STRIVE
Lessons Learned

STRIVE II
Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism
Executive Summary

The nature of the threat from violent extremism (VE) in the Horn of Africa, and Kenya specifically, continues to evolve. Since the Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism (STRIVE) II programme started in 2016, the threat remains undiminished. At the same time, some aspects of the response by state, as well as non-state, actors have improved, which continue to influence the tactics by violent extremist organisations. While Al-Shabaab continues to be the primary threat, it is no longer the only threat in the region. The Islamic State, as well as the possible return of Al-Qa’ida in East Africa, is one of the actors that countering violent extremism (CVE) programmes are currently monitoring and seeking to curb. STRIVE II has focused its analysis and programming on the threat posed by Al-Shabaab.

STRIVE II seeks to build on achievements and lessons learned during STRIVE Horn of Africa, which was a pilot programme of the EU’s CVE programmes. This is a lessons learned report written by the STRIVE II programme team for the benefit of other practitioners and policymakers.¹

The programme was designed based on this developing picture of the VE threat in Kenya. This report provides reflections and actionable recommendations within the four intervention areas:

1. Mentorship to reduce the risk of recruitment and radicalisation for at-risk youth.
2. Prevention awareness training for law enforcement.
3. Preventive communication to strengthen media and communications responses to VE.
4. Research on the interplay between existing conflicts and VE.

The programme objectives included the requirements of contributing and sharing evidence about the interventions to provide recommendations for the future. A separate chapter of the report focuses on monitoring and evaluation, which offers reflections and recommendations for similar interventions with regard to the measurement of effect. While these recommendations emerged from a programme in Kenya, they have relevance for interventions in the Global South, given the structural factors.

The conclusion for this report focuses on reflections around programme management and adaptations carried out by the team to respond to rising concerns, including setting up gender-segregated mentorship teams. The reflections on the management approach are captured in the conclusion as a way of providing food for thought rather than structured lessons learned.

It should be noted that during the last six months of the implementation period, Covid-19 spread in Kenya. This resulted in the cessation of movement in or out of key project locations and a ban on public gatherings throughout the country, rendering in-person activities impossible. In response to the measures prohibiting the planned programme, the project team revised plans and many of the activities described in this report were conducted via online messaging, video conference platforms and voice calls. One of the obvious lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic is that future risk mitigation plans should consider public health crises that include measures for how the programme can be executed remotely and the inherent risks of such changes in strategy.

¹ An external evaluation was conducted of the programme and is published separately.
Key Recommendations

Mentorship

• Focus on the capacity-building of stakeholders (who provide referrals) and mentors as well as build on a case-management approach. Both recommendations are essential for identifying who is at risk, developing and refining those criteria and doing it in practice.

• Organise engagements – meetings and training of mentees – to engage mentees. Through running the programme it has become evident that direct engagement, perhaps built over time, is key to maintaining motivation during and ensuring quality of interventions.

• Combine mentorship with livelihood interventions. The evidence of the programme suggested that for the mentees who also received financial support, the benefit of the mentorship programme was more effective and the social change was significantly enhanced.

• Create continued engagement between mentors and mentees after the programme has completed.

• Identify and continue to understand the risks associated with the programme. The assumed risks are not the same as the actual risks experienced, therefore an essential recommendation related to mentorship is to clearly discuss and continuously reassess the risk inherent in implementing such a programme and to adopt strategies which mitigate the risks to the participants.

Law Enforcement

• CVE training for security and law enforcement agencies (SLEA) is key to building the prevention capacity of law enforcement officers, highlighting that violent extremism (VE) is a new threat which requires support and knowledge for law enforcement to adapt to changing security threats.

• Consider beneficiary counties beyond VE frontier counties, considering the frequent transfers as well as the agility of the violent extremist organisations (VEOs), which will take advantage if SLEAs are not paying attention.

• Consider sustainability and future ownership up front when designing engagements with and building the capacity of SLEA officers. This is a direct reflection of the need for integrating knowledge at the training stage in the curriculums and manuals of training institutions for security personnel.

• Involve the right stakeholders and understand the sensitive nature of countering violent extremism (CVE) programming and the need to be in line with government priorities, as well as having the right stakeholders involved in the process to ensure relevance and sufficient commitment.

• Adapt the content, speakers and implementation of the trainings to each specific location
of training, given that the threat is significantly localised.

• Involve local experts and knowledgeable persons to support making connections on the ground.

• Encourage a continued process towards a 'whole-of-society' approach which strengthens collaboration between security, state and non-state actors.

Preventive Communication

Youth

• Work directly with the youth, starting with their language and story. This is the foundation to building a participatory approach which can address relevant issues of identity and meaning.

• Exercise a high degree of caution to avoid exposing individuals and understanding the at-risk youth.

• Base interventions on participants’ reality and use their skills as well as the tools already available to them for both sustainability and empowerment.

Media

• Understand how the conflict behind VE is discussed by the legacy media and design media development interventions to address specific gaps and shortcomings.

• To maximise impact, consider which media are most significant in shaping shared discourse about terrorism and conflict, and which media need capacity-building and skills training.

• Ensure the buy-in of editors and managers as it is essential to enable the participating journalists to have the requisite institutional backing to publish their work. RUSI views evidence and research as a key aspect of the training content and as such recommends sharing well-founded research and information, which helps inform journalists and the public conversation.

• Focus attention on helping reporters to diversify the range of sources and voices they use in their journalism. Making links and providing connections is a key recommendation for this component.

Research

• To enhance the evidence base and knowledge informing CVE interventions, build research capacity in areas where there have been high levels of violence by VEOs or locations known to have high levels of recruitment, to improve the quality of the data and ensure learning institutions in high-risk areas are included in the process of knowledge generation.

• As VE is a highly sensitive undertaking, research projects and designs must seek to address the problems of sensitivity from the outset when designing the methodological approach.

• Learn from other academic disciplines in applying more rigorous techniques, such as from public health, criminology and related fields.

• Coordinate research programmes to avoid duplication, enhance shared learning and
reduce the risk of fatigue among research subjects.

- Encourage dissemination of findings to multiple government actors.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Explore the possibilities for experimental and quasi-experimental approaches to accurately measure attribution, which has to be considered from the outset and should be closely integrated with the intervention.

- Address the problem of non-response and subjectivity bias by building trust with the beneficiary group and other conflict-sensitive data-collection approaches.

- Encourage coordination and partnership with different actors in the CVE space to address the problem of beneficiary fatigue. Research fatigue among beneficiaries is a particular concern for an expanding programme area such as CVE. This is especially the case if there is a multiplicity of CVE implementing organisations and actors concentrated within a limited geographic area.

- Consider adoption of a consortium-specific approach to CVE programming with the objective of bringing together organisations with deep specific expertise in the different programming areas.
Abbreviations

AKF – Aga Khan Foundation
AS – Al-Shabaab
AQ – Al-Qa’ida
BRICS – Building Resilience in Civil Society
CAP – County Action Plan
CAPYEI – CAP Youth Empowerment Institute
CSO – civil society organisation
CVE – countering violent extremism
FGD – focus group discussion
GiZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HoA – Horn of Africa
IFRA – French Institute of Research in Africa
KDF – Kenya Defence Forces
KFS – Kenya Forest Services
KRC – Kenya Red Cross
KWS – Kenya Wildlife Service
NCTC – National Counter Terrorism Centre
NGAO – National Government Administration Offices
NIS – National Intelligence Services
NPS – National Police Service
NSCVE – National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism
P/CVE – preventing/countering violent extremism
RV I – Rift Valley Institute
SLEA – security and law enforcement agency
STRIVE – Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism
ToC – theory of change
VE – violent extremism
VEO – violent extremist organisation
We are grateful for the contributions to this report by all STRIVE II team members as well as the wider STRIVE team managed by RUSI.

We also wish to thank the Government of Kenya and specifically the National Counter Terrorism Centre for the support and collaboration received throughout the programme, and for RUSI’s operations in Kenya. We would not have been able to lead this work without the commitment, support and availability of senior officers through the many trainings we conducted together.

RUSI had a great deal of support from and collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GiZ) and through them the County Action Plan Youth Empowerment Institute (CAPYEI), the Kenya Red Cross and the Aga Khan Foundation. We appreciate the support partners have provided to the mentors and mentees and the many interesting discussions we had through the programme.

Finally, we sincerely wish to thank the EU and its respective programme managers who have overseen the programme from inception to completion. We value the financial support that has enabled the work as well as the dialogue and not least the flexibility when required to adjust to the changing context.
1. Introduction

The nature of the threat from violent extremism (VE) in the Horn of Africa, and Kenya specifically, continues to evolve. Since the Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism (STRIVE) II programme started in 2016, the threat remains undiminished. At the same time, some aspects of the response by state and non-state actors have improved, which continue to influence the tactics used by violent extremist organisations (VEOs). While Al-Shabaab continues to be the primary threat, it is no longer the only threat in the region. The Islamic State, as well as the possible return of Al-Qa’ida in East Africa, is one of the actors that countering violent extremism (CVE) programmes are currently monitoring and seeking to curb. STRIVE II has primarily focused its analysis and programming on the threat posed by Al-Shabaab.

The agility of VEOs and their continued evolving nature forces CVE interventions such as STRIVE II to continue to assess the threat and the response while seeking to be as robust as possible in their intervention.

This report describes some of the adjustments from STRIVE Horn of Africa (HoA), along with changes made during the programme and lessons learned, which hopefully will prove helpful to other researchers, governments and implementers in the sector. It complements other reports and conference notes that have been published.

STRIVE II in Kenya was initiated in October 2016 and ran until October 2019, when it was subsequently extended to September 2020. The original duration of the project was 36 months and the funding was €3 million, with an additional €1 million for the extension period.

The programme has been funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa as a part of a greater consortium of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GiZ) and Kenya Red Cross. The overall objective of the consortium programme is to contribute to increased peace, stability and inclusive economic opportunities for youth in marginalised areas in Kenya.

STRIVE II had the objective of contributing to reducing recruitment and radicalisation to VEOs by focusing on four specific result areas. The intervention areas emerged from the lessons learned from STRIVE HoA. STRIVE II sought to extend the scope and depth of impact, as well as develop more robust systems of data collection and learning:

1. Mentorship for youth at risk of recruitment and radicalisation in urban marginalised areas.
2. Support to law enforcement agencies through the National Counter Terrorism Center

(NCTC) to enhance awareness of CVE and response to VE.

3. Preventive communication.

4. Research into drivers of VE.

This report consists of five chapters which highlight lessons learned from each of the four result areas, and lessons learned from the monitoring and evaluation conducted during the programme. This has been given a separate chapter as it is one of the most challenging areas for CVE programming overall and a significant gap in the evolving sector. STRIVE II made significant efforts to enhance the robustness of measurement of the interventions from STRIVE HoA. Each chapter includes an introduction, achievements, challenges and recommendations, and as such each can be read as a standalone overview. The report ends with an overall conclusion of the lessons learned.

This report can be read in conjunction with a report from a team of independent evaluators, which will be published subsequently.
2. Mentorship

2.1 Introduction

The mentorship component for the STRIVE II programme was designed based on evidence from the STRIVE HoA intervention. The design was also informed by the team’s consultations with experts and further studies of literature on mentorship programmes implemented in other regions. As a result, the design of the STRIVE II mentorship component was more rigorous and included a greater focus on case management for the individual ‘at-risk’ youth than under STRIVE HoA.

The mentorship programme was designed deliberately as a community-based process without consultations with government entities. In general terms, the government counterparts were kept abreast, but no individual details were shared. This approach was chosen to ensure that the youth were interested in participating and to mitigate the potential risk of government surveillance of participants. Therefore, the process of identifying the at-risk youth who were to be enrolled as mentees in the programme was based on a continuous assessment and dialogue within the team informed by research and analysis as well as consultation with key community stakeholders.

The Theory of Change (ToC) applied in the mentorship programme implies that if youth vulnerable to radicalisation and VE are identified, approached and engaged in mentorship activities which include dialogue, peer-based mentorship support, group activities and exposure to alternative networks that respond to their needs, they will become less susceptible to VE recruitment.

2.1.1 Design

The selection of the mentees in STRIVE II was based on a set of criteria including: participants having a close peer/relative who has been recruited into a VE group or engaged in VE activities; associating with violent criminals or gang members; holding radical or extremist views and tendencies; or affiliating with holders of extremist views and tendencies. One of the four criteria is then coupled with two or more of the following six criteria, such as: being a school dropout; having a dysfunctional family background; being socially withdrawn; being a former convict; being newly converted to Islam; and idleness. These criteria are less determining than the first four, but inform the level of vulnerability of the youth.

The mentors are selected from criteria, including: being engaged in their community; caring; open minded; and having humanist values. They are

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3. For further information on programme design in other regions, see Anne-Sophie Hemmingsen, *The Danish Approach to Countering and Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation*, DIIS Report 2015:15 (Copenhagen: DIIS – Danish Institute for International Studies, 2015).
expected to lead the mentorship process with the mentees and thereby provide a mentee with a good example of how to manage life. However, it can be tough being a mentor as they run the risk of being stigmatised in their community by interacting with the mentees. Working as a mentor requires that they are open minded and tolerant of diverse viewpoints among the mentees and sometimes difficult behaviour.

Stakeholders come from a diverse team of social workers, parents, peace committee\textsuperscript{4} members, teachers and religious leaders. The role of stakeholders is to support the identification of youth at risk (mentees) in their community and refer them to lead mentors, who then pair mentors with new mentees.

The programme engaged mentors and stakeholders from the same communities because the identification of the right mentees according to the ‘at-risk’ criteria depends on a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the specific community and its members. The selected mentors and stakeholders are well known among the community and considered particularly upstanding. The intention is that they have legitimacy in relation to the mentees as they can identify with, know and have overcome the difficult life conditions with which the mentees struggle.

The gender representation of mentees in the programme has a ratio of 40:60 between females and males. This is because the underlying context has shown that more men are being recruited into VE groups than women. The selection of the programme mentors also reflects that gender balance to reflect the mentees.

2.1.2 Intervention Approaches and Activities

The main types of interventions in the mentorship programme include meetings (one-to-one and monthly within groups), training of mentors and stakeholders, psychosocial support (for the mentors, and on an as-needed basis for the mentees), and socioeconomic links for the mentees through consortium collaborations.

The mentorship intervention directed at youth at risk was as follows:

- **One-to-one meetings**, where mentors meet the mentees on a weekly basis. These enable the mentor to support the mentee on an individual basis and discuss issues which cannot be handled during group meetings. Examples of such support include the identification and setting of goals in cooperation with the mentee, dialogue about personal and social issues of concern to the mentee and the use of techniques to develop self-awareness.

- **Bi-monthly group meetings**, which offer an opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet, discuss and share experiences, and build support networks and friendships to develop resilience to gangs and recruitment to VEOs. It is a key component to encourage the mentees to jointly develop ideas about which options they have, what they can do to achieve their goals and how they support each other in achieving change. During the mentorship programme, a manual was developed to provide the basis for mentors in discussing subjects linked to VE, techniques to address challenges mentees face in everyday life and

\textsuperscript{4} Peace committees are community-level groups consisting of individuals seeking to de-escalate conflicts and contribute to peace.
group facilitation plans to deliver to their groups.\(^5\)

- **Online and mobile phone messaging groups** for continued discussions.

- **Training of mentors**, designed to expand their capacity to better equip and support mentees. In total, 16 training sessions were held during the first two years of the programme. Topics included: building the mentees’ self-confidence and self-awareness; critically engaging in extremist narratives and identifying violent propaganda; understanding the drivers leading youth into VE; and terrorism in the region.

- **Stakeholder engagement** of religious leaders, social workers, teachers, peace committee members and parents, in each area. Monthly meetings were organised between stakeholders and mentors. The purpose of these meetings was to provide a forum for discussion on the emerging risks of radicalisation within the community and identify appropriate strategies to best support at-risk individuals.

- **Links with networks offering skills training** as part of the efforts to address the socio-economic constraints faced by mentees. Attempts were made to link mentees to an existing organisation offering vocational training, life skills and scholarship opportunities. The mentorship programme team also included a psychologist who provided psychosocial support to the mentors and, on an as-needed basis, to the mentees. Psychosocial support is important in reducing the risk of secondary trauma among the mentors as they are exposed to the mentees’ experiences, some of whom have suffered traumatic events. Additionally, the psychologist addressed other stressors that the mentees and mentors undergo, such as community and family-based violence, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, stress, substance abuse, unemployment and general difficult living conditions.

To explore the added value of a multifaceted engagement against VE, the team considered consortium collaborations. Such collaboration provided an opportunity for the team to provide recommendations within its areas of expertise and to learn from the other consortium members in their specialist areas. Through collaborations with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) Strathmore Educational Trust\(^6\) and Kenya Red Cross, the mentees benefited from life skills training, educational scholarships and business grants support. This consortium collaboration was an important intervention since it provided mentees with opportunities to improve their financial prospects and reduced the risk of them being influenced by VEOs and going back to their old way of life.

## 2.2 Achievements

### 2.2.1 Implications of Propaganda and Recruitment to VEOs

The mentorship programme has been successful in making the mentees aware of the implications of propaganda and recruitment to VEOs. This has been informed by both the quantitative interviews and focus group discussions with the mentees, which revealed that they have gained understanding about radicalisation, VE and how people are recruited into VEOs. Specifically, significant changes were observed in the percentage of

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mentees who identified at least four actions that can be taken to address VE (35% at the midline and 32% at the endline), as well as at least four forums for discussing VE issues (midline 22% and endline 35%).

Through the programme, the mentees learned to develop a critical approach and understand the impact of the choices they make in everyday life. At the midline, mentees reported an enhanced ability to set their goals (6% improvement) and solve problems (8% improvement). The focus group discussions with the mentees established that the mentors encouraged them to discuss issues and their problems relating to making plans for their future, dealing with life’s daily struggles and with difficult circumstances and people.

Consortium collaborations and partnerships have successfully exposed mentees to socioeconomic opportunities and networks, which has greatly reduced their vulnerability to VEOs. During the course of the programme, based on the project’s internal monitoring and evaluation reports, the share of self-employed mentees increased by 6% (midline) and 13% (endline), respectively. Combined with figures on the reduction in the percentage of unemployed (disinterested) mentees across both time periods, such changes indicated positive shifts in employment levels. Further, the employed mentees were more likely to report. The findings also indicate that employed (part time or full time) and self-employed mentees were 10% and 12% more likely to report changes in their attitudes (self-confidence levels) than those who were unemployed but looking for work (reference group or the comparison group).

Literature on radicalisation has pointed to factors contributing to vulnerability to radicalisation and potentially VE as: socioeconomic deprivation within a community; exposure of the individual to radicalised peers; and propaganda in online media. Beside dialogue and the building of healthy networks among mentees, collaboration with other organisations, such as Kenya Red Cross, GiZ and RTI, have led to mentees being empowered economically, receiving scholarships, and getting life skills and vocational training. Through focus group interviews, mentees acknowledged that these opportunities had improved their lives. For instance, mentees under RUSI received training and start-up kits from the Red Cross Society which have improved their lives. This is evident among some of the mentees in Mombasa: ‘Through RUSI, we have been linked to organisations such as [the] Red Cross, Haki Africa, where we have been able to get training and start-up kits … and we are thankful’, said one STRIVE II mentee in Mombasa.

2.2.2 Good Mentor–Mentee Matching

Focus group discussions with mentors and mentees indicated that the right match of mentor–mentee was key to success. To increase the probability of a good match it is important for the mentors and mentees to be of the same peer group. Mentors who are closer in age to their respective mentees often appear to be better positioned to relate to and engage with the mentees. In building natural affinities, the mentors often become role models and valuable resources for navigating intersecting developmental contexts and concerns such as family, friends and religion.

The team’s experience suggests value in also matching mentors to mentees from the same neighbourhoods and background. Sharing similar experiences and understandings of local dynamics enables mentors to use their affinities to support mentees.

A finding from the monitoring and evaluation revealed that the cross-gender matching of mentors and mentees proved beneficial as both males and females became more knowledgeable about the issues of those of the opposite gender. For the cross-gender matching approach to be successful, it is important that the mentors had a
trusting relationship with each other that enabled them to direct female/male mentees to contact a mentor of the same gender when they had gender-related issues and questions which the other mentors were unable to answer.

The mentorship programme successfully engaged social workers, parents, peace committee members, teachers and religious leaders within their respective communities as stakeholders. Based on focus group interviews with stakeholders in all project locations,7 it appeared that partnerships with local communities, government and non-governmental entities and stakeholders seemed to be important for facilitating the development, implementation and reach of initiatives that aimed to prevent or reduce youth radicalisation.

2.2.3 Sustainability and Consistency

The established interaction among stakeholders, mentors and mentees appears strong and potentially sustainable beyond the end of the STRIVE II programme. According to research, social disconnectedness and unfulfilled needs for belonging are some of the factors contributing to radicalisation among young people. In this regard, encouraging relationships and feelings of closeness between mentors and mentees through engaging in activities of shared interest and mutual sharing over time seems to be important in the process of building the necessary trust and thus the mentees’ resilience to radicalisation and VE.8 Based on the focus groups with the stakeholders, mentors and mentees separately, there is an existing bond among them, with 82% of the stakeholders communicating with the mentors at least once a month, in line with the design of the programme. Yet, only 19% of the mentors approved that stakeholders and mentors have strong relations. With the programme coming to an end in September 2020, the lack of a formal ongoing programme could jeopardise the link between the mentors and stakeholders.

Consistency in monitoring the relationship among the mentees, mentors and the programme management team has proven to be a success. Regular contact between mentors and mentees with programme staff has contributed to long-lasting mentoring relationships, as well as more frequent meetings between mentors and mentees, which seems to have led to stronger mentoring relationships. Based on the focus group interview with the mentors, the programme established that consistent training for the mentors has helped in maintaining their interaction with their mentees. Among such important topics in the training, ‘how to be a good mentor’, ‘things to consider in conversation with mentees’ and ‘how to run a group discussion’ have been helpful in maintaining good relationships with the mentees.

2.3 Challenges

Despite the success of the mentorship programme, several challenges emerged which should be addressed for future mentorship initiatives and might be relevant for others considering developing mentorship approaches.

2.3.1 Attitudes to Violence

One of the major challenges was ensuring sustainable attitudinal level changes, especially regarding attitudes towards violence. Contrary to the hypothesised relationship between the mentorship programme (the treatment) and mentees’ attitudes towards violence (outcome), the quantitative results

7. Project locations include: Majengo and Eastleigh in Nairobi County; Kisauni, Likoni and Majengo in Mombasa County; and Kwale in Kwale County.
demonstrated that mentees’ acceptance of using only ‘violence in case of self-defence or defence of others’ improved over the course of the project (12% and 15%, at the midline and endline, respectively). Similarly, changes were not observed when mentees were asked whether violence was ‘not at all acceptable under any circumstances’. During follow-up interviews, some mentees justified violence as a strategy for protecting their interests and those of their communities, especially in the context of the extended election process, when many felt their rights and those of their communities were being violated. Given the high incidence of violence in the areas where the mentees resided, a more context-specific engagement with the concept of violence was required to encourage a better understanding of such indicators.

2.3.2 Mentor–Mentee Matching

The matching of mentor with mentee is essential for success, as mentioned above. During the programme, it also proved important to have some mentors who possessed a good understanding of the theology of religions and extremist narratives as some mentees struggled with extremist religious views. A more practical challenge was that it proved difficult for mentors to meet on a weekly basis if the mentees lived in a different neighbourhood. This, in turn, may have a negative impact on the bonding between the recruited mentees and the assigned mentor. Such issues can pose a challenge to the identification and recruitment of the right mentors as well as matching them to the right mentees.

2.3.3 Ending Mentoring

Another challenge is how to identify when mentoring can be concluded. Mentors in this programme have, in collaboration with the mentees, established goals that can help the former identify when the latter is ready to leave the programme, combined with judgement based on the mentee’s circumstances. Indeed, CVE programmes based on mentorship should aim at setting goal indicators for whether the mentee has undergone a positive development and to determine when they are ready to ‘graduate’ from mentorship.

2.3.4 Identifying Stakeholders

Identifying stakeholders who can come to adequately understand and support the objectives of the programme can be a challenge. Stakeholders who do not have a clear understanding of the programme make it hard for them to identify the youth at risk. Stakeholders are, in most cases, the first to get in touch with mentees. It is important that they have a clear understanding of the programme’s aim and how to approach potential mentees to avoid stigmatising them when approaching them as part of a CVE programme. If they do not have a clear understanding of the programme, they may also unintentionally give mentees the wrong expectations of what involvement implies, for example, getting an allowance or a job upon participation.

2.4 Recommendations

- **Deeper engagement:** The difficulties of evoking attitudinal change over and above strengthening knowledge and understanding of resilience suggests that deeper and longer engagements are likely to result in positive effects. This includes reorienting discussions around violence to be more locally grounded, and also to undertake deeper engagements on

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9. The last general election in Kenya was held in 2017, but there was a court order to have a re-run. The overall election process was significantly extended and, given the historical violent elections (2007 in particular), caused significant stress and disruption to the economy. Post-election violence largely affected areas of the Rift Valley, Nairobi and the Coast region. For more details, see Center for Strategic & International Studies, ‘Post-Election Violence in Kenya and its Aftermath’, 11 August 2009.
attitudes towards violence as well as using more behavioural indicators to track progress.

- **Capacity-building of stakeholders and mentors**: Effective mentorship requires providing mentors with the skills and assistance for them to support the mentees in their change process. To improve the mentorship capabilities, various professionals and experts, such as psychologists, experts in religious matters, gender specialists and more are engaged to facilitate different training sessions. It is important to support the mentor’s training with a manual and to develop facilitation plans to be used during the training. This helps to set a framework for the training, and support mentors in running meetings and to systematically address important and difficult topics.

- **Build in activities that sustain engagement after the close of the programme**: Ensuring sustainability of the mentorship programme even after its completion should be a key consideration in designing the programme. Informed by focus group discussions with mentors, stakeholders and the mentees, the recommended sustainability measures include establishing WhatsApp communication groups, as well as email exchanges. This method of communication is cost effective and allows for the continuation of relationships without significant resource investment, as well as an opportunity for the mentors and mentees to continue to relate. Consequently, such activities should be designed as a mechanism to enable the participants (mentors, mentees and stakeholders) to lead the follow-up that decreases the role of the programme implementation team in sustaining the mentorship work. Additionally, to enhance sustainability of the programme, mentors should be engaged in activity training as part of the overall training taking place within the programme. This will empower them in presentation skills, public speaking and running mentor–mentee sessions.
• **Diversify meeting and training formats:** To achieve the overall objectives of the mentorship programme, various means should be adopted in both one-to-one and group bi-weekly meetings. This reduces monotony and makes it more enjoyable for participants. Informed by separate focus group discussions with the mentors and mentees, it is recommended that the mentors and mentees be engaged in pleasurable and relationship-building activities, such as roleplay, debate, group work and football tournaments. This should be articulated in the normal monthly meetings. Additionally, inasmuch as the one-to-one and group meetings are informal, the programme’s learnings suggest that written records of mentor–mentee meetings and mentees’ progress should be outlined clearly and tracked progressively. This record-keeping should be solely in the interest of maintaining an effective mentoring programme. These records should be maintained securely and in line with the appropriate ethical and legal considerations given the nature of such mentorship programming.

• **Enhance partnerships that complement mentorship:** In order for mentorship to become a success and for change to emerge for the mentees, the programme needs to provide some degree of access to life skills, vocational training and educational options that participants can access during or following their mentorship. Non-governmental and community-based organisations approached by the programme should be engaged in such a way that they can complement and contribute towards the mentorship programme. Links between mentorship programmes such as employment skills and educational programmes should be made to address structural factors that drive at-risk youth towards ideologies advocating the use of violence, such as religious and ethnic marginalisation, unemployment and educational problems, high levels of poverty, and insecurity.

• **Articulate risk and include strategies to reduce risks to participants:** Focus group discussions with the mentors and stakeholders indicated that both groups were at risk of being targeted by VEOs as well as increased scrutiny by government security and law enforcement actors. These potential threats are considered a direct result of the work they do in P/CVE and the confidential information they may have access to by virtue of their engagement with at-risk youth, some of whom can cite connections, however tenuous, to VEOs. Due to such issues, there is a need to consider and address the full range of risks in pursuing CVE work. It is therefore recommended that first, there is open discussion between the programme, the mentors and the stakeholders about risks and agreed responses and mitigating measures. Such information can be articulated in the training manual and also supported through close management of the mentorship network. Second, the mentorship schemes should involve and establish partnerships between police and other statutory agencies such as community leaders, local chiefs and NGOs.

• **Aim to build networks and convene locational, regional or country-specific training/workshops:** Ideological violence crosses borders and is not confined to any location, region or country. Based on the focus group discussions with the mentors, mentees and stakeholders, it emerged that the participants were at one point in communication or contact with other organisations dealing with CVE. Based on this, it is recommended that programmes should consider approaches that bolster a sense of community through involving/linking mentors, mentees and stakeholders to CVE workshops/training which gives an appropriate space for such engagements.
3. Prevention Awareness Training for Law Enforcement

3.1 Introduction

According to the Kenyan government, the threat posed by terror groups such as Al-Shabaab constitutes a significant challenge to the country’s security and development. Currently, the regions primarily affected by recruitment and radicalisation into VE include North Eastern, Coastal and Upper Eastern. However, the situation is dynamic, and the scope of affected areas continues to change. In 2016, in response to the need for effective management of VE and in recognition of the importance of prevention efforts, the government launched the National Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism (NSCVE)\(^{10}\). The second version of NSCVE is in its final stages of review at the time of writing.

The NSCVE has been used in guiding the development of County Action Plans (CAPs). To date, all 47 counties in Kenya have successfully developed some iteration of CAPs against VE. In both the NSCVE and the CAPs, one key approach is to build prevention capacities of national and sub-national stakeholders and institutions. In line with this shared ambition, the law enforcement component under STRIVE II aims to contribute towards building the capacity of security and law enforcement agency (SLEA) personnel on the subject of P/CVE. The training’s main objective is to improve the understanding of P/CVE and encourage prevention-focused responses to VE.

The ToC here is that if the knowledge and capacity of SLEA in PCVE is enhanced, this will result in a strengthening of the role of an agency’s personnel, particularly in prevention, improvement of the quality of officers’ responses to CVE and enhanced collaboration with non-security actors (including civil society organisations, the general public and community members). Similar to other components of STRIVE II, law enforcement capacity-building was designed to be implemented (initially) over the original three years, but as mentioned, the programme was extended to September 2020. In total, one regional training and trainings for middle-level managers in 11 counties have been successfully conducted.

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3.2 Achievements

3.2.1 Flexible and Iterative Approach and Design

At the time of the STRIVE II proposal, existing evidence on VE dynamics and trends was considered and analysed. Additionally, in consultation with stakeholders, particularly NCTC, a needs assessment was conducted. Resulting from this inclusive process, nine counties were identified and targeted as high risk for VE high-risk and priority areas for intervention under the law enforcement component. These counties included Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Isiolo, Lamu, Kwale, Kilifi, Nairobi and Mombasa.

To be responsive and adaptive to changing contexts and dynamics, new developments and needs presented by government partners were considered. As such, the list of beneficiary counties changed, although only slightly. With the law enforcement component’s flexible design, three new priority counties were introduced – Nyeri, Tana River and Siaya – while Nairobi, Kilifi and Mombasa were dropped during implementation. This, however, was done at the request of the NCTC and with approval of the donor (the EU).

During the inception phase, RUSI and the NCTC collaboratively defined SLEA to mean administration and security officers from the National Government Administration Offices (NGAO), the National Police Service (NPS), the National Intelligence Services (NIS), Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Kenya Forest Services (KFS), Kenya Prison Services, Immigration Services and Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA). Senior and mid-level managers were distinguished from frontline officers to ensure relevant training could be delivered. Members of Regional Security and Intelligence Committees (RSIC) and County Security and Intelligence Committees (CSIC) were classified as senior management and sub-CSIC as middle-level management, while those of lower ranks and in the identified ‘hot spot’ counties were classified as frontline officers. Furthermore, the CVE training was designed and conducted locally in the above-mentioned counties. As such, senior- and middle-management level and frontline SLEA officers were earmarked and engaged in the training. As a result, at least 600 SLEA officers, eight RSICs, 11 CSICs and 55 sub-CSICs were reached under this result area.

Moreover, a CVE training curriculum was designed and developed particularly for an SLEA audience in Kenya. Although not yet approved for publication at the time of writing, the training curriculum was used in its working draft form for all 10 trainings involving the regional, county and sub-county teams. Based on these agreements, a diverse team of officers was engaged for each four- to-five-day training course. The training was conducted by experienced facilitators from NCTC/government, RUSI, guest speakers and academics, and at times representatives from local civil society organisations (CSOs). As evidenced by participant feedback through midline assessments, the training met the general expectations from participants across counties, departments and management levels. The syllabus covered the basic understanding of relevant and common concepts in CVE, the history of VE and VEOs, vulnerability assessments, human rights in counterterrorism, engagement with the public, community policing in the context of CVE and working with non-state actors, and an introduction to disengagement. In addition, feedback from participants, and particularly from midline and qualitative endline surveys, showed unanimous agreement on the usefulness of the training, with the majority suggesting a need to cascade the same training to other lower-ranked officers and some indicating the importance of training all SLEA officers in the country.
3.2.2 Collaborative Approach to Stakeholder Engagement

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya created a devolved system of governance and the establishment of 47 county administrations. It further separated powers and functions between central and county governments. However, security was retained under national government control. As such, the government enjoys a monopoly over and day-to-day management of security service provision, deployment of security officers, roles and responsibilities. In addition, the central government has, since 2010, retained the eight regional administration offices (the former provincial administration) under its remit.

Successful engagement initiatives – capacity-building and training targeting government security officers and/or managers, particularly on the relatively sensitive subject of VE – rely on the continuous and sustained support of key government stakeholders. This calls for a careful mapping and meticulous engagement of the multi-level security sector stakeholders. At the national level, the NCTC is the government’s appointed national body for coordinating all CVE efforts in the country. Although the centre exists nationally and has no regional or county physical presence, the mandate to coordinate and oversee CVE operations, programmes and initiatives has been delegated primarily to CSICs, which are chaired by county commissioners. Hence, the key stakeholders and main entry points at national and sub-national levels are the NCTC and CSICs, respectively. Activities at sub-county level are coordinated by sub-CSICs.

The CVE stakeholder engagement started with the NCTC at the national level. With the centre’s support, engagements were cascaded down to line ministries, national institutions and counties. In addition to the desired government buy-ins and approvals, engaging these key stakeholders helped

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11. County commissioners report to the central government rather than the county government as it is not a devolved function, as explained above.
in the deconfliction of programmes, avoidance of duplication of efforts and prioritisation of activities and locations. The key stakeholders further helped with the programme’s mobilisation, which could have otherwise proved challenging, particularly in such a ‘disciplined’ sector where participating in a security training (especially when it is provided by a non-state actor) must be approved in advance.

Although it was seemingly tedious and bureaucratic, the approach used in engaging the identified stakeholders was key in successful implementations. It involved RUSI and NCTC collaboratively engaging county stakeholders with the NCTC leading in stakeholder mobilisations and organisation of meetings. Moreover, the NCTC provided briefings in the wider context of national strategy while RUSI focused on the intended programme and collaborative support. Failure to get this approach right would have likely led to unnecessary delays in roll-out and implementation, and worse, may have impacted government buy-ins, ownership and support.

3.2.2 Real-Time Monitoring and Evaluation and Continuous Feedback System

Delivery of all the training conducted under the component was supported by real-time monitoring and evaluation. The team implemented a robust framework that relied primarily on baseline, midline and endline surveys in the form of pre- and post-training assessments and qualitative interviews with key line managers and participants, respectively. In addition, feedback was collected on expectations and quality of the training for all sessions, which included all levels of SLEA personnel.

Based on the results of the monitoring and evaluation conducted on at least 270 participants from nine counties, it was found, for instance, that law enforcement officials generally had a good baseline understanding of the factors affecting national security and the national security apparatus. Substantial improvements were also noted between the baseline and endline on indicators related to vulnerability and risk assessments (using NCTC’s RADAR tool), disengagement, the importance of observing human rights disengagement, and the role of the public in CVE. Accordingly, analysis of the generated data was disseminated to stakeholders, particularly the head of training at NCTC and all the training facilitators involved in the risk assessment activities. This feedback not only helped to show the immediate change in knowledge capacity in subjects taught, but also helped to enable a constant update of content and approach, quality assurance, identification of areas of weakness in facilitation and efforts to mitigate or strengthen them. Coupled with the flexibility and adaptive nature of design, this feedback loop contributed to continuous improvements in delivery and, to a greater extent, assured quality towards meeting the programme objectives and participants’ expectations.

3.2.3 Choice of ‘Short, Focused and Local’ Training

The target participants in the law enforcement component are generally decision-makers in their respective positions. They are responsible for functional security under their assigned jurisdictions, and as such, drawing them out of their stations for a training activity for extended periods may pose a challenge to their security service delivery and strain decision-making systems, which, in such high-risk locations targeted under

12. RADAR is a risk assessment and decision-making tool currently used by NCTC and law enforcement actors to determine the different levels of risk of individuals suspected of extremism, based on the different categorised activities engaged in (for instance, if a suspect is a terrorist operator, radicaliser, recruiter, sympathiser, etc).
this engagement, could have serious consequences. Further, considering a training far afield from their duty counties and areas of responsibility could potentially have even more disastrous consequences to risk management.

Even though all the training locations face a common challenge of VE, their contexts generally differ in a number of ways, including: levels of understanding and appreciation of the problems; experience in handling the challenges; levels of public engagement; community grievances against security officers; issues of human rights violations; mutual distrust between security teams and local communities; and levels of risk and threats endured by the officers. Furthermore, as generally shown by baseline data, a minority of participating officers had prior CVE or even counterterrorism training, with the majority of them currently deployed on the border counties of North Eastern. Also, participants from border counties of North Eastern and Coast showed a somewhat higher understanding of VE, counterterrorism and core concepts, such as vulnerabilities and disengagement, compared with other counties.

As such, the approach of conducting a four-to-five-day ‘short, focused and local training’ allowed consideration of such potential challenges and the importance of local context in designing and delivering training. Furthermore, it also saved the programme’s resources from incurring potentially high transport, per diem and venue hire costs associated with conducting residential training outside the target counties.

3.3 Challenges

3.3.1 Sustainability Challenge: Limited Resources Versus Capacity-Building

Feedback from participating officers indicated the usefulness of training conducted under the law enforcement component. Further, participants highlighted the need to cascade the training down to lower-level officers. However, due to limited resources, this was not an option in this iteration of the programme. As such, the component’s localised approach was aimed at building local capacities to help in continuous sharing of knowledge with downstream security personnel beyond the immediate target participants.

3.3.2 Sustainability Challenge: Frequent Transfer of Law Enforcement Officers

Capacity-building of SLEA was challenged greatly by frequent and often unpredictable transfers. In some cases, officers were transferred within a short period of time, for instance, six months after the training. Other factors, such as the reassigning of duties and retirements, further challenged efforts to build capacity. Moreover, government personnel, and security officers in particular, are subject to periodic transfers from one location to another. Aside from this, there is a general rule (that differs slightly depending on the security body) that security and administrative officers can serve in a given location for a period of no more than three years. This may take out critical human resources based at county or sub-county level when the trained personnel are transferred and
replaced with those who lack equivalent training. Similarly, stakeholders from non-security backgrounds may become frustrated and fail to engage security officers as frequently due to transfers with little notice period and the continuous need for capacity-building of new officers with limited P/CVE experience. Stakeholder processes, continuity of engagements and the execution of endline focus group discussions may be further challenged when stakeholders or training participants are moved shortly after engagement with the risk assessment. For instance, a reshuffle of officers in one of the initial counties trained greatly affected the endline FGDs conducted six months later.13

3.3.3 Securitisation of CVE

At present, the important role of non-state actors in P/CVE is globally acknowledged and accepted. As such, the handling of CVE has, over time, shifted from government-centred actions to a ‘whole-of-society’ approach. For instance, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) acknowledges a whole-of-society approach involving multi-agency and multidisciplinary interventions and engagements of non-state actors, including local communities, as good CVE practices.14 Furthermore, the OSCE recently published a technical guide on the whole-of-society approach in dealing with radicalisation that leads to terrorism.15 As such, complementary efforts by CSOs and development actors are encouraged. Good working and complementary relations between state and non-state actors are key in achieving the desired whole-of-society approach, particularly recognising and trusting each other’s roles in addressing a problem as complex as VE. CSOs can also support efforts to bridge the gap between communities and the government as they are often closer to the community and have the latter’s trust and confidence.

Although both the NSCVE and CAPs emphasise government and non-government actor and community collaboration on P/CVE in Kenya, the CVE space remains relatively securitised – limiting actions and initiatives by CSOs, among other non-government actors. This, in a subtle way, manifested itself during the implementation of the activities under the component of STRIVE II. For instance, the spirit of the programme is to build the capacity of the SLEA officers together with local CSOs, with the aim of creating sustainable local relationships and collaboration with regard to P/CVE between the two groups. However, engaging SLEA officers in training with local CSOs was a significant challenge due to the observed discomfort and security-related sensitivities held by the security officers engaged in the training – assumed to have, again, risen from the securitisation of P/CVE. Although in a few instances some local CSOs (endorsed by the local CSICs based on their respective working relationships) joined the activities, their level of engagement was limited to discussions around government engagement and partnerships with the public and/or CSOs.

To some extent, such sensitivities may be understood due to allegations of local CSOs sympathising with and, in some cases, being rumoured to support VEOs. Whether such allegations are real or perceived, any blanket condemnation of – and distrust in – CSOs and their engagement in P/CVE will serve only to further securitise the space and limit or restrict CSOs’ support for P/CVE, making a whole-of-society approach impractical or difficult to achieve. Moreover, the

13. During the endline FGDs in Nyeri, only one of the original training participants was still posted in the county. The rest had been posted to different counties.
recent security law amendments,¹⁶ which demand the reporting of all CVE activities engaged in by the CSOs to the government, including details of activities and participants, contribute to further constricting the already challenged P/CVE space.

### 3.3.4 Gender Representation and Parity

The law enforcement component was keen on the inclusion of women in SLEA P/CVE training. During mobilisation, female representation was greatly considered and encouraged. However, the desired number of female participants was not achieved. This may be partly due to the selection criteria (targeting senior and mid-level managers in high-VE-risk counties) and the acknowledgement that there are few women in key leadership roles in the security sector in Kenya. For instance, of the total participants in the nine counties, only 0.05% were women (15). Four of the nine counties had zero representation, two had one each and the remaining three ranged between three to five female participants. Of the 11 counties, 66% of female participants came from only two (Nyeri and Siaya), which are regarded as less affected in comparison with North Eastern and Coastal counties. This means that only a few of them hold such important posts, especially in the majority of northern and coastal counties where VE activities are prevalent.

### 3.4 Recommendations

Based on the achievements and challenges, the following recommendations are suggested:

- **P/CVE training for SLEA personnel is key in building local prevention capacities for law enforcement officers:** P/CVE training and capacity enhancement should be considered for all SLEA officers irrespective of the location of their work in Kenya. This is because VE is a challenge that is no longer restricted to specific regions, particularly with rising levels of radicalisation, recruitment and homegrown terrorism in the interior of Kenya and attacks led and conducted by Kenyans of non-Somali descent. For instance, Ali Salim Gichunge, the individual named by the government as the leader of the recent Dusit D2 attack, was born in Nyeri, schooled in Isiolo and resided in Limuru, just outside Nairobi."¹⁷ These areas are relatively new recruitment grounds compared to North Eastern and Coastal regions. As such, prevention efforts should be made beyond the known hotspots, for instance to include the rest of the 36 counties of Kenya not engaged under this programme.

- **There is a need to consider beneficiary counties beyond VE frontier counties:** While training for all those in frontier counties bordering Somalia is necessary as initially identified under the law enforcement component, rising numbers of new incidents and evidence of recruitment calls for the need to expand the scope to include the remaining counties not considered under the component. Further, even in the frontier counties, it should be cascaded down to lower levels of command.

- **Sustainability should be considered in designing engagements with and capacity-building of SLEA officers:** To make the

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¹⁶. In 2014, a Security Amendment Law was passed that officially mandated NCTC as the government agency to lead and coordinate CVE activities in the country. The first amendment came with restrictions for media coverage of terrorism and the clauses infringing on rights were contested in court. In 2016, the amendment was amended again, broadening membership of NCTC. Further, a clause was introduced in this particular amendment that required CSOs to seek approval from NCTC before engaging in any CVE activity and sharing of activity and participant information with NCTC.

implementation of training more sustainable, the curriculum should be incorporated into officer training carried out by the respective police or agency training college to benefit all officers irrespective of security arm. As such, basic training curriculums should include CVE lessons. Also, as opposed to a one-off approach, such training should be conducted on a regular basis to achieve effective learning for all officers in the targeted locations. This will further serve to address the challenges of frequent transfers and relocations of officers (as identified in the preceding section).

• **Involving the right stakeholders and getting their engagement right are key to successful CVE interventions.** To achieve sustainable stakeholder engagement, stakeholder maps should be robust and always updated. Successful training engagement – for example, recently concluded SLEA CVE trainings under STRIVE II – extensively relies on the continuous and sustained support of key government stakeholders. This calls for a careful mapping and meticulous engagement of the multilevel security sector stakeholders. The key stakeholders and main entry points at national and sub-national levels in Kenya are the NCTC and CSICs.

• **Localisation of training:** A localised approach and implementation leads not only to successful projects, but also enhances local acceptance, relevance, ownership and sustainability. Therefore, all engagements, and especially the training, should be designed with local contexts in mind. Accordingly, participants resonate well with the training content, especially when delivered by subject matter experts who are well versed in the prevailing local situations – further enhancing the learning environment and settings.

• **Towards a genuine whole-of-society approach:** It is important for government security agencies to appreciate the significant role that non-state actors play in CVE. For a whole-of-society approach to be achieved, there is a need to deliberately engage non-state actors in CVE, particularly CSOs and the public. This is key in the fight against VE. Furthermore, deliberate efforts must be made in building trust between security officers and community members to strengthen collaborations in P/CVE.
4. Preventive Communications

4.1 Introduction

The preventive communications component was organised in response to analysis that highlighted the restrictions on youth from taking part in and being adequately represented in the media. The team merged this conclusion with the role that media reporting could have on conflict and VE. Therefore, interventions were designed in two strands:

1. Strengthening the voice of the youth (mentees) to address individual incentives that foster VE in Kenya, including an individual’s search for purpose, value and belonging, and to address an individual’s sense of exclusion.
2. Media capacity-building to address the structural factors related to media discourse that can exacerbate grievances, conflict and excessively reactionary measures by security agencies.

4.1.1 Strengthening the Voice of Mentees

A sequence of activities involving film, writing and social media were designed to create opportunities for bottom-up storytelling by mentees. In strengthening the capacity for mentees to develop their personal stories, the intention was for them to reflect on and strengthen their own sense of purpose and meaning. Techniques were employed to help mentees develop how they thought about different elements of their life, their identity and past experiences. Then, through managed opportunities to take some of those stories online and communicate them more widely through writing and smartphone video, they could strengthen their sense of belonging and connections to community and country.

First, mentors in the mentorship programme participated in workshops to explore and develop their storytelling techniques, recorded on video using their own smartphones. This led to a film competition, where groups of mentors and mentees worked together to film stories. Following this, professional film-makers, under the direction of the mentees and mentors, developed their

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stories further and distributed them through a social media campaign (a process overseen by RUSI but run by two mentors and supported by an external expert) and neighbourhood screening events. In parallel, a mentor from the Coast region and another from Nairobi took part in a writing project where, under the tutelage of professional newspaper editors, they wrote a series of articles that were published in the Kenyan media.

To bolster the process of content creation and media participation, mentees were provided with propaganda, media and information literacy training from their mentors. This training focused on strengthening individual resilience to VE messaging and recruitment. Using examples from recent history and local to Kenya, the training demonstrated how propaganda in some cases contribute to possible involvement in violence, how emotions can be manipulated and how various communication devices can heighten hostility. A key educational point was understanding how propagandists deliberately and selectively chose events and ideas to create a narrative that served their political purpose to incite extreme forms of violence and hatred. The training sought to strengthen the mentees’ ability to think critically if exposed to VE propaganda, with the aim of preventing the sharing of such material and reducing the susceptibility of mentees to recruitment techniques.

### 4.1.2 Media Capacity-Building

The STRIVE II programme worked with nine local radio stations in the Coast region to develop skills in conflict-sensitive journalism as a means of creating radio broadcast content that addresses local conflict and grievances, and to improve state and societal responses to VE.

The training in conflict-sensitive journalism was designed to reinforce basic journalism skills with a particular focus on accuracy and impartiality in order to reduce hostility and division in media coverage. Moreover, the approach emphasised a proactive stance in reporting so that journalists were encouraged to probe the reasons for conflict, diversify the voices and perspectives they use in reporting, tell untold stories of marginalised communities and use language that transforms the understanding of VE.

The STRIVE II programme trained 30 radio journalists, presenters and producers in two rounds. The first focused on strengthening the production of feature stories and the second focused on talkshows and studio discussions. Station managers were approached at the start to strengthen buy-in, understand needs and to help inform the design of the training. Course materials and a syllabus were created that adapted conflict-sensitive journalism to the particular context of the Coast region and local research findings about VE.

The four-day course was classroom based and took place in Mombasa. It included former journalists as co-trainers and speakers. Exercises, group discussions and assignments made up the training modules, which started with an introduction to conflict-sensitive journalism and discussions about the causes of recruitment and radicalisation in Kenya. Journalism skills sessions included how to research a feature story or develop a talk show, with topics including the voice of youth, interview techniques and managing live on-air discussions. After the classroom training, a former Kenyan broadcast journalist led a series of mentorship sessions, taking place in the radio station or on the ground, which led to the production and broadcast of feature stories and talk show radio programmes.
4.2 Achievements

4.2.1 Youth Interventions

The propaganda, media and information literacy training on propagating violence based on a specific ideology sought to build critical thinking around relevant issues for mentees. This included how communication can result in binary thinking, blaming ‘the other’ and manipulating emotional states. Using a range of locally relevant and historical examples, such as the Rwandan genocide, meant that mentees could understand the harm created by propaganda techniques independent of the case of VE. Focus group discussions found that the process of sharing personal stories created opportunities for empowerment and self-expression.

Mentors and mentees who voluntarily participated in the media opportunities, such as the film-making competition and collaborating with professional film-makers, responded to how storytelling can empower and foster relations for and with young people. During a focus group discussion held during the film competition, a female mentor described how self-expression ‘is important because someone gets to expose their inner thoughts, they are able to bring their thoughts to the world, and people can really relate to that’. During the process, mentees came to share personally significant stories through videos addressing topics including recovering from mental health issues and self-harm, resisting peer pressure and gang violence, and transforming personal values.

The two mentors who volunteered to write articles in Kenyan newspapers used their media capacity to represent their own backgrounds and viewpoints. They then developed this capacity to represent the issues that concerned those in the mentorship programme, thereby projecting the views of mentees and mentors to national audiences. This enabled them to overcome constraints on youth, which were discussed at a focus group discussion made up of media, NGOs and professionals. One of them stated: ‘I think [the youth] are generally totally misunderstood and I think that goes across generations. But I think much more than anything, they don’t get a chance to speak. People speak for them. We assume they know what they want and we come up with programmes that we assume is what they want. They don’t get heard and we don’t give them a chance to be heard’.

Developing mentees’ storytelling capacity provided them with ways to explore ideas around self-confidence and individual choice, a sense of shared identity with other youth, self-esteem and personal acceptance, and building individual meaning. Working with personal stories meant that all the mentees could participate and lead group discussions away from issues of community or political controversy that could not be resolved through mentorship. Video-making using smartphones was an accessible and effective medium for telling the personal stories of mentees with low levels of literacy, who were otherwise largely excluded from opportunities to communicate.

Enhancing mentees’ capacity for self-expression and participation led to some important results. In a midline focus group discussion, one mentee from Likoni described how the video-making increased their awareness of the problems associated with VEOs: ‘What I learnt from them is that before you do something, you need to know exactly what you are doing. An example is people were promised jobs in different counties like Syria, but in [a] real sense you were taken to Al-Shabaab, so we need to be aware of such [problems] before joining’. During a focus group discussion at the
film festival, mentors described how the communication training enabled them to better organise their thoughts on paper and engage audiences with ideas that they can relate to. They described how film-making gave them the opportunity to explore issues in new ways, and gave them skills which they could use in the future, including marketing products they sell and capturing news stories in their community.

4.2.2 Media Interventions

Working with radio station managers from the outset and ensuring their buy-in increased participation in the training and mentorship phases of the activity, as well as the broadcast of radio content at the end. Understanding the restrictions and challenges journalists and media face helped to increase the relevance of the training and also manage the programme’s expectations about the scale of capacity change that could be expected. Talk shows and studio discussions are a staple form of radio programming for small stations in the Coast region. So, strengthening their skills for these formats was most relevant to their existing output. Building skills in making feature stories strengthened relatively underdeveloped capacity among stations and provided new opportunities to report on VE.

In feedback sessions, the journalists indicated how building their understanding of VE and increasing their network of sources enabled them to explore and report on difficult subjects connected to terrorism. In the stories, the journalists focused on the perspective and consequences felt by people, articulated in their own words, and broke the subject down into simple stories and ideas. The focus on accuracy in reporting on the causes of VE helped to undermine some of the harmful myths propagated through media.

Using conflict-sensitive journalism techniques in their reporting helped the participating journalists connect VE to social issues in the Coast region that also underpin drug abuse and gang violence, thereby expanding the public’s understanding of VE. Results from the first round of training showed that the majority of radio journalists were able to identify a good example of conflict-sensitive reporting and the ways to improve the coverage on VE.

4.3 Challenges

4.3.1 Youth Interventions

Mentees can find it difficult to share their stories and were inhibited from participating fully. It was therefore important to recognise and respect their personal choice, and the storytelling activities started with their level of enthusiasm and interest. Creating incentives such as film competitions, festival gatherings, and bringing in inspiring film-makers and respected journalists to work with the mentees helped to enthuse them and reinforce the significance of storytelling. Nevertheless, many mentees were more concerned with spending their time finding sources of income which limited their involvement. Providing small material incentives, such as data bundles and memory cards, helped to increased participation in online activities and social media campaigns.

There were a few instances where mentors and mentees sought to write or film about controversial issues, such as police brutality, while being unaware of the consequences. Managing and guiding the process of content creation was important to ensure its relevance while avoiding pitfalls.

There were significant structural obstacles that impeded the participation of mentees in public and media conversations. One documentary was made by a respected journalist about mentees in the Coast region, designed specifically for Kenyan TV. Despite being produced by a professional documentary-maker, made freely available for broadcast and offered to several stations, it was never used, perhaps because it was not hardhitting
in the way it addressed the problem of terrorism. The challenge remains finding a sustainable way to distribute mentees’ stories in a media market dominated by commercial constraints.

4.3.2 Media Interventions

From the start, journalists participating in the project tended to seek out simplistic or sensationalist hard news angles when planning their feature stories. They needed to be encouraged to develop storylines that dealt with VE through the lens of human or social issues. There were limited improvements in participating journalists’ ability to identify the major reasons why people may join or support VE and also in the role that media reporting can play in worsening or reducing it. The implication of this is that more discussions should be directed towards improving journalists’ knowledge of VE issues.

Producing feature stories that address the human and social dimensions of VE requires allowing journalists the time to research, investigate and follow up leads. All of this can be difficult for radio stations where staff numbers are limited and where the priority is producing a daily schedule of programmes. Many media houses with limited news budgets find it difficult to cover the travel expenses that journalists require for developing such stories.

Despite spending time among young people in marginalised areas of the Coast region after the training and during the mentorship, participating journalists found it difficult to tell their stories. Building the necessary relationships and articulating the sociological connections to terrorism within the format of a radio feature story was difficult. In comparison, security officials, government figures and CSOs were more readily available to talk about VE and participate in radio features.

Following the mentorship activities, the participating journalists were encouraged to finalise and broadcast the feature stories they had been working on. While most saw their stories through to transmission, for a small minority, staff changes and competing priorities at the stations meant that the stories were either not completed or broadcast.

4.4 Recommendations

4.4.1 Youth Interventions

- **Use the mentees’ language and their stories:** When developing a young person’s story and skills of expression, do not start with the topic of VE or an assumption of what story they should pursue. Spend time creating opportunities for young people to explore and develop their own interpretation and value of important experiences and beliefs and the story they want to communicate. Be wary of creating a platform that appears to engage in campaigning or advocacy that could risk undermining the programme’s independence or draw the mentees into political controversy. Rather, include diverse viewpoints and make sharing and discussing stories the objective so as to maximise participation.

- **Make the intervention practical to the mentees’ reality, and use their existing talent and tools:** Bear in mind and respect the fact that not all youth want to be prominent on social media or in making films, writing articles or building a social media presence. For those who are interested, encourage them to adopt a role that means they represent the stories of those who are more reticent. This way, those who are not ready to participate themselves can still feel involved.

- **Be careful about over-exposing individuals:** In media activities, protecting at-risk youth is paramount. Understand the political environment in which they are operating as well as the touchstone issues. Maximise the
power of the empathic response that young people can create in their communication with wider society when creating content. This means more personal depth and authenticity, and less politics. Avoid victimising mentees, well-known complaints and making controversial arguments.

- **Draw on a wide range of media and communication skills interventions**: Rather than fixing on one or two activities, think about ways to maximise the impact and participation of young people by combining training and mentorship for youth and media professionals, social media campaigns (including paid sponsorship), professional content production and film commissioning, partnerships with media houses, competitions and festivals for youth, and creating events in the community so that content can appear on multiple platforms. Be prepared to adapt to take advantage of opportunities.

### 4.4.2 Media Interventions

- **Assess the skills and knowledge of the participating journalists before training**: The programme needs to understand the level of journalism skills participants have as well as their existing knowledge of conflict and terrorism issues in order to most effectively enhance technical skills and capacity.

- **Give training time to revisiting the basics of journalism and explaining ideas around conflict and VE**: Results showed that journalists would have benefited from more time on skills that are particularly important for reporting on hard-to-reach youth, such as interview techniques, as well as making the connection between reporting themes (for example, social and family issues) and styles (for example, subjective or interpretive reporting) and how that can affect public understanding of VE and conflict.

- **Understand the media landscape from the point of view of marginalised and at-risk individuals**: To inform what is emphasised in a conflict-sensitive journalism training programme, try to conduct media coverage analysis to understand how discourse may perpetuate conflict in the target locality.

- **Consider the choice of media or channels**: In order to present the greatest relevance to expanding public discourse and understanding about terrorism and conflict, or to benefit from journalism skills training, consider which type of media or channel to engage with. Target capacity-building towards the type of media – possibly radio – that reaches a broad cross-section of society in places where radicalisation and recruitment is known to be a problem. This enables a shared conversation around VE that can bring the stories of marginalised youth to the ears of leaders and decision-makers.

- **Add value by sharing evidence**: During training, enhance the knowledge of participants by providing reliable, locally relevant research on the causes of terrorism. Reinforce it throughout the training and mentorship. Avoid jargon and directly address myths and perceptions that are perpetuated in local reporting around terrorism. Question the cultural, social and historical framings that are assumed to be the causes of terrorism. Help the reporters to develop the research into stories that are less well told but relevant to social issues.

- **Focus attention on helping journalists to diversify their range of sources and voices**: Work with journalists to build up a range of sources other than security, government and civil society spokespeople. Train them in techniques so they can build relations with young people in marginalised areas, interview hard-to-reach youth and manage on-air conflict. Explore creative ways of telling the stories of at-risk individuals from marginalised communities.
5. Research

5.1 Introduction

To address the limited availability of evidence on the locally specific drivers of VE in Kenya, an additional component, focusing exclusively on research, was included in the overall design of the STRIVE II programme. To address the gap in knowledge and understanding, the research component aimed to enhance the level of understanding on the causes of conflict and VE. Thereafter, the objective was to disseminate findings to policymakers and CVE stakeholders to encourage policy consideration and uptake.

In order to achieve these objectives, the STRIVE II programme supported the development and implementation of research projects and studies. By exclusively working with experienced Kenyan researchers and academics with expertise in conflict and terrorism studies, the programme sought to support the generation of local knowledge and enhance community-level understanding of VE issues. The main areas of research that were supported are as follows:

- The role of women and VE.\(^\text{19}\)
- The role of external actors in clan conflicts in the north-eastern counties of Kenya.\(^\text{20}\)
- The relationship between crime and VE.\(^\text{21}\)
- The relationship between coastal politics and VE.

Furthermore, the programme also sought to ensure that research findings were disseminated widely and made available through publicly accessible platforms. This included partnering with journals and other academic publications that were either based in Africa or were accessible to African academics and researchers, such as *The African Review* (based at the University of Dar es Salaam) and the *RUSI Journal*.\(^\text{22}\)

Along with funding and publicising, the research component also lent capacity-building support and advice to the researchers. In particular, the STRIVE II team worked closely with the researchers in designing the focus and methodological approach of the study. The team also assisted researchers with quality control and editorial support. Additionally, the research manager


\(^{22}\) A leading independent journal on defence and security studies.
provided the EU and other donor partners with advice on the changing VE dynamics in Kenya. As part of this process, the research team compiled briefing notes on security threats and incidents between 2017 and 2018 and presented them to the EU Commission in Nairobi (2018).

5.2 Achievements

Over the four-year programme cycle, the research team made important strides and managed to achieve many of the planned goals.

5.2.1 Building an Evidence Base of the Drivers of VE

The team worked diligently to expand the existing evidence base of the drivers of VE and conflict and their interrelationship. In particular, the interventions undertaken helped support nine studies, cutting across all four research areas. This was more than the original target of four studies. In addition to exceeding the set target, the studies also enhanced the level of understanding of the locally specific drivers and dynamics affecting recruitment and radicalisation into VE.

For instance, the studies on the role of women and VE, which were led in partnership with the French Institute of Research in Africa (IFRA), unpacked the gender-specific dimensions of involvement and engagement in VE. Specifically, the studies addressed the lacuna that exists in much of the research within the region, which views women as either victims or peacebuilders and fails to recognise their role as perpetrators and supporters of violence. The set of four studies examined the drivers underpinning women’s participation in VE groups, their role within such groups as well as the impact of VE activities on women’s lives. In investigating these different dimensions, the studies found evidence of different recruitment strategies, including the use of gendered narratives, trust-based networks and involuntary or coercive tactics. Additionally, the studies also concluded that although women performed several integral tasks and functions within groups such as Al-Shabaab, only a few were recruited as frontline fighters. Involvement in VE activities, however, left long-lasting scars, including for those women who had not been directly recruited, but whose family members were involved. This latter group were among the most vulnerable, as they were often sanctioned by their communities and deprived of social support.

Due to the limited availability of evidence regarding Al-Shabaab’s involvement or opportunism in clan-based conflicts, an additional set of studies was conducted on the role of external actors and conflicts in the North East region. The research, which was conducted in partnership with Garissa University College, which was attacked by Al-Shabaab in 2015, examined the evolving nature of clan conflicts in North East Kenya and analysed the role of Al-Shabaab in navigating and exploiting such conflicts to further their ends. The studies found that while there were important similarities in how Al-Shabaab has exploited clan conflicts across Kenya’s counties – pitting clans against each other, and fuelling the victimisation narrative and hostilities between elected officials – there were also critical differences. For example, the differences in Mandera and Garissa counties compared with Wajir County indicate variations in the exploitation of clan conflicts to service Al-Shabaab narratives. In Mandera County, businesses (clan-based) were inclined to form alliances with the group for control of border and trading routes. In return for facilitating youth recruitment, Al-Shabaab was known to expedite the movement of smuggled goods across the border. Small-arms proliferation was also found to be a driver of clan conflicts, particularly in Mandera and Garissa. The porous nature of the Kenya–Somalia border and the booming firearms business in Hargeisa and other towns on the same border exacerbated the intensity of clan conflict,
which Al-Shabaab repeatedly exploited by extending its support to particular clan groups.

Similarly, the study on the relationship between crime and VE tested the validity of a common claim within academic and policy circles regarding the overlap between criminality and VE. The study was conducted with prisoners and remandees in the Shimo La Tewa and Borstal juvenile prisons in Mombasa. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, permission for the research was granted only to the RUSI project team. Following a qualitative approach, the study interrogated three main dimensions of the relationship between crime and VE:

1. **Individual**: The overlap between criminal histories and VE offences.
2. **Organisational**: The level of coordination and link between criminal networks and VEOs.
3. **Institutional**: The pattern of radicalisation and recruitment within the institutional context of the prison.

Drawing on interviews with VEO members across the different prison contexts, the study found a tenuous overlap between crime and VE at the individual and organisational levels. Specifically, there were limited references to either the ‘redemption narrative’, the ‘skills transfer’ argument or the ‘super gang’ theory. At the organisational level, few instances of overlap were reported between criminal groups and VEOs. The only aspects of potential overlap were where gangs and VEOs were recruited from the same areas and within the same demographic group. However, on the question of radicalisation patterns within the prison context, strong intergroup relations were observed, suggesting a clearer case for institutional-level overlaps.

The study also explored coastal area dynamics. In development at the time of writing, it promises to offer further insights. Specifically, the study will adopt an ethnographical approach to uncover the story of the Ansar Al-Sunna (Ansar) movement, based in Kwale County. The Ansar are an insular Islamic group, who see themselves as more connected with transnational Islam than with the local Kenyan Muslim population on the coast. It is thereby crucial to investigate the presence of any overlap between the ideas of Ansar as advocated by Sheikh Abdulaziz Rimo with the activities of Aboud Rogo, particularly his inclination towards Al-Shabaab. The research proposes to trace the position of the Answari Al-Sunna in Salafist ideology, and explain its relationship or lack thereof with global and trans-local radicalisation, violence and extremism.

### 5.2.2 Creating Platforms for Dissemination of Findings

Recognising the importance of ensuring that the findings are disseminated, efforts have been made to create platforms for learning and distribution. For research on the role of women and VE, a seminar was organised in June 2018 at the Rift Valley Institute in Nairobi. Approximately 50 participants representing CSOs, donors, governments, think tanks, research organisations and implementers participated. Drawing on the lively debate that followed, a publication in September 2018 outlined the key discussion points and recommendations for policy action and programming. The findings from this research were also reported.

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23. Shimo La Tewa is one of two maximum-security prisons in Kenya holding prisoners and remandees from VEOs. The size of the population is the largest in the country. See Sahgal and Zeuthen, ‘The Nexus Between Crime and Violent Extremism in Kenya’.
24. Aboud Rogo Mohammed was a Kenyan Muslim cleric. He was alleged to have been an Islamist extremist and was accused of arranging funding for the Al-Shabaab militia in Somalia.
in international media outlets such as the BBC, which invited RUSI to prepare a commentary note on the major findings of the research and relate them to international trends, such as the recruitment of women to the Islamic State.

Findings on the role of Al-Shabaab in clan conflicts in the North East were also shared during a workshop organised in January 2019 at the RVI. The workshop was moderated by Murithi Mutiga, Deputy Project Director, Horn of Africa, International Crisis Group, and chaired by Osman Warfa, Vice-Chancellor of Garissa University. A total of 24 participants attended, including representatives from CSOs such as the Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies, the Horn Institute, Saferworld, Danish Demining Group (DDG), Life and Peace Institute, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), as well as donor and government representatives from Kenya, the Netherlands, the US and the EU. A summary paper, outlining the cross-cutting themes emerging from the three counties as well as the recommendations and feedback from the event, was published in June 2019.

Findings from the study on crime and VE were shared first with the prison authorities for their verification, given the sensitivity of the topic. Following their approval, a draft was also shared with the donor community, particularly representatives from the US and Danish embassies, the EU, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Donors reflected on how the findings would be useful in designing and implementing other projects with Kenyan prison authorities. An article capturing the principal findings of the study was published in June 2020.

The study on coastal politics and VE was developed by July 2020. The emergent findings from this study will be broadly shared with the CVE community in Kenya and the Horn of Africa. The research will also be submitted to the RUSI journal and other leading publications. The launch of the study, which was expected to take place in Mombasa, will be adapted to a webinar format, due to the continuation of the coronavirus pandemic’s restrictions on movement and in-person activities.

5.2.3 Creating Spaces for Collaboration and Discussion

Between 2017 and 2018, in partnership with the RVI and with funding from BRICS-I and USAID, RUSI supported the establishment of the CVE Researchers’ Roundtable. The objective of the seminar series was to create spaces for dialogue and engagement on emerging research within the field of CVE in Kenya and the broader region. The forum sought to promote the dissemination of evidence, experiences and lessons learned to facilitate greater learning and encourage the effective coordination of research on CVE issues. As a testament to this latter role, the partnership between RUSI and IFRA on gender and VE developed after one of the roundtable discussions. Additionally, attempts have been made to build greater synergies among the existing networks of actors. RUSI has connected Kenyan researchers with other implementing organisations and research institutes, for instance, Garissa University with the DDG and the RVI, which have projects in the North East and are working on similar issues.

5.2.4 Disseminating Findings to Key Stakeholders

Specific initiatives were also taken to disseminate findings to government actors, particularly at the NCTC. To this end, the programme team made efforts to ensure the participation of government stakeholders.

stakeholders at the various launch events. The research team also collaborated closely and relayed the emerging evidence to the NCTC’s Research Department. In an attempt to widen the scope of coverage and engagement, the results of the studies were also shared with security and law enforcement officials participating in the training (under the law enforcement component of the programme). During the training sessions in Mandera and Garissa, findings from the study on clan conflicts were included as part of the session on context analysis. Such sessions were deeply appreciated by the officers, especially those who had been recently posted and were less familiar with the security dynamics in the specific counties.

5.3 Challenges

Notwithstanding successes and achievements, there were also important challenges that were encountered in implementing research activities. The following sections capture some of the principal challenges faced by the research team.

5.3.1 Varying Research Capacity

Owing to the nascent development of the CVE field, there was varied in-country expertise on researching issues related to VE. Only a few universities and colleges taught subjects related to terrorism and conflict analysis when the research was conducted. Further, the research capacity that did exist was concentrated in a few universities and departments, primarily those located in bigger cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa. This was particularly to the detriment of other regions of the country, which had a higher incidence of VE and were more ‘at risk’ but lacked the commensurate capacity to research such issues.

5.3.2 Sensitivity of the Research

The topics of VE and CVE were sensitive and often difficult to research directly. For instance, it was difficult to talk about VE in a way that made respondents feel comfortable expressing their opinions and feelings without judgement or scrutiny. Given such sensitivities, subjectivity bias – in other words, the tendency of respondents to tailor their responses to what they feel the interviewer may want to hear – was often an issue. These challenges were not easy to overcome and required the adoption of complex methodologies that were difficult to implement.

5.3.3 Rigour of Methodology

Given the relatively small population of those who engaged in VE and those who may be at risk, it was often difficult to adopt rigorous sampling designs. For instance, most known studies used purposive techniques to identify those who were at risk of engaging in VE. These approaches were less rigorous than probability-based sampling designs. However, given the individual specific pathways that guide youth into VE, a randomised sampling design involving the selection of participants from the general population would have been less appropriate in exploring the specific drivers of VE. However, the limitations in the sampling design meant that there was limited scope for adopting more robust approaches such as experimental and quasi-experimental methods.

29. Such methodologies include quasi-experimental designs, such as list and endorsement experiments.
5.3.4 Respondent Fatigue

Despite the emergent development of the field, there were many CVE actors and stakeholders in Kenya. Concomitantly, there were several research projects, many of which were concentrated in a few key counties, for example, Nairobi, Coast and the North East. The combination of these two factors – several different actors in a limited space – implied that there was a real threat of research fatigue among respondents who may be recruited to be part of the different studies. As a consequence of such fatigue, the quality of the data could potentially suffer as respondents might have been discouraged from providing the most truthful responses and/or they might have become less interested in taking part in such studies.

5.3.5 Policy Uptake of the Research

Due to the sensitivities of the research, the policy uptake of findings was a challenge. One reason was that, while policymakers and senior government officials in particular had an interest in the research output, they were not always in a position to disseminate findings to security actors in the field. This was particularly challenging because mid- and frontline-level staff were among the first responders in dealing with the threat of VE and were therefore unable to attend county-level training and capacity-building exercises that would provide them with a more context-specific understanding of such issues. The second and related issue was that research studies were designed to test some of the prevailing assumptions of recruitment and radicalisation to VE. If the evidence found countering existing narratives and understanding, policy actors found it more challenging to reconsider or reconfigure their policy preferences.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of these specific challenges, the following recommendations for other research projects and future interventions are proposed.

- **Build research capacity in high-risk areas**: One of the principal recommendations is that research capacity needs to be developed across counties, especially within counties that are most at risk of VE. For instance, it is recommended that further efforts are directed in working with researchers and academics in north-east counties among the known hotspot zones. This would enable researchers who currently have access and local understanding but lack the techniques and research support to create a body of localised knowledge and expertise. Such strategies would not only build the capacity of researchers, but would also contribute to more localised patterns of dissemination and ensure that research findings are not just limited to academia but are widely shared and understood.

- **Address problems of sensitivity**: It is critical that in researching CVE issues, attempts are made to involve researchers who have local buy-in and support. This would include working with researchers who are embedded in communities and therefore are in a better position to research the sensitivities and nuances of recruitment into VE groups. Working with local researchers would contribute to a higher quality of research and would also address the ethical challenges of researching vulnerable communities that most external researchers find difficult to address.

- **Borrow from related fields in applying more rigorous techniques**: While there are quite a few methodological constraints with

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31. Most frontline officials cannot attend training because they are directly responsible for managing the security situation in their counties and cannot therefore take significant time off to attend.
conducting CVE research, these are not insurmountable and there is much that the field can borrow from related disciplines. For instance, within the field of criminology, significant strides have been made to understand the factors that may make individuals more or less susceptible to crime. These methodologies could also be applied to CVE research. Additionally, there is also research that is more broadly focused on studying violent behaviour, which could also lend important insights for the field of CVE. Many researchers have been attempting to apply more rigorous techniques for studying the concept of VE, and there are therefore lessons to be learned from such studies that can be incorporated into the field of CVE.

- **Coordinate research**: The increasing interest in CVE means that there is a need for more effort to ensure that there is better coordination among donors and programmers and that duplication is avoided. This would entail more investment in platforms and coordination of forums to provide researchers with the opportunity to collaborate and share their findings.

- **Disseminate findings to multiple government actors**: It is necessary to disseminate findings across multiple platforms and to a variety of government actors, at both national and county level. In disseminating to government actors, findings must be shared with those at the frontline. In RUSI’s experience, while senior government actors often have access to emerging research, frontline security and law enforcement personnel often lack similar levels of exposure. Since these latter groups are also the ones that are dealing routinely with VE threats, they must have an appreciation of the underlying drivers of radicalisation and the nuances of the tactics being employed across the different counties. Dissemination of research findings, through training and other more localised platforms for sharing and knowledge distribution, would be an important step in this direction.

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6. Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Introduction

STRIVE II was conceptualised as a CVE programme with the core objective of reducing the risk of radicalisation, recruitment and support to VE groups in Kenya. During the inception phase, a ToC was jointly developed by the monitoring and evaluation team and the programme managers. This theory provided a shared understanding of the project activities, assumptions and how programmatic interventions would contribute to the achievement of project outcomes.

As per the ToC, the law enforcement and mentorship components were designed as the two main intervention areas. These were supported by the research and preventive communications components.

The law enforcement component was designed in consultation with the NCTC, which also provided guidance on the selection of training participants, primarily mid-level officers from different security agencies. The intended project outcomes of the component included improved responses to VE by law enforcement officers in high-risk stations and improved levels of understanding of CVE by those officers in high-risk areas.

Under the mentorship component, at-risk youth (mentees) were identified based on pre-defined criteria, developed in consultation with stakeholders in selected urban communities of the project areas. They were paired with mentors – youth from the same communities – who could serve as role models in influencing positive changes in mentees’ attitudes, awareness levels and ultimately behaviour. The intended project outcomes for the mentorship component included: an enhanced network of stakeholders and mentors active in the CVE space; the improved ability of stakeholders to recognise the primary signs of CVE and patterns of recruitment and radicalisation; and a reduction in mentees’ readiness to engage in political violence.

The monitoring and evaluation component adopted a mixed-method approach, involving both quantitative and qualitative elements. For the quantitative approach, owing to the budgetary constraints, the programme used a pre-post research design to evaluate changes in the beneficiary groups throughout the programme cycle. As part of the qualitative approach, a series of focus group discussions and key informant interviews with relevant project beneficiaries were undertaken to unpack their views, opinions and expressions of the effects of the different project components.

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34. A pre-post design measures changes in the same group of treated beneficiaries by comparing their outcomes at the baseline (start of the programme – prior to treatment) and at the endline (end of the programme – after treatment).
6.2 Achievements

6.2.1 Indicators for Measuring Project Performance

Drawing on the emergent literature on CVE and in recognition of the complexity of factors that contribute to recruitment and radicalisation, the monitoring and evaluation team adopted an interdisciplinary approach. A set of core and sub-indicators were constructed that drew on a variety of fields including psychology, social anthropology, political science and international relations in order to allow the component to accurately capture changes in behaviour, attitudes and knowledge. For example, on the mentorship component, the monitoring and evaluation team developed a variety of indicators that measured mentees’ attitudes towards violence, their levels of self-confidence, types of support systems and diversity of networks. The team also conducted pilot tests and consulted the relevant programme teams to ensure the reliability and validity of the measures.

6.2.2 Integration of Measurement Techniques to Elicit More Genuine Responses

Given the sensitive nature of CVE programming, the monitoring and evaluation framework adopted several approaches to mitigate the risk of ‘biased’ responses. For example, on the mentorship component, contingent valuation techniques were used to help gather information on how beneficiaries valued certain intangibles, such as security and ethical correctness. For instance, to capture whether mentees would react differently to situations that contravene their morality, a type of contingent valuation question that was included in surveys asked mentees whether they would hypothetically advise someone to accept an offer of Kenyan Shillings (Kshs) 1,000 for destroying some property or Kshs 800 for eight hours of construction work.

6.2.3 Design and Development of a Detailed Performance Management Framework Tool

To ensure effective monitoring of project activities and the sharing of feedback with programme teams, the monitoring and evaluation team developed a performance management framework (PMF) tool that routinely tracked programme indicators. The regular tracking of indicators allowed the team to provide prompt and continuous feedback to programme managers on the status of the programme’s outcomes, outputs and activities. Primarily, the identification of the expected results versus actual results allowed for benchmarking performance and identifying critical gaps and challenges encountered during implementation. The PMF tool also provided programme managers with an opportunity to reflect on the monitoring and evaluation framework, assess its appropriateness in measuring outcomes to meet stated objectives and share learnings from implementation that could be incorporated into the design.

6.2.4 Building Trust to Address Risk and Reliability Concerns

The sensitive nature of CVE programming makes the collection of its data particularly risky. Programme beneficiaries, especially community members and other groups, may come under increased scrutiny by both VE groups and government actors because of their association with a given CVE programme. To reduce risk to programme beneficiaries, the programme team sought to partner with community stakeholders
to build sufficient rapport and trust before a sensitive line of questioning was pursued by local researchers contracted by the team. For instance, for the mentorship component, mentors served as the first line of communication with the mentees or at-risk youth. Mentors were recruited from within the respective communities of the mentees and were assigned the primary responsibility for managing the mentees. Therefore, even in the case of monitoring and evaluation, data-collectors accessed the mentees only through the mentors. Although more long-winded, this process helped to build mentees’ trust and encouraged them to feel comfortable revealing aspects of their lives and experiences.

6.2.5 Broadened Analysis of CVE Interventions

Owing to the limitations of the design of the pre-post mode, which assumed that all observed changes could be attributed to the programme, the monitoring and evaluation design employed both descriptive (basic statistics) and inferential (advanced statistics) analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme interventions. In analysing the changes observed for the mentorship component, in particular, a maximum likelihood estimation model was employed. This estimate is the value of the parameter that makes the data that was actually observed as likely as it could be. The technique involved using logit regressions for models with binary outcomes and ordered logit regression for models with ordinal outcomes (scaled outcomes such as Likert scale questions). This approach allowed for controlling beneficiaries’ sociodemographic characteristics to determine the potential contributable effects of the interventions.

6.2.6 Integration of Attitudinal and Behavioural Aspects and Developing Metrics for Their Measurements

Many CVE programmes fail to incorporate attitudinal and behavioural questions, due mainly to measurement difficulties. For instance, because attitudes are intangible, it is often difficult to quantify changes in them. Similarly, measuring behavioural change is complicated, because CVE programmes are directed at assessing the impact of ‘non-events’.


6.3 Challenges

6.3.1 Determining Attribution

Demonstrating attribution, or the extent to which specific interventions have resulted in an observed change, was one of the most significant challenges with which the team had to contend. One problem
was twofold: the interplay of a number of factors in the CVE space rendered it harder to determine whether specific outcomes could be considered to be the result of CVE interventions or other exogenous variables; and it was challenging to construct an effective control group with whom the project beneficiaries could be compared. These limitations constricted the options available for adopting more robust methodologies such as experimental designs for establishing causality.

6.3.2 Measurement of CVE Interventions

While most types of evaluations are riddled with measurement challenges, particularly on intangible outcomes involving attitudes and behaviours, this challenge was pronounced in the case of the STRIVE II programme. Many of the outcomes of interest to the team were intangible, for example, attitudes towards violence, self-confidence levels and risk appetite. The inclusion of these indicators meant that it was often difficult to capture all aspects of the underlying concept, for example, empathy or self-confidence, as well as to ensure that it was measured reliably and consistently.

6.3.3 Respondent Fatigue

Due to the proliferation of CVE interventions in the main project locations, another common challenge was respondent fatigue, which undermined the quality and reliability of the data. Some of the beneficiaries had already been exposed to multiple data-collection exercises and were less likely to provide a considered response. Another related challenge was that respondents may be motivated to provide socially appropriate responses, or may ‘learn’ to align their responses with the expectations of the data-collectors.

6.4 Recommendations

- **Explore possibilities for experimental and quasi-experimental approaches to accurately measure attribution:** Employing a pre-post approach in evaluating the effectiveness of intervention tends not to be sufficient in establishing attribution and causality. To determine causality and attribution, robust monitoring and evaluation designs that use randomised control trials and quasi-experimental designs (such as regression discontinuity designs) should be explored. For example, sufficient resources should be included to construct a relevant comparison group (quasi-experimental) or to adopt an experimental design and randomly assign outcomes to treatment and control groups. Such methodologies could be adopted if there is a close collaboration between the programme and the monitoring and evaluation teams to ensure that the delivery of programme activities is standardised and consistent across the project locations.

- **Address the problem of non-response and subjectivity bias:** The monitoring and evaluation framework should include measures tailored at building greater trust and rapport with beneficiary groups. Measurement techniques that reduce socially desirable responses and the number of non-responses should be adopted. For example, conflict-sensitive data-collection instruments and designs such as list, random response or even endorsement experiments could be used to guard against beneficiaries’ subjectivity and protect the confidentiality of respondents. The list experiment approach could be implemented by randomly dividing at-risk youths into treatment and control groups. Both groups are then
provided with the same set of pre-selected questions. The treatment group, however, is given an additional question that is more sensitive in nature and of interest to the study. The responses from both groups are compared, and the mean difference in the responses is used to assess support for the sensitive question.

- **Improve coordination and partnership to address the problem of beneficiary fatigue**: There is a need to build a support community in the CVE space to prevent the saturation of particular intervention areas. For instance, programmes and organisations working on CVE must have available platforms for coordinating the scope and coverage of their work, sharing information related to any challenges encountered in developing and delivering CVE programming and disseminating emerging evidence and learning. While some initiatives can come from programme teams, it is also critical that donors make sufficient provisions for encouraging their implementing partners to share information and invest in dialogue and coordination with other groups working on similar issues.

- **Broaden CVE approaches and interventions to integrate livelihood and economic opportunities**: Evidence from STRIVE II suggests that respondents’ economic and educational status is positively correlated with attitudes and behaviours consistent with reduced risk to VE. As such, there is a need to consider how to combine mentorship- and preventive communications-related interventions with the provision of socioeconomic opportunities. In considering the need to adopt a more comprehensive approach, programme teams should be encouraged to seek partnerships.

- **Consider adoption of a consortium approach in CVE programming**: Given the complexity of factors related to vulnerability to VE, it is important that interventions are designed to provide comprehensive support. To benefit from comparative advantages, it is recommended that donors leverage the advantages of a consortium approach. A consortium approach, where different implementing organisations with varying levels of expertise work towards a common objective, could provide the overall framework for encouraging greater coordination and synergy in designing a programme. This approach could also provide an effective mechanism for scaling up programme interventions to other regions and areas of the country, where smaller implementing partners lack coverage but can benefit from partnerships with larger organisations.
7. Conclusion

Aside from the specific recommendations and lesson learned outlined in this report, the team wish to reflect on programme management considerations that were an integral part of the design of the STRIVE II programme.

As technical expertise was required, rather than having a team of programme management specialists, the team comprised a law enforcement manager with experience from the Kenyan security sector, a psychologist supporting the psychosocial component, a mentorship manager with technical experience from working with youth and on life skills, a research and monitoring and evaluation manager with extensive research experience, and a communications manager with experience in strategic communications and media development.

It was also considered vital that the team had knowledge of the Kenyan context in designing the programme and that there was continuous space for reflection around the creation of an intervention based on contextual changes. This approach enabled investment in relationships for the longer term. It also meant that there was limited use of international external consultants providing advice. This was only found to be useful in one role – the mentorship adviser – because of the limited available experience in Kenya from mentorship programming and an emphasis on existing VEOs.

It was considered important for the team to have diversity in terms of those leading the activities. This included diversity in language skills, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and gender. This representation was found to be positively received during the implementation of the activities.

The welfare and safety of young people in the mentorship component was and is of paramount concern, as was respecting the confidentiality and work of Kenyan law enforcement officers. Hence, in line with what was learned during STRIVE HoA, due to the subject of VE being sensitive, there was no visibility or production of RUSI-, EU- or STRIVE-branded materials targeted for publicity among host communities. Written and video media content produced by mentors and mentees did not credit the programme or the EU. Social media and other communications activities talking about the programme were carefully managed and mostly focused on exchanging findings among practitioners and experts.

A final note with regard to management of the programme was a focus on learning and continued discussion around priorities and focus. This included reading and bringing in experience from a range of fields to support the development of innovative ideas and new practices. The design of the programme was developed based on mutual brainstorming and as the programme team learned from doing, the team was brought together to discuss adjustments and adaptations. One such example could be within the mentor-
The STRIVE II programme has provided the opportunity for a number of lessons to be learned. It has sought to share lessons from the interventions through the launch of research papers, briefings and conferences organised during the programme. The team has also shared experiences and lessons through presentations and conference papers at numerous international conferences during the life of the programme. The lessons discussed in this report are a result of evidence gathered as well as practical considerations and experiences. While not generalisable across contexts without careful consideration, they contribute to strengthening the evidence base for CVE interventions, research, and monitoring and evaluation, and allow other organisations to initiate work from a stronger starting point.