schools such as presentations on cyber security. The counter terrorism stakeholders have targeted community members through village level forums targeting women and girls mainly in areas of information sharing and help deter young people from entertaining individuals with ideologies supporting terrorism.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study has examined stakeholder partnership engagement as a counterterrorism strategy in Wajir County. Contrary to popular perceptions, residents in the region have actively participated in various forums and workshops aimed at fighting terrorism. In fact, collaborations between security agencies, civil society, private sector and the religious leaders have positively helped security agencies received information they had never achieved before government considering for this approach. However, the stakeholder lack of trust is very important as it can destroy relationships allowing the terrorists to exploit the opportunity. This paper has elucidated some of the key attributes of engagement, thus providing insight into how security agencies can form

better partnerships with religious leaders and members of community to help prevent terrorism.

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5.2 Recommendations

1. While intelligence gathering will always be a key priority of police, the reflections of stakeholders indicates that in the counter terrorism context, stakeholder-partnership engagement, if executed correctly, can help engender greater levels of trust that ultimately enhance the intelligence gathering capabilities of police. This requires patience and a willingness to invest in ongoing relationships between different stakeholders in the region.
2. There is need to embrace various forms of community outreach with stakeholder engagement to help various security agencies, such as the police, to manage terrorism activities at the borders and within the country.

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