

# ARRIVED

SUCCESS STORIES

## +INSIDE

### CONFIRMED AND REFORMED:

From a life of crime  
to one of hope.

### INTERFAITH DIALOGUES:

A Way of  
Sustaining Peace.



# Women

ON THE FRONTLINE









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Shirley Gitau at the Gatimbi Young Innovator's farm in Meru.

# Sowing seeds of change

This farm has changed her life and that of the other members of Gatimbi Young Innovators.

**A**t first glance, the small farm in Gatimbi might look like any other. But for Shirley Gitau, the chairperson of Gatimbi Young Innovators, it is much more than that. She stands proudly among rows of lush crops growing in innovative vertical grow bags, while others spring from the ground. This farm has changed her life and that of the other members of Gatimbi Young Innovators.

"We started with just a small piece of land," Shirley recalls. "We wanted to fight hunger, and poverty, and improve the

environment through organic farming. But we didn't know how to do it, we kept losing crops until CARITAS Meru and the ARIVE program gave us training."

The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), has transformed communities across Kenya.

By empowering vulnerable groups through economic and social initiatives, ARIVE prevents violent extremism while fostering resilience. In



Meru, the program works closely with local organizations like CARITAS Meru to implement its County Action Plan (CAP), focusing on youth engagement, education, and economic empowerment.

For Shirley and her group of ten young people, the training they received through ARIVE was life-changing. "We started farming on less than half an eighth of land, struggling to grow seedlings and barely making any income. But after ARIVE's training on organic farming, everything changed. Now we know how to make our own biopesticides and fertilizers, and our yields have increased significantly."

The introduction of vertical grow bags was a game-changer. "Each bag holds up to 100 plants, allowing us to grow 5,000 crops on a tiny piece of land," Shirley explains.

"It's less labor-intensive, more sustainable, and has improved our livelihoods. Today, we're not just farmers, we have also shown others how to farm organically and embrace a healthier, more sustainable way of life."

The group now earns enough to support themselves, hire additional workers every once in a while, and they have even supported three more youth groups to engage in dairy farming, poultry, and vegetables.

"Before, we could barely make ends meet. Now, we can afford to reinvest in our farm and help others. Each member has a grow bag at home for their own kitchen garden. We've stopped buying produce from the market. As you can see, we are glowing!" she says with a smile. "We are healthier because we are eating healthier."

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*We wanted to fight hunger, and poverty, and improve the environment through organic farming. But we didn't know how to do it,"*

**Shirley Gitau.**

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Fatuma Abdi, Assistant County  
Commissioner Meru.



**Morris Kirimi Mwit**  
**ti, Director of CAR-**  
**ITAS Meru.**



The group's success demonstrates ARIVE's focus on economic empowerment as a tool for countering violent extremism. Meru, though not a hotspot, is vulnerable due to its proximity to Isiolo—a recruitment hub and transit route for extremists. "Violent extremism thrives where there's idleness and despair," explains Morris Kirimi Mwit, Director of CARITAS Meru. "By giving young people meaningful activities, we make them less likely to fall prey to radical ideologies."

The program has instilled in Shirley and her friends a sense of purpose and community. "We've been actively engaged in farming, which keeps us busy and focused," Shirley notes. "We're no longer easy targets for recruitment. Instead, we're building a future—not just for ourselves but for Meru."

The impact of ARIVE extends beyond the group. CARITAS Meru has supported over 200 youths in similar initiatives, from car-washing ventures to urban farming projects. Fatuma Abdi,



*The ARIVE program has reached communities at every level, from farmers to religious leaders, ensuring that everyone understands the risks and knows how to respond,"-*

**Fatuma Abdi, Assistant County Commissioner Meru County.**



Assistant County Commissioner and secretary of the Meru County Engagement Forum (CEF), praises the program's inclusivity. "The ARIVE program has reached communities at every level, from farmers to religious leaders, ensuring that everyone understands the risks and knows how to respond."

While the ARIVE program has achieved remarkable success, challenges remain. Limited time has made it difficult to sustain some initiatives. "We need more time with ARIVE to continue implementing long-term solutions to ensure these gains are not lost."

Shirley and her team intend to keep spreading the word and build bigger. "We're thinking of starting a Community-Based Organization (CBO) to reach more youths," she says. "The dream is to create a network of empowered young people who can teach others and keep this momentum going."

In Meru, the seeds of change have been planted, and the future of the youth is brighter and more secure.

# Education **FOR ALL:** A case for Wajir

Habiba Mohammed Shuria, a teacher in Wajir.

The ARIVE program, launched by ACT! in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF)

**E**ducation in Wajir is a very pressing issue. The students often go untaught as teachers avoid the area due to threats of terror. This in turn creates a ripe environment for radicalisation.

This is according to Habiba Mohammed Shuria, a teacher by profession. She used to be a headteacher and is now retired after 40 years, but as she says, she is “retired but not tired.”

She has tirelessly worked to ensure that the children of Wajir receive a proper education despite the myriad

challenges in the county as the head of the education pillar in The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE).

The ARIVE program, launched by ACT! in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), operates in 15 counties, including Wajir, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to

leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including education, arts, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women's empowerment, aiming to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

In Wajir, the program has been implemented by World Vision International, which works in remote and hard-to-reach areas and whose goal is to ensure all children live life in all its fullness.

"We have worked on empowering the youth in our schools. Most of our youth are not given career guidance these days. That's why we don't even have teachers in our region, we always get teachers from down Kenya," says Shuria.

"One time our teachers were killed here and all of them left. We always stay without teachers and our children fail. They resort to cheating, which will not help us. So we said this is a time bomb. If we are going to produce doctors, teachers, and engineers who are not learned, it is a time bomb for us."

As a result, they decided to do mentorship in schools. Shuria heads an organization called Champions for Change, composed of 10 champions trained in countering violent extremism. They are all volunteers, with no salary.

Shuria says that most students in the area are only interested in white-collar jobs and do not want blue-collar jobs.

"They do not want to go to TVET (Technical and Vocational



*One time our teachers were killed here and all of them left. We always stay without teachers and our children fail,"*

**Habiba.**



**30**

**We have 30 women who are standing to take care of their youth and take care of their peace and security.**



Education and Training), become masons, electricians, and so on. In Wajir today, all our money is going to other counties because the people building are from other counties while the majority of our youth are unemployed. So they can be cheated by bad people. If somebody is hungry, they can do anything," she says.

According to her, they did not even want to be teachers because former teachers like her have no riches to show for it. However, with the concerted efforts, they are slowly changing their minds.

"We talked to them and they have now made clubs in schools. In one of the schools, we have the Young Teachers' Club. We are showing them that teaching is a noble job and it is going to help them and the community. They are now aiming to become teachers and we now have three teacher training colleges packed with our own local students," she says.

Shuria says all this is in an effort to keep them busy and prevent radicalization, which was rampant in Wajir. It has now reduced and in addition to the 10 champions, more champions have been produced at the grassroots, in the sub-counties, and adds that they are very happy with World Vision because of their work on the program.

"We have 30 women who are standing to take care of their youth and take care of their peace and security. We mentor the youth for career guidance, and performance and always try to make sure that dropouts return to school because we do not want them to be misled," she says.



Rhoda Gichohi, Senior Chief, Kiganjo Location, Nyeri County.

# Healing

## the mind to heal society

This farm has changed her life and that of the other members of Gatimbi Young Innovators.

**A**lmost a decade ago, the allure of a better life drew tens of young men from the quarries dotting Nyeri County to a frontier that was opening. At the time, business opportunities in Manderu County provided a way out for these young men hungry to make something of their lives.

As fate would have it though, for some of them, this dream turned into a nightmare, as they became targets of terrorists and terror groups leaving more than 40 of them dead.

Over the years, the toll of these deaths and the gap left behind but these breadwinners have left



**Winifred Wanjiku Kamoshu, Administrative Officer, Office of the County Commissioner.**

their communities somewhat imbalanced.

"The effect of what happened in Mandera is devastating. Some families lost breadwinners, children lost their fathers, and the community has had to step in to fill those roles," says Rhoda Gichohi, Senior Chief of Kiganjo Location in Nyeri County. "Some survivors haven't recovered: they're stuck because they lost their only source of income, and the community discouraged them from returning to Mandera. They've been left in a cocoon of their own."

With grief having engulfed the community, Rhoda says that she had no idea how to address the trauma and grief of the victims in her jurisdiction as a chief. Until the ARIVE project came in, that is.

The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched

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*We've developed referral guidelines for victims of violent extremism and trained psychosocial first aiders,”*

**Winifred Wanjiku Kamoshu, Administrative Officer, Office of the County Commissioner.**

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in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), operates in 15 counties, including Nyeri. The initiative brings together the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), civil society organizations like the Foundation for Dialogue (FFD), and local leaders to prevent and counter violent extremism (PCVE).

One of its most impactful components is the psychosocial pillar, which equips communities to handle trauma. “We've developed referral guidelines for victims of violent extremism and trained psychosocial first-aiders,” says Winifred Wanjiku Kamoshu, Administrative Officer at the office of the County Commissioner and chair of the law enforcement pillar in Nyeri County's Engagement Forum. “These first-aiders provide counseling not only to

victims of extremism but also in other crises, like the tragic dormitory fire at Hillside Enderasha Primary School where 21 students died.”

Rhoda, who received psychosocial training through the program, says it has given her the ability to deal with victims of trauma. “Now I can handle victims properly and confidently, and I know where to escalate cases. I’ve even formed groups to help people deal with the reality of being maimed and recover from losing loved ones,” she explains. “We’ve also linked victims to people who can provide financial and emotional support so they can rebuild their lives.”

The project’s impact goes beyond trauma counseling. It’s working to strengthen community ties and reduce vulnerability to extremism at every stage of life. “We’ve trained cultural elders to mentor young initiates during traditional rites of passage, teaching them positive values and raising awareness about radicalization,” Winfred says. “We’re ensuring that it happens at every level—schools, cultural events, and community activities.”

Thanks to these efforts, people in Nyeri are now more aware of violent extremism and how to protect themselves. “When we talk about radicalization now, people understand what it means. It’s something they’re discussing openly in the community,” says Winfred. “We’ve even had victims come back to share their success stories, which shows just how much this initiative has helped.”

This proactive approach is particularly critical in Nyeri, a county where violent extremism doesn’t originate but still leaves its mark. “We’ve always been recipients of extremism,” says Winfred. “Attacks may happen elsewhere, but the victims are our people. That’s why programs like ARIVE are so important—they give us the tools to support those affected.”

However, more can be done. Both Rhoda and Winfred ask that the program be extended to keep the momentum going. “The Foundation for Dialogue has been instrumental in helping us implement these initiatives, but we need to expand them across all sub-counties in Nyeri,” says Winfred.

Rhoda adds a poignant plea: “The more people we can reach with this information, the better for our country. Eventually, you will have saved the whole nation.”



**Rhoda Gichohi, Senior Chief, Kiganjo Location, Nyeri County.**



*We’ve trained cultural elders to mentor young initiates during traditional rites of passage, teaching them positive values and raising awareness about radicalization,”*

**Winfred Wanjiku Kamosh.**







Hannah Adisu, GCERF's Regional Manager for East and Southern Africa.

# Sustaining Peace The ARIVE Way

The program aimed to address the root causes of violent extremism by fostering trust between communities and the government

The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE) has reached its conclusion, its success enabled by collaboration among several stakeholders in the fight against violent extremism.

Launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), ARIVE worked in 15 counties, partnering with Kenya's National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and local civil society organizations.

The program aimed to address the root causes of violent extremism by fostering trust between communities and the government and amplifying voices often overlooked in policy-making.

Through its implementation of County Action Plans (CAPs), ARIVE focused on pillars like arts, education, faith, mental health, media, law enforcement, psychosocial needs, and women's empowerment. From trauma healing and youth mentorship to interfaith dialogues and media outreach, the program emphasized practical, localized solutions to complex challenges.

ARIVE was born out of consultations between GCERF and Kenyan stakeholders in 2021. According to Hannah Adisu, GCERF's Regional Manager for East and Southern Africa, the program's design was rooted in supporting existing structures. "We identified that supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) and CAP implementation was an area where GCERF could play a key role.

ARIVE represented an opportunity to operationalize Kenya's national strategy at the sub-national level, which is rare globally," she says.

This collaborative effort involved working closely with local partners who brought essential insights into the challenges faced by communities. Irene Ndung'u, GCERF's Country Advisor for Kenya, highlights the importance of this approach.

"We sought to complement the government's efforts by strengthening coordination at both national and county levels. This partnership ensured our work addressed unique local challenges," she says.



*We sought to complement the government's efforts by strengthening coordination at both national and county levels. This partnership ensured our work addressed unique local challenges,"*


**Irene Ndung'u, GCERF's Country Advisor for Kenya.**



**Irene Ndung'u, GCERF's Country Advisor for Kenya.**



**Joseph Kanyiri, Chief Liaison Officer at NCTC.**

A portrait of Fred Ndegwa, a man with a short beard and mustache, wearing a light blue button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and trees.

**Fred Ndegwa,  
Chief Liaison  
Officer NCTC.**

ARIVE's inclusive approach made its interventions impactful and relevant. By working with civil society organizations, the program tailored its initiatives to address specific community needs. These included youth mentorship programs, support for survivors of violent extremism, and initiatives to tackle radicalization at its roots.

"One of ARIVE's greatest achievements was bringing communities and governments to the same table," Adisu says. "Creating space for debate and enabling critical voices to influence policy was transformative."

The impact is clear in the increased awareness among communities. "People are now rejecting extremist narratives and addressing vulnerabilities like youth unemployment and marginalization," says Joseph Kanyiri, Chief Liaison Officer at NCTC. He adds that government institutions have also benefited from ARIVE through training and the adoption of standard operating procedures, which have strengthened their ability to implement PCVE strategies.

Despite its successes, ARIVE faced challenges that offered valuable lessons. Some delays initially slowed progress. "Starting earlier could have given us more time to achieve even greater impact," Adisu says. Additionally, natural disruptions like flooding in counties such as Mandera and Tana River affected implementation, though those challenges were tackled head-on, despite not being part of the mandate.

Youth engagement, a cornerstone of the program, was another area with room for improvement. "While youth were involved, their participation wasn't always consistent," Kanyiri says. "More targeted outreach and support, such as enhanced facilitation, could have made their involvement stronger."

One of the program's biggest lessons was the importance of local ownership, which the program aimed to establish



*For long-term impact, initiatives must be community led,"*

**Fred Ndegwa.**



## 2021

**Launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), ARIVE worked in 15 counties, partnering with Kenya's National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and local civil society organizations.**



and cement, a feat that was achieved. "For long-term impact, initiatives must be community-led," says Fred Ndegwa, also a Chief Liaison Officer at NCTC. The program's adaptability also stood out, as partners responded to emerging issues like the aforementioned natural disasters and shifting community needs.

Another significant takeaway was the value of partnerships. "The collaboration between state and non-state actors was crucial," Ndung'u says. "Non-state actors bring local knowledge, resources, and trust, which are invaluable in PCVE work."

Although ARIVE has concluded, its impact will continue to shape Kenya's PCVE efforts. Stakeholders are committed to scaling successful interventions to other counties and integrating lessons learned into future programs. "We've created an infrastructure that's both localized and sustainable," Ndegwa says. "Counties now have the know-how to lead their own PCVE efforts."

Globally, ARIVE is a model for addressing violent extremism. "Kenya's approach demonstrates the power of collaboration and inclusivity," Adisu noted. "These lessons are being shared internationally, and could show how other countries address similar challenges."

While the threat of violent extremism persists, the counties that participated are better prepared to respond. "We've seen communities take ownership of PCVE efforts, creating solutions that are both innovative and rooted in local realities," Kanyiri said. "This is the true strength of ARIVE."

ARIVE's success highlights the importance of addressing violent extremism through a whole-of-society approach. By empowering communities, fostering collaboration, and ensuring inclusivity, the program has laid a strong foundation for resilience in Kenya.

As its partners move forward, the lessons from ARIVE will continue to guide efforts to combat violent extremism.

# Taking justice to the people

Although Lamu had seen past conflicts, such as with the Shiftas in the 70s and 80s, this attack felt different.

In June 2014, terror attacks in Mpeketoni, Lamu County, left 58 people dead and many others unaccounted for. Although Lamu had seen past conflicts, such as with the Shiftas in the 70s and 80s, this attack felt different.

It was far more sinister because it was targeted at Christians and certain communities, creating a significant rift in the community. "We who aren't native to Lamu felt like the natives (who are mostly Muslim) had caused the attack or betrayed us to the attackers," says Alexander Mutua, a resident.

Addressing this division was a monumental task, but the Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI) rose to the challenge. One way they did this was through the law enforcement pillar, harmonizing the



Noor Dair, Executive Director, KYBI at a public *baraza*.



**Abel Omariba, Senior Prosecution Counsel ODPP, Mpeketoni.**



**Erick Maina, Advocate of the High Court.**



**Alexander Mutua, Mpeketoni Resident.**

community's relationship with the police, courts, and prisons. Partnering with ACT! through The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), KYBI aimed to mend relationships and rebuild trust. Launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), ARIVE operates in 15 counties, including Lamu, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program supports County Engagement Forums (CEFs) by granting Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like KYBI the resources to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) to prevent and counter violent extremism (PCVE). ARIVE focuses on CAP pillars such as law enforcement, youth and women's empowerment, education, faith, mental health support, media, and online engagement. By uniting state and non-state actors, ARIVE seeks to build resilience against extremism.

Disputes among people, often fueled by mistrust, clogged the justice system, bringing more harm than resolution. Julius Mwangi, a pastor, notes that many disputes could have



*KYBI has been critical in providing resources and facilitating meetings, ensuring every contribution is valued,"*

**Erick Maina**



been resolved outside the courts. "We had a problem of lack of peace. People would fight- community versus community, pastoralists versus farmers over land - and we also had Al-Shabaab. We've seen improvements from KYBI's training. We first created peace committees," he says.

"We were trained on resolving minor disputes so people would know there was a place to go for cohesion and dialogue. Now, through KYBI and partners, we have reconciliation committees in every sublocation." These committees fall under the Court Users Committee (CUC), a platform of stakeholders accessing court services, including judiciary members, law enforcement, clergy, and alternative dispute resolution representatives.

"The CUC ensures court processes within a region run efficiently," says Richard Chesoni, Resident Magistrate at Mpeketoni Law Courts. Abel Omariba, senior prosecution counsel at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) in Mpeketoni, credits KYBI with providing platforms to educate the community about ODPP's role, their rights, and methods for resolving disputes outside the court



**Richard Chesoni, Mpeketoni Resident Magistrate.**

system. “Certain cases don’t need to come to court. These cases create backlogs,” he says. This approach allows the justice system to allocate resources to more serious cases.

Erick Maina, an advocate of the High Court, highlights KYBI’s role in training communities on alternative justice systems. “KYBI has been critical in providing resources and facilitating meetings, ensuring every contribution is valued,” he says.

If offenders are prosecuted and found guilty, KYBI supports their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. Joseph Mayieka, Assistant Director of Probation in Mpeketoni, observes that KYBI’s training benefits both offenders and officers. “People now understand court processes, from bail and bond to how to behave in court. Even guilty offenders can apologize and seek forgiveness, which helps during appeals,” he says.



**Joseph Mayieka, Assistant Director of Probation, Mpeketoni.**

Resident magistrate Chesoni commends KYBI for training on PCVE through the CUC. “At Hindi prison, we trained prisoners on PCVE. KYBI has also trained CUC members and the community. Through these efforts, we’ve seen changes in youth behavior. We’ve had only one suspected terrorism case, which turned out to be a false alarm,” he says. As a result of these combined efforts, Mpeketoni Law Courts is now ranked among Kenya’s best.

Noor Dair, Executive Director of KYBI, says their work has reached nearly every ward in Lamu County. “Lamu residents now understand the law and actively cooperate in fighting violent extremism,” he says.

Mutua notes that normalcy has been largely restored. “Not 100 percent because, as the Swahili saying goes, ‘If you’re bitten by a snake, you’ll jump at the sight of grass.’ People are still wary, but violent incidents have reduced dramatically - from once in two days to maybe once in two years.”



*Lamu residents now understand the law and actively cooperate in fighting violent extremism,”*

**Noor Dair.**



# Shaping narratives for a peaceful Lamu

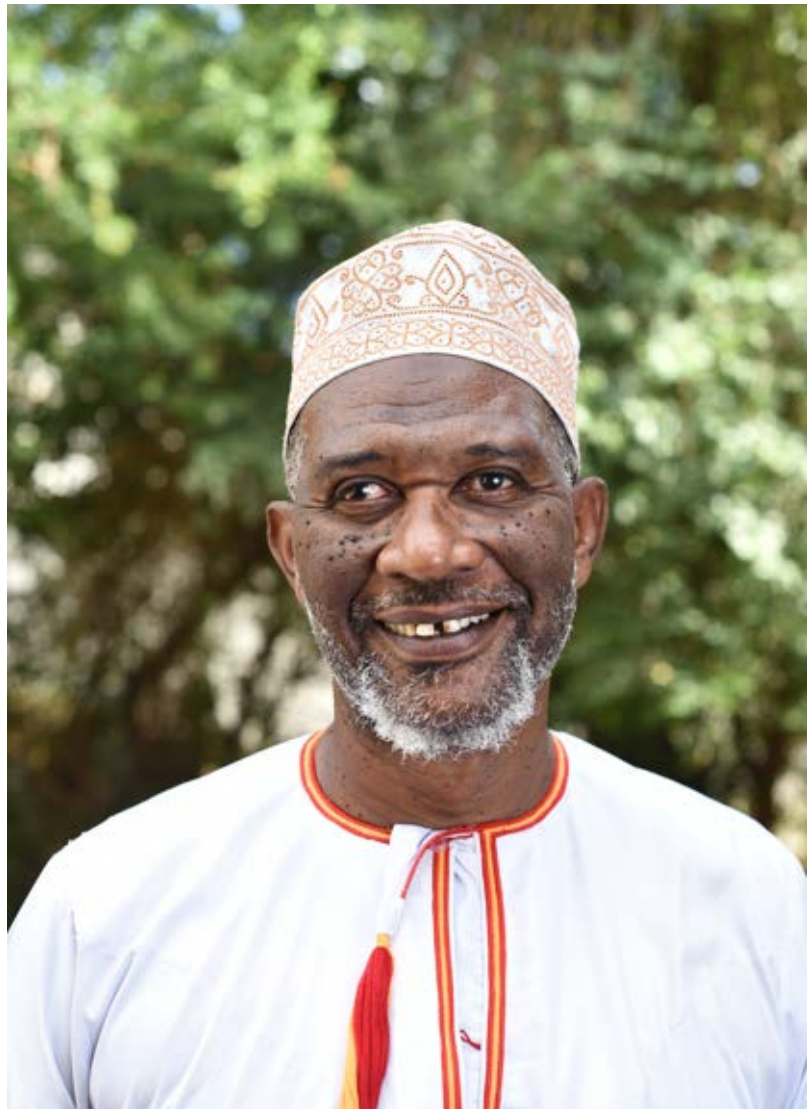
Although Lamu had seen past conflicts, such as with the Shiftas in the 70s and 80s, this attack felt different.

**A**s the dust settled on the 2014 Mpeketoni attacks, the rift that was revealed was widest in religious circles. Most people in Lamu are religious, so this was a major societal upheaval when adherents of the two biggest religions were deeply suspicious and hateful of each other.

"The attacks came under the guise of religion. It was Muslims against Christians and Christians against Muslims," says Sheikh Ibrahim Shahibu, chair of the Interfaith Council of Lamu West and of the Inter-religious Council of Kenya, Lamu County.

The survivors retold how the attackers would ask the victims what religion they were and if they were Muslim, they were spared, and if Christian, they were slaughtered on the spot.

"So faith was directly involved. We had a very huge task. People did not trust each other and did not want to work together on anything. People were afraid to go to churches because they thought anything could happen there, and mosque attendance was also reduced. So the clergy in Lamu saw that we could not bury our heads in the sand," he says.



Ibrahim Shahibu, Chair of Interfaith Council of Lamu West.



**Pastor Julius Maina, a religious leader in Mpeketoni.**

Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI) came in at this point, providing capacity building on how to handle issues to do with mediation and counter-terrorism and they provided training on how to speak to their followers in both religions in the rural areas.

A lot of this work was done under the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE). The program was launched in October 2021 by ACT! with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), and operates in 15 counties, including Lamu, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like KYBI in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and

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*We really thank them because the government could give us security but not peace. What we needed most was peace,”*

**Pastor Julius Maina.**

”

countering violent extremism (PCVE). By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE has encouraged collaboration among partners, ensuring that PCVE activities are seamlessly integrated into new and existing programs.

The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including the ideological pillar, arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women’s empowerment. It also emphasizes practical efforts like interfaith dialogues, aiming to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

“We really thank them because the government could give us security, but not peace. What we needed most was peace. Security was achieved by the government through external forces to thwart threats from outside but peace amongst ourselves, working together, doing business, and living together as a community had been destroyed. The government



**Chief Joseph Kibiru Njoroge.**

had no capacity to rebuild that," says Shahibu.

Pastor Julius Mwangi is part of the Court Users Committee dealing with matters of reconciliation at the Ukumbi courts in Mpeketoni. He says that peace requires a multi-agency system, which they recognize as the clergy in Lamu.

"That's why we have an interfaith committee which involves Muslims and Christians, with whom we discuss our issues. We also have a council of bishops, the clergy, pastors' fellowships, in court we have a committee and we have committees in the rural areas where we ensure religious leaders are present," he says.

As a result of this cooperation and intervention, conflicts between people based on religion have been reduced. Mwangi says that there has also been a tremendous reduction in cases reaching the official court system, especially in civil matters.

"In 2023, from January to July, we solved more than 35 cases in Ukumbi Suits, separate from the court. In 2022 we had almost 60. It has reduced the court's backlog to a great extent," he says.

"KYBI has been a very good instrument, they have really helped us in these issues. Anything we needed, we had them on board. So we would ask the people supporting Kiunga to keep helping them with funds so that they can reach us and we can continue helping the community," he says.

The religious leaders do all this as volunteers with no salary, for the sake of peace in Lamu. One judge summed it up succinctly, as told by Njoroge:

"He told me, 'We only stay here for 3 years and then leave. So anyone we've offended will not see us again. But you are with them throughout. If you feel that we have offended someone, tell us. If you feel like we've gone against your community, tell us because tomorrow, they will tell you that 'Pastor, you were in court and things went wrong in your presence,'" says Njoroge.

"That's why I'm very keen on issues here in court. I'm always here and my office is always open."



Noor Dair, Executive Director of KYBI at a public sensitization meeting.

# Lamu's journey towards peace

The ARIVE program operates in 15 counties, including Lamu, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

At 82 years of age, most of those lived in Lamu, 17 of them as chief, Joseph Kibiru Njoroge has witnessed Lamu evolve, both the good and the bad. He was the first chief of the Kenyatta Settlement Scheme in Mpeketoni Location, back when there were more wild animals than people in the area.

With time, after his retirement, he saw both herders and farmers settle there and both occupations became two of the main economic activities. Constant conflict arose over fighting for pasture, where, according to senior prosecution counsel Abel Omariba, the pastoralists believed that there were grazing corridors, whereas the farmers believed that they had a right to till unoccupied land. The farmers' crops would also be eaten by livestock.



**Chief Joseph Kibiru Njoroge**



*Under ARIVE, we did a lot. We visited schools, rural areas, pastoralists, farmers and fishermen and taught them the importance of cooperating with the government,”*

**Chief Kibiru.**



Both Njoroge and Omariba say that the intervention by the Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI) has greatly helped in reducing the conflict, thus reducing violent extremism in the area.

“KYBI has come in to support us in trying to resolve this conflict by providing us an opportunity to sit down with these communities and explain to them that these things can be sorted out by other means other than fighting,” says Omariba. KYBI got support to do this under the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), by ACT! which was launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

The ARIVE program operates in 15 counties, including Lamu, in collaboration with the National

Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like KYBI in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE has encouraged collaboration among partners, ensuring that PCVE activities are seamlessly integrated into new and existing programs.

At its heart, ARIVE works to reduce the mistrust between communities and the government, while uplifting the voices of those most at risk of radicalization - voices often left out of mainstream policy conversations. The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including the economic pillar, arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women's empowerment, all with the aim of building lasting resilience against violent extremism.

“Even the government has come in and decided to put up a border where everyone, pastoralists, and herders, have their own side. But they have not completely succeeded because the pastoralists sometimes graze at night when farmers are asleep. We are continuing to solve the issue through KYBI and through their training, we have learned not just about conflict resolution, but also how to have good relationships with each other, peace, and development,” says Njoroge.

Noor Dair, executive director of KYBI, speaks of the work they have done and the success they have had.

“Under ARIVE, we did a lot. We visited schools, rural areas, pastoralists, farmers, and fishermen and we taught them that they were obliged to work with the government and report when necessary, and at the right time, and they did that. Information was shared and the level of violent extremism was reduced. Lamu is peaceful now but we have to continue working together,” he says.

He also states that he is grateful to the partners, while mentioning the need for more collaboration because they need to continue stressing the need for peace. However, everyone agrees that so far, so good. As someone who has seen it all, Njoroge can attest to this:

“As an elder of 82 years, 26 years since my retirement, I am happy to see these developments. I can see the cooperation between residents and now you can hardly differentiate between tribes, unlike before. It has really helped bring peace.”

**Marian Hassan,  
Assistant County  
Commissioner  
Kilifi North.**



# **Saving** lives through serving customers

YOWPSUD is a non-governmental organization focusing on governance, development, and social justice in Kenya.



**Ian Kinga, a beneficiary of the ARIVE project.**

If you want deliveries, errands run, or shopping done for you in Kilifi, Ian Kinga is your guy. His deliveries business, Swift Serve, has gained popularity in the area, and, with the way things are going, is on track to grow exponentially.

But this story almost never happened. Kinga was once just an idle young man living hand-to-mouth on low-paying odd jobs here and there. After high school, like many young people in Kilifi, he could not proceed further.

His mother had died when he was in class 6 in primary school and his sister had been supporting him until form 4, after which she informed him she was no longer able to do it and he had to fend for himself.

If it wasn't for Youth and Women for Peace and Sustainable Development (YOWPSUD), Kinga says he would still be out there struggling.

YOWPSUD is a non-governmental organization focusing on governance, development, and social justice in Kenya.

It is one of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working with ACT! on The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE).

The ARIVE program, launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), operates in 15 counties including Kilifi and Malindi in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

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*If it wasn't for Youth and Women For Peace and Sustainable Development, Kinga says he would still be out there struggling.”*

”

Maria Dickson.





Harrison  
Katana.

One of ARIVE's core goals is to uplift the voices of those most at risk of radicalization, such as the youth. The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including youth empowerment, arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women's empowerment.

It also emphasizes practical efforts like trauma healing and youth engagement through extracurricular activities, helping to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Kinga tells of how YOWPSUD provided him and fellow youths with mentorship in entrepreneurship, teaching them how to identify their potential and learn their identity.

"I learned that I had some trauma from the past which I needed to deal with, and I did. I did not know that my mum's death had affected me so much until then. During our mental health sessions, we learned that many of us youths were going through a lot due to lack of

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*I learned that I had some trauma from the past which I needed to deal with and I did. I did not know that my mum's death had affected me so much,”*

**Maria Dickson.**

”

opportunities to make a living and while trying to survive, many of them get into violent extremism," he says.

Armed with this knowledge, Kinga came up with his business idea, and with some funding from YOWPSUD combined with his very little savings, he bought a motorbike and started the delivery business. Today, he has been able to buy another bike and he says they are growing very fast.

Fahima Ali, a community leader and peace ambassador working with YOWPSUD in Malindi, says all this work has been worth it because many young people are impressionable and drug-addicted because of lack of employment, which leads to crime and violent extremism.

"I am from an area where people are easily influenced and radicalised into violent extremism and drugs so it wasn't easy at first. But when we broke through, we found that they really wanted mentorship and



**Fahima Ali, A Community leader in Kilifi.**

forums to air their views. Many have been reformed through this program and in the sessions women would beg YOWPSUD to expand the program to reach more youths. I hope this is going to happen," she says.

Harrison Katana and Maria Dickson have similar success stories to Kinga. Katana, who was formerly idle due to unemployment, has since started Talanta Graphics, a t-shirt printing business. Maria Dickson, who coincidentally also lost her mother in class 6 and lived in hardship, is now a certified counselor in drug and substance abuse, and mental health and is looking at several potential work opportunities this year.

Marian Hassan, the Assistant County Commissioner in Kilifi North, says that through such activities by civil societies including through the ARIVE program, 9,800 young people in 24 wards in Kilifi County have been reached and terror attacks have significantly reduced as a result.

Kinga cannot thank YOWPSUD and the ARIVE program enough. As he says, "YOWPSUD helps you learn yourself. Without knowing who you are, crime looks attractive, but they showed us that instead of gaining notoriety through crime, you can do something great for the community."

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*I am from an area where people are easily influenced and radicalised into violent extremism and drugs so it wasn't easy at first."*

**Fahima Ali**

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Abdia Boru, Nyumba Kumi Cluster Head.

# Women on the frontline

The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

Isiolo has long been known as a hotspot of terrorism, but it is quickly shedding that reputation thanks to the efforts of women like Abdia Boru, who previously were left out of initiatives around the prevention and countering of violent extremism (PCVE).

Under the shade of an acacia tree in Bora Afya Village, she speaks with pride about the strides her community has made and the massive contributions she has made. Nyumba Kumi, which translates to 'ten houses', is a community policing initiative introduced in

Faith  
Mwende,  
Project  
Officer  
CEED.



“

*I've been a Nyumba Kumi cluster head for three years, and when I started, there was so much we didn't know about how to do our jobs, but the training we received through ARIVE gave us the tools to do them,”*


**Abdia Boru.**

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2013 as part of the national strategy to enhance security and promote cohesion. Its leaders are known as cluster heads.

“I've been a Nyumba Kumi cluster head for three years, and when I started, there was so much we didn't know about how to do our jobs, but the training we received through ARIVE gave us the tools to do them.”

The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), operates in 15 counties across Kenya.

A portrait of a woman, Fatma Omar, wearing a red headscarf with a gold and black patterned inner lining. She has her arms crossed and is wearing a gold bracelet on her right wrist. The background is an outdoor setting with green foliage and a building.

**Fatma Omar,  
Nyumba Kumi  
Cluster Head.**

In Isiolo, the program is implemented by the Centre for Empowerment and Education Development (CEED), in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). By supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like CEED, ARIVE helps implement County Action Plans (CAPs) that focus on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

Through the training that Abdia received, she learned how to identify risks in her community and report incidents. She mobilized her fellow cluster heads and they would meet every Sunday, discuss issues that had been identified, come up with solutions on the spot, and if need be, visit affected households the same day.

In Isiolo, training women like Abdia and Amina Rajab on PCVE and how to report incidences has made most of the difference.

“Before ARIVE, I didn’t know how to handle or report incidents,” Amina recalls. “I was also afraid of retaliation, but now, I have the confidence and the training to act.”



*Before ARIVE, I didn’t know how to handle or report incidents,” Amina recalls. “I was also afraid of retaliation, but now, I have the confidence and the training to act,”*

**Fatma Omar.**



**Chief Abdinassir Mohammed, of Burat Location**



**Amina Rajab.**

ARIVE has facilitated the production of identification cards for Nyumba Kumi leaders, through which they have gained authority and respect.

“The IDs are helping the community policing leaders in the work that they do at the community level,” says Faith Mwende, a project officer at Community Empowerment and Environmental Development (CEED).

“Before that, we had some cases where, when they did patrols, they would be questioned about what authority they had to be interfering in things, but with that badge they are now able to prove that they are community policing leaders, cluster heads or area managers, making their work easier.”

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*The IDs are helping the community policing leaders in the work that they do at the community level,”*

**Faith Mwende,  
Programme Officer CEED.**

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Faith Mwende,  
Program  
Officer CEED.



Chief Abdinassir  
Mohammed, of  
Burat Location.





**Amina Rajab.**



**Abdia Boru.**

The program has also helped women overcome cultural barriers. As Amina shares, “Even during elections, husbands used to dictate how we voted. But after ARIVE’s community training, women can now vote freely, and it’s brought a sense of peace even during tense times.”

Isiolo has long been vulnerable to violent extremism, with extremist groups exploiting economic hardships and disconnection to recruit young people.

Chief Abdinasir Mohammed of Burat Location speaks of the transformation that this has brought.

“Empowering women to do this has been important because the mother is the one who gives a child their first lessons and gives primary care as the child grows up. Involving and empowering them has enabled them to report whenever they find anything suspicious since they are able to identify it faster,” he says.

The results are clear. Violent extremism in Isiolo has significantly reduced since ARIVE began. As Chief Abdinasir notes, “We used to lose young men to radicalization regularly. Now, even when we hear whispers, they don’t escalate because the community is proactive.”



*Today, our youth are playing football instead of joining gangs. In the process of sitting together as women, we also help ourselves through those clusters,”*

**Abdia Boru.**



Women have become first responders, reporting suspicious activity early and addressing community issues confidently.

“Our children were once drawn into Al-Shabaab, but now we educate them and guide them. Violent extremism has reduced because we are vigilant, and the community trusts us,” says Fatuma Omar, also a cluster head.

Abdia is also a woman’s representative in the football federation, and she uses the opportunities she has in that role to do even more work in PCVE outside of being a Nyumba Kumi cluster head. She organizes tournaments to keep the youth busy and for them to also have peers to exchange positive ideas with.

“Today, our youth are playing football instead of joining gangs. In the process of sitting together as women, we also help ourselves through those clusters. We don’t just wait for CEED or the chief to bring relief or aid. We are very motivated. It is a success story that through the training from CEED, we have changed a lot of things,” she says.

“The parents in our clusters now have information, and information is power. Through our work as women, they now know how to prevent bad things from happening in their communities.”



**Suleiman Kariuki at his  
sugar cane juice shop.**

# Juiced up for peace

CEED taught them how to make sugarcane juice, and the enterprising lads learned how to make more varieties of juice including mango, pineapple, and moringa.

From looking at his peers and a lack of employment, Suleiman Kariuki and his friends knew that if they didn't find meaningful work, they would easily find themselves in a dangerous pastime that Isiolo had become infamous for: terrorism.

"An idle mind is the devil's workshop," he says. He did not want to give his and his friends' minds any room for radicalization, so they quickly formed the Ecosawa Self-Help Group and started figuring out how to help themselves. In the process, they encountered the Community Empowerment and Environmental Development (CEED).

Today, in between sentences as he tells the story, he expertly feeds in fresh stalks while his colleague grinds ginger beside him and eventually produces a very tasty drink. CEED taught them how to make sugarcane juice, and the enterprising lads learned how to make more varieties of juice including mango, pineapple, and moringa, which Suleiman says is medicinal.

"Through the ARIVE program by CEED, we learned how to make sugarcane juice, and they gave us the machine," Suleiman says. "Now, we have something to focus on, income to sustain ourselves, and we are no longer as vulnerable to radicalization."

The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021, is funded by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) in collaboration with Kenya's National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). Operating in 15 counties, ARIVE empowers local stakeholders, providing



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*Through the ARIVE program we learned how to make sugarcane juice.”*

**Suleiman Kariuki.**

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practical, community-focused interventions to prevent violent extremism (VE).

At its core, the initiative addresses mistrust between communities and government while uplifting those most at risk of radicalization. This includes youth, women, and marginalized groups. By integrating PCVE (Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism) into pillars such as education, livelihoods, mental health, and faith, ARIVE fosters resilience through strategies like trauma healing, interfaith dialogue, and economic empowerment.

In Isiolo, ARIVE's emphasis on youth livelihoods has been key in the fight. As the local implementing partner, CEED has trained dozens of young people in practical skills, such as sugarcane juice production and mobile phone repair. "We equipped vulnerable youths with skills and provided them with startup kits. For example, seven young people trained in mobile repair were also supported

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*Area managers are now well-trained such that if someone disappears for even a short time, they are able to find out,”*

**Assistant Chief Daniel Kathukumi.**

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with initial equipment and rent for their business spaces,” says Faith Mwendu, a project officer at CEED.

The results speak for themselves. Suleiman's Ecosawa group now trains others in juice-making. This has not only provided livelihoods but also reduced susceptibility to VE. "When you're busy earning an income, you have no time for idle thoughts or dangerous influences," he says.

Through the ARIVE program, CEED has also reached out to bodaboda riders, who Mwendu says were often used to transport violent extremists to and from Isiolo as they commuted for recruitment sessions. They have also been trained to identify such people and report any suspicious activity.

Chief Abdinasir Mohammed of Burat Location recalls darker times in Isiolo, when youth disappearing into Somalia was a common occurrence.

"Isiolo used to be bad because there was a period in 2016 and 2017 where



**Daniel Kathukumi, Chief Kiwanjani Location.**



boys from Isiolo Boys Secondary School disappeared, in addition to others from other regions. After investigations, it was found that they had crossed the border into Somalia and some were caught before they were able to cross. A lot of action was taken to curb that and things are not bad now," he says.

CEED has also used Amani (peace) clubs in schools to help in the fight. "The youth we have trained are now PCVE champions and are training others," says Mwendu.

Assistant Chief Daniel Kathukumi says that through CEED's efforts, violent extremism has been reduced.

"Because of seminars, civic education, and public barazas facilitated through CEED and the ARIVE project, it has reduced greatly. CEED has paid for civic

education and they have paid for trainers to sensitize people on Gender-based violence and violent extremism," says Kathukumi. "They have gotten involved in the community to ensure that the training is effective. Area managers are now well-trained, such that if someone disappears for even a short time, they are able to find out and know where they disappeared. They used to get into Al-Shabaab when they disappeared but it's not happening anymore."

Back in his shop, Suleiman reflects on how far they have come. "Before this, many youths were idle, falling into drugs and crime. But now, we have a purpose." The Ecosawa group hopes to expand and increase production, brand their juices, and reach wider markets. Investing in his and his friends' livelihoods might be the answer that has long been sought in ending violent extremism in Isiolo.



Michael Yator, Deputy County Commissioner, Changamwe.

# Interfaith dialogue as the foundation of peace

Mombasa has had a huge problem with juvenile gangs, composed of children aged 9 to 15.

**M**ichael Yator says he has witnessed violence in very close proximity.

"One day in 2020, I witnessed 15 people having been killed, more the next day, and more the following day after that. So when you see peace and tranquility now, know that something has happened. People have worked. The soft approach has worked," he says, in his position as deputy county commissioner, Changamwe sub-county, in Mombasa.

Part of that soft approach, as opposed to the hard approach that involved 'shoot-to-kill' orders, has been through the County Engagement Forum (CEF)'s education pillar, through activities facilitated by The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE) with Coast Education Centre (COEC) as the secretariat of the CEF, which took over from Haki Africa.

**Jacqueline Ogaya, of the Coast  
Interfaith Council of Clerics.**



Mombasa has had a huge problem with juvenile gangs, composed of children aged 9 to 15. The team in the education pillar has had their work cut out for them, given that children of that age are mostly in school, and recruiters have gotten smarter.

"We used to see young children being recruited and taken to Somalia by Al-Shabaab, but currently, juvenile gangs are within our very learning institutions. You find that children want to go to the schools where their friends, the gang members, are," says Penuel Nyagaka, who was leading the education pillar in Mombasa.

"You find primary school children carrying machetes and teargas canisters to class and you wonder where they got them from. Nowadays, even their own parents and siblings are members of militia groups."

ARIVE was launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) and operates in 15 counties in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as COEC in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE has encouraged collaboration among partners, ensuring that PCVE activities are seamlessly integrated into new and existing programs.

The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women's empowerment, building collaboration between communities and security agencies. By bringing together state and non-state partners, ARIVE aims to build lasting resilience against violent extremism (VE).



*ARIVE gave members the opportunity to meet monthly and coordinate their responses to PCVE,"*

**Penuel Nyagaka.**



As a result of this collaborative work, peace and security in Mombasa has improved, according to Yator. "When I reported, there were a lot of juvenile criminal gangs, but we have minimized those gangs," he says.

According to Jacqueline Ogaya, of the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics, the biggest success of ARIVE in Mombasa, was helping re-establish the CEF as there was initially some mistrust between stakeholders, a sentiment that is echoed by fellow stakeholders.

Getting that message through the learning institutions was not easy at first. "Things were not smooth because learning institutions were not welcoming, due to gatekeepers like principals and so on," says Nyagaka.

It was not until the government came in and explained how violent extremism was affecting Mombasa County and the country, and how everyone needed to be on board that things started becoming easier.

ARIVE then helped bring all these partners together, in both the first and second phases of implementation. The first phase took place over five years, while the second phase was done in one. ARIVE helped streamline reporting to each other and to NCTC, preventing duplication and creating synergy.

"ARIVE co-ordinated us very well by making sure all the pillars had time and space where people could convene and discuss. Partners came together and shared how they have been doing work. ARIVE gave members the opportunity to meet monthly. The project didn't fund the activities per se, but it helped in co-ordinating," says Nyagaka.

He explains that the education pillar has over 54 registered members who were working in the learning institutions within Mombasa.

## 9-15

**Mombasa has had a huge problem with juvenile gangs, composed of children aged 9 to 15.**





Penuel Nyagaka of the Coast Education Center.

"These partners and stakeholders work in different ways. There are those targeting young people who are in EDCEs, including Sunday School and Madrassa kids because it is good to monitor the kind of information that such children are getting," he says.

"Others work with primary school children in different ways, such as drama, plays, and so on, similar to secondary schools."

When the team started, only 15 schools in six counties allowed school programs, but with time, specifically after drafting the CAP, a circular came out saying that it was mandatory to allow them in learning institutions. As a result, the program now operates in 55 schools, where they engage in discussions and learn how to avoid being radicalized and so on.

As a city, Mombasa has vast learning institutions, from Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) to universities, so the education pillar's objective was to share knowledge and information about PCVE in all such learning institutions.

Nyagaka says that the education pillar is crucial because that is where the youngsters start. "For infiltration or radicalization, this is the best entry point, through education," he says.

There are, however, some gaps in implementation, where once ARIVE steps down, things don't flow as smoothly, as he explains:

"We need a sustainable plan because dropping it kills morale and the pace of implementation, so even if we take one step forward, we take two more steps back. Children are not static - they move ahead to higher institutions and others come in so the information needs to keep flowing. We also need to encourage the government to use its own resources and not just depend on donors because if this initiative stops, we will have gotten Mombasa wrong,"



# Marsabit women and their leadership **journeys**

SND is one of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working on ACT!'s Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE)

**A**di Alahe tells captivating, heroic stories of the work that women have done in Marsabit. She and a group of 40 women have gone around Marsabit County speaking to youth about preventing themselves from being radicalized and falling into drug addiction.

In one of her heroic ventures, a girl was about to be removed from school to be married off early and when they heard about it, she and her fellow women rushed to the area to stop it. In another, they heard of a young man who was about to join Al-Shabaab, the terrorist organization based in Somalia, and they convinced him not to do it.

“One woman even ended up in jail because of our work,” she says.

All this work has been thanks to the support of Strategies for Northern Development (SND), a local non-governmental organization working with nomadic pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia.

SND is one of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working on ACT!’s Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

The ARIVE program operates in 15 counties, including Marsabit, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading CSOs like SND in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

One of the key CAP pillars in the program is the gender pillar, which Alahe is part of. Others include arts, education, faith, media and online, law enforcement, and mental health support, all of which aim to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.



*Female Genital Mutilation and early marriages have reduced and our youth are not enticed as easily,”*

**Adi Alahe.**



Alahe says that because of their work, things have changed in Marsabit. “Female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage have reduced. Our youths are not enticed as easily to cross into Somalia to join Al-Shabaab,” she says.

Why use women for such roles? Alahe says, “When a child is born, women are the ones who go to sing. Women do 80 percent of the child’s upbringing. They counsel the child as they grow up. Women report immediately when they realize a crime is going on,” she says.

But not every woman in Marsabit gets that. Alahe often sits with women and shows them female leaders making waves in the country, like female governors, and explains to them that their female children can be the same with education, but without it, they will always have a hard life.

“Recently, Chief Justice Martha Koome was here. I told them, ‘Do you see a woman has spoken? There is no difference between you and her except for education. Are you therefore not ashamed of taking your girl child out of school?’

Not everyone likes it, but Alahe says she doesn’t care. “I do what I can because I love the job and it is important for our community,” she says.

There is one thing that she however has no control over, and that is funds, which are scarce in the county. She is heartbroken that the program has come to an end because she says that they have not even done half of the work that they needed to.

“We are ready to work but we need an NGO. Some people can never do this work without an allowance. Right now we would be going door to door because it is the holidays when most of these things happen if we could. Poverty has ruled us here. A young lady can be deceived by sh100 only,” she says.

She however says she is going to keep doing what she can, including advising mothers to stay vigilant about the ongoings and whereabouts of their children.

## 15

**The ARIVE program operates in 15 counties, including Marsabit, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).**





Martin Muhia, Assistant County Commissioner, Marsabit.

# In football, we discover our bonds

Sharing issues with the police was unusual because, with the tribal conflict in the area, the hatred between communities was such that warring tribes would rather revenge than tell the police anything.

**W**hen Abdiaziz Boru had to tell his friends that they would be having a tournament with the police, he found it difficult. He himself had had to be persuaded of the idea by the Assistant County Commissioner, because it was unheard of, for police interacting that freely with the citizens. But once sold, he sold it to fellow leaders from other locations, and the game was on.

Boru is the Speaker of the Saku Youth Assembly in Marsabit County, and he says they were afraid at first during the first match. "But the police were friendly and interactive, and we beat them! Eventually, we even exchanged jerseys as a show of good faith. Then we sat down with them, and they told us not to be afraid of them and share issues with them," he says.

He explains that sharing issues with the police was unusual because, with the tribal conflict in the area, the hatred between communities was such that warring tribes would rather revenge than tell the police anything.

“So they told us to be taking cases to them. They taught us the importance of reporting to get justice and agreeing to be witnesses and be friendly with the police,” he says.

Such tournaments were facilitated by Strategies for Northern Development (SND), a local non-governmental organization working with nomadic pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia.

These were part of the strategies employed in The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE). The ARIVE program, launched in October 2021 by ACT! with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), operates in 15 counties including Marsabit, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). By building the capacity of local stakeholders,

ARIVE has encouraged collaboration among partners, ensuring that PCVE activities are seamlessly integrated into new and existing programs.

The program has been working to reduce the mistrust between communities and the government while uplifting the voices of those most at risk of radicalization—voices often left out of mainstream policy



*We have had several volleyball and football matches with the youth, which have really helped. They have brought the community together,”*

**Martin Muhia.**



**The program has been working to reduce the mistrust between communities and the government while uplifting the voices of those most at risk of radicalization**

conversations, like the youth in Marsabit.

Law enforcement and youth engagement through extracurricular activities, are some of its pillars, enabling stronger collaboration between communities and security agencies to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Martin Muhia, Assistant County Commissioner of Marsabit explains that they use sports to teach the youth not to be afraid of them as law enforcement.

“We have had several volleyball and football matches with the youth, which have really helped. They have brought the community closer. Every time I go there I get an opportunity to talk to the youth. They also tell me things and our interaction becomes easier,” he says.

He explains that this has gone a long way in PCVE because the youth are more free with them and they are able to get information from them about violent extremism hotspots.

“Drugs are a factor in violent extremism, so I have also tried to speak to the youth in drug hotspots. For instance, one of them had been coming to the tournaments and had a terrible temperament, which I later learned was due to drug addiction. I spoke to him without involving the police for a forceful arrest,” says Martin.

This soft approach means that even the girls have become more open and are telling them about places where Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still occurring. “We tell them that these things shouldn’t be happening in this day and age, and they go back and sensitize the people at home about it too, curbing the vice.

Abdiaziz Boru.





“

*Violent extremism, including cattle rustling and intercommunity clashes are all because people don't come together, and one of the few most effective ways to do that is through sports,”*

**Abdiaziz Boru.**

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Martin believes that sports is one of the greatest ways of bringing people, even enemies, together. “Even marriage is not as effective. In Brazil and in Ivory Coast, they have used sports internally violent hotspots and resolved even civil war in some places by bringing people together through sports. Similarly, in our tournaments you find different tribes interacting and playing together, which they would never do under normal circumstances,” he says.

“Violent extremism, including cattle rustling and intercommunity clashes are all because people don't come together, and one of the few most effective ways to do that is through sports. So I want to tell the county government and NGOs to facilitate more sporting activities for the sake of peace.”

Boru says that it has become a free space with the police now, sharing information with them, and the police in turn act quickly on information. He says, “We need more mentorship of the youth and interaction with the police due to our porous border with Somalia where our youth are easily radicalized. We want them to be very active in different activities rather than violent extremism. And we are looking forward to beating the police in the next match!”



Kiambu Youth at an engagement forum.

# **Ties that bind:** closing the gap between law enforcement and the community

They share their frustrations, fears, and even hopes. To their surprise, the police listen and share their perspectives too. By the end, there's mutual understanding: the police are human, and they feel misunderstood just like the youth.



**Karanja Muraya, Executive Director for the Africa Center for Engendered Security.**

**A**t the Thogoto Vocational Training Center in Kikuyu, Kiambu County, young people are sitting down for something they've never experienced—an open, heart-to-heart conversation with the police. Divided into two groups, they start hesitant, unsure whether speaking up might land them in trouble.

"How many of you have ever spoken with the police?" Silence. Not a single hand is raised.

"How many of you have ever been to a police station without conflicting with the law," an animated Karanja Muraya asks. Again, no hands.

This type of engagement—where police and youth talk as equals—

“

*We've introduced Station Youth Liaison Officers and Station Youth Sounding Boards to bridge the gap between police and young people,”*

**Karanja Muraya.**

”

is entirely new. But as the session progresses, and after assurances of confidentiality and that no one will get into trouble, the youth slowly pluck up the courage to speak. They share their frustrations, fears, and even hopes. To their surprise, the police listen and share their perspectives too. By the end, there's mutual understanding: the police are human, and they feel misunderstood just like the youth.

This breakthrough moment is part of the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), a program launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). ARIVE operates in 15 counties, collaborating with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and County Engagement Forums (CEFs).



It supports local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like the Africa Center for Engendered Security (ACES) in Kiambu to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) for preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

At its heart, ARIVE aims to reduce mistrust between communities and the government. It focuses on key CAP pillars like law enforcement, arts, education, faith, media and online engagement, mental health support, and women's empowerment.

By integrating practical efforts like youth-police dialogues, trauma healing, and interfaith forums into existing programs, ARIVE works to build resilience and prevent radicalization.

Kiambu hasn't historically been a terrorism hotspot, but that's exactly why it needs attention,

according to Karanja Muraya, Executive Director at ACES. "Violent extremism is evolving. Terrorists are no longer focused on hotspots like northern Kenya but are recruiting in places like Kiambu, where vigilance is lower," he says.

"For example, Ali Salim Gichunge, one of the Dusit D2 attackers, was an ethnic Kikuyu. That attack was planned from Ruaka, right here in Kiambu County."

ARIVE has been instrumental in operationalizing and reforming Kiambu County's 2019 County Action Plan, which had been dormant due to a lack of resources. Through the law enforcement pillar, ACES worked with local authorities to strengthen police-youth relations.

"We trained 30 officers from the Ministry of Interior and organized 36 vikao barazas—community forums that follow Chatham House



rules to ensure open and honest discussions," Karanja explains. "These forums reached 883 young people across five sub-counties, creating safe spaces for them to voice their concerns."

The law enforcement pillar is critical in addressing a key driver of extremism: the strained relationship between police and young people. "If we had proactive community policing, the Dusit D2 attack, for instance, might never have happened. The suspects would have been noticed as soon as they got to Ruaka," says Karanja.

The initiative has also focused on practical solutions like Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for youth-friendly policing. "We've introduced Station Youth Liaison Officers and Station Youth Sounding Boards to bridge the gap between police and young people," says Karanja. "These officers, working with youth representatives, develop Station Youth Engagement Plans, making policing more inclusive and responsive."

The results have been remarkable. Police stations are becoming less intimidating and more approachable for young people. "For the first time, we're seeing young people engage with the police willingly, not out of conflict but for dialogue," says Karanja. "This is revolutionary."

The work by ACES has been so successful it has spread to counties like Nairobi and Kajiado, which weren't officially under the ARIVE program, and police stations from those counties have benchmarked the work in Kiambu police stations. Lessons learned from the program have also informed national policy recommendations.

ACES made submissions to the Maraga Task Force on Police and Prisons Reforms, calling for a national policing policy and a community policing policy—both of which were adopted. These policies are now being developed.

Despite its success, the initiative has faced challenges. "Kiambu is new to PCVE work. Setting up, understanding drivers, and implementing solutions takes time, so it can't be done in a year," Karanja says. "But the goodwill from communities and police has been incredible."

The youth, like the ones at the training center who were once reluctant to talk to the police, are now engaging openly with them. This will go a long way in preventing violent extremism, one honest conversation at a time.

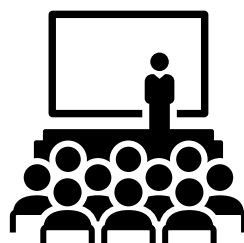
**30**

**officers trained from the Ministry of Interior and organized 36 vikao barazas—community forums that follow Chatham House rules to ensure open and honest discussions.**



**883**

**These forums reached 883 young people across five sub-counties, creating safe spaces for them to voice their concerns."**



# Women

## taking the lead at home and at work

Human Rights Agenda (HURIA) is a human rights agency, and, upon recognizing the critical role of women in PCVE, set out to empower them to do the work.

**B**eing a woman leader in Kwale is a battle. Mwanakombo Kibwana Jerumani, a community leader, activist, and chair of the peace and security community in Kwale refers to one of the days she was elected as one full of 'fire.' She had won the majority votes, but some men rejected them. People had to vote two more times before one of the men stood up and said, 'Enough. Give her right, she has been voted for three times meaning God has chosen her and we have to accept her.'

Chief Mwanaulu Hamisi Mwatsakatsa, Assistant Chief of the Vijongoni sub-location in Msambweni Location, has the same story. Her sub-location has 11 villages and all the village elders are men who are supposed to report to her but at first, they would try to circumvent the process because they did not believe a woman should lead them.

Though difficult at first, things changed for both women after they proved themselves. This attitude that women can't lead is rampant throughout Kwale due to the culture, and as a result, women did not involve themselves in most matters, including prevention and countering of violent extremism (PCVE) yet as it turns out, their involvement has made most of the difference.





**Mwanaulu Hamisi  
Mwatsakatsa,  
Chief, Vijongoni.**



**Mwanakombo Jerumani Kibwana.**

Human Rights Agenda (HURIA) is a human rights agency, and, upon recognizing the critical role of women in PCVE, set out to empower them to do the work. They partnered with The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE) for this. The ARIVE program was launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) and operates in 15 counties including Kwale, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like HURIA in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on PCVE.

The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women's empowerment, with the aim to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

“

*Juvenile gangs were so rampant that going to some areas was dangerous. There were extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, and people were hacked with machetes,”*

**Mwanakombo Jerumani Kibwana.**

”

Mwanakombo explains that violent extremism has been a huge problem in Kwale. “Juvenile gangs were so rampant that going to some areas was dangerous. There were extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, and people were hacked with machetes. I was chosen during a very difficult period. Gangs would waylay each other and kill each other. I volunteered to help.”

Under the women's empowerment pillar, HURIA held trainings for women on PCVE, who then went back to their communities to spread word. Most of it involved engaging with the youth, who were most vulnerable to being radicalized. One of them was Ali Makini, who started off with a brighter future than most, leaving high school in 2014 as the president of Kenyatta High School in Mwatate and joining Umma University, but started using drugs from 2015 to 2017 and was unable to finish his studies. To compound things, he was involved in a car accident in 2020 and found himself in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and now uses a crutch to walk.



**Ali Makini and Mwanaharusi Kombo.**

“After the problems I got, I met Mwanaharusi Kombo. I’ll never forget her because she introduced me to these programs where I met ARIVE. She didn’t leave me behind, she’s not my mother but a community woman who realized I would be lost if she didn’t intervene. She saw my worth and saw that we could walk together,” he says.

They involved him in a youth group called Jamii Action Center, where he got mentorship and started speaking to other youth, which he says gave him confidence and respectability, and the community has accepted him as a leader. He adds that fellow youth listen to him because he used to be in the trenches with them.

“A lot of our youth are really lost and because they don’t have money they get some by robbing others. But if you care about the youth they will want to work with you. Through HURIA the women have talked to us many times and we have brainstormed solutions to help ourselves and the community,” he says.

“I believe that women’s strength has been hidden but it turns out they have a lot of it and can speak with the youth and reach their hearts in ways that the youth can listen.”

“

*After the problems I got, I met Mwanaharusi Kombo. I’ll never forget her because she introduced me to these programs where I met ARIVE. She didn’t leave me behind, she’s not my mother but a community woman who realized I would be lost if she didn’t intervene. She saw my worth and saw that we could walk together,”*

**Ali Makini.**

”



### **Mwanaharusi Kombo.**

Mwanaharusi Kombo, the woman who reached out to Ali, is the vice chair of Sauti ya Wanawake (Voice of Women), Matuga chapter. Its work is to sensitize the community on matters of peace and security and find ways to reduce violent extremism.

She says that because of the work they have done with HURIA in reaching out to young people like Ali, the youth have become much more friendly to her and will even stop her whenever they see her, asking when the next meeting will be held, when before they were very resistant, and this collaboration has helped reduce violent extremism in the area.

“With the training I have received, I can now stand in front of people and find solutions to the issues affecting us. I can talk to the youth and they listen. HURIA uplifted us and now we are uplifting others,” she says.

ACT! also trained them as mediators and peace monitors during the 2022 election period.



*With the training I have received, I can now stand in front of people and find solutions to the issues affecting us,”*

**Mwanaharusi Kombo.**



“Our work in the field was to train people how to keep the peace. Huria held public debates where the candidates discussed their manifestos while also discussing peace and security. I’m proud that as a result, 2022 was the second time in a long time that we had elections without election violence,” says Mwanakombo Kibwana.

It has been a long road to acceptance for Mwanakombo, chair of Sauti ya Wanawake Matuga Chapter. In 2021 she received the Mashujaa Award from President Uhuru Kenyatta for her unwavering efforts.

She continues to advocate for the empowerment of women in PCVE. As she says, “A woman is the mirror of the society, a relief for the soul. Because a woman is the child’s first teacher when women involve themselves in PCVE, a lot of things reduce. For this to happen, women have to be educated, accept themselves, and volunteer, but they need support to do this. If ACT supports Huria in training more women, Kwale will shine more.”



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**Khalifa Salim.**

# Art for peace

The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women's empowerment.

**K**halifa Salim Mwarangi's dad was a popular Muslim preacher and Imam, but not everyone was happy with some of the things he was preaching about. He was against radicalization and recruitment of young people into the vice and was very vocal about it. He started getting threats, which he reported to the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI).

One day, Khalifa overheard him talking to a friend about his fears, and when Khalifa asked him about it, he admitted

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*Through it, I found the urge to advocate for peace as I am a victim of terrorism, and I don't want to see other young people going through the same because it is a very hard situation,”*

**Khalifa Salim**

”



**Idd Salim, Executive Director I-Change Youth Transform Centre.**

that he had been abducted and tortured a couple of times, and suspicious-looking people had been following him and he was afraid he would be killed soon. In 2014, just as he was about to leave the mosque, unknown assailants on a motorbike pulled up outside of his home and shot him dead.

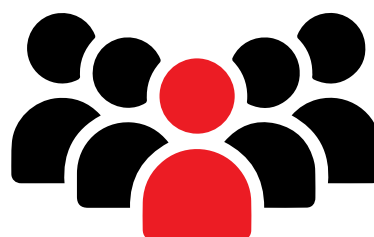
The impact on Khalifa was immense and even years later, he found himself still suffering the trauma. In early 2023, the Human Rights Agency (HURIA) engaged him in the prevention and countering of violent extremism (PCVE).


“Through it, I found the urge to advocate for peace as I am a victim of terrorism, and I don’t want to see other young people going through the same because it is a very hard situation.”

HURIA engaged him and his crew as they were looking for content creators in Kwale County to do PCVE work. Arts is one of the pillars of the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021.

**50**

**With HURIA’s support, they now have around 50 active members. They have three music groups made up of over 10 people each. These groups were former gangs.**



A portrait of Hamadi Kamole, a man with a mustache and goatee, wearing a maroon polo shirt and a black smartwatch. He has his arms crossed and is looking directly at the camera. The background is an outdoor setting with a wooden fence and green foliage.

**Hamadi Kamole,  
a music producer  
and film director at  
the I- Change Youth  
Transform Centre.**



Thanks to funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), ARIVE operates in 15 counties, including Kwale, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on PCVE.

The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support,

# 5,000

**They receive as many as 5,000 views on Instagram alone in a month, and the feedback from the audience has been positive.**



and women's empowerment. It also emphasizes practical efforts like trauma healing and youth engagement through extracurricular activities, to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Khalifa's team, dubbed 4 Peacemakers (initially composed of four but are now 6 members) all have different skills in arts and they create PCVE content based on training by HURIA, using cartoons and animations, which Khalifa says is a popular art in Kwale. They receive as many as 5,000 views on Instagram alone in a month, and the feedback from the audience has been positive.

HURIA has also explored other artistic avenues with I-The-Change Youth Transform Center, an initiative of 12 volunteers with expertise in different areas of creative arts, including music, film, dance, and more.

"Our objective is to bring our expertise together and share with the youth in rural areas so that we can help them build themselves in life and give them economic opportunities," says Idi Salim, Executive Director of the organization.

They specifically work with youth who are in conflict with the law and/or involved in drug and substance abuse. Idi says that though the government has rehabilitation centers (rehab), after rehabilitation there is usually no further engagement with the people they helped.

"So that person can easily go back to where he came from. Most go back to gangs and become even worse. Their anger has tripled and with that, they influence a lot more young people. So we are targeting those rehabs too. Once they finish rehab, we absorb them and incorporate them into our initiatives like music and film production," he says.

This way, and with HURIA's support, they now have around 50 active members. They have three music groups made up of over 10 people each. These groups were former gangs.

"Most of them used to spend most of their time in their hideouts, but now they spend almost all their time in our studios. They are



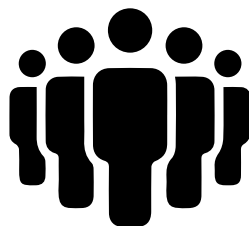
*Most of them used to spend their time in their hideouts, now they spend almost all their time in our studios,"*

**Hamadi Kamole.**



**12**

**HURIA has also explored other artistic avenues with I-The-Change Youth Transform Center, an initiative of 12 volunteers with expertise in different areas of creative arts, including music, film, dance, and more.**



there every day recording music and brainstorming concepts," he says. The members also acted in and produced a film that was well received, called Mustafa, about a child who got into crime.

Hamadi Kamwale, one of the artists at I-The-Change, says that when people act, they internalize the themes they are talking about, therefore it is like therapy for them. He however hopes that they will get more support, which has not been easily available.

"Getting facilitation has been a challenge because the people who can support us don't take the arts seriously, but I would like to tell them that music is received better than lectures. What if we had music with good themes instead of what they currently listen to? Imagine how many more people we would reach with more support," he says.

I-The-Change checks on how the members are doing daily, and Idi is rallying for more resources and partners in order to build a real facility "that has everything a young person needs to empower themselves" and reach more people.

As for Khalifa, sharing his story through HURIA has been able to make something positive out of his tragic loss. He was trained in the Youth Empowerment and Engagement program by the United Nations Office for Counter-Terrorism. He also got an opportunity to attend a UN conference on victims of terrorism in Spain in October 2024 where he was a panelist empowering youth as a peace advocate in PCVE. Through this and content creation, he is honoring and continuing his father's legacy in the fight against violent extremism.



**"TBS County Radio Maguoguo la Jambanja"**

Dennis Maithya, reporter Tana Broadcasting Services Radio.

## The role of **media** in fostering peace

These pillars are such as arts, education, faith, ideology, economy, mental health support, and women's empowerment.

All through history, the media has shown that it can be a potent for destruction. However, it can also be a vehicle for peace.

Dennis Maithya is a reporter for Tana Broadcasting Services County Radio in Tana River, and he says that the media as a pillar gave other pillars a platform to speak to the public about violent extremism and allowed the public to give feedback on the same.

These pillars are such as arts, education, faith, ideology, economy, mental health support, and women's empowerment. They are part of County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism,





implemented by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county, such as Tana River Peace Reconciliation and Development (Tana Peace) as part of The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE).

The ARIVE program was launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) and operates in 15 counties in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading CSOs in each county, enabling them to implement the CAPs. By bringing together state and non-state partners, ARIVE aims to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Maithya says that the push factors towards violent extremism that came out in the media pillar were lack of employment and high levels of poverty that make people prone to radicalization.

"Tana River county has also had many consecutive natural disasters like floods and famine, exposing the youth to serious hardships in life," he says.

As the media, they got training from Tana Peace under the ARIVE program on using a professional approach to reporting on violent extremism.

"NCTC taught us to report alternative approaches of reporting that don't stoke the fires of violent extremism," says Maithya.

Some of the challenges the media faced in reporting on the issue included the fact that reporters had no training on violent extremism reporting, while others had no journalism training at all.

"Others were that sometimes you would want to help the community, but they did not want to give you information because they are afraid. As the media, we also sometimes hear of an incident of violent extremism but are afraid we might be targeted for going against the perpetrators, so it is not reported," says Maithya.

His recommendations to stakeholders are to involve the media more so that the PCVE message can be disseminated widely to the community, which will help curb violent extremism.



*NCTC Taught us to report alternative approaches of reporting that do not stoke the fires of violent extremism,"*

**Dennis Maithya.**





Alex Ojango, County Director of Youth Affairs.

# Economic empowerment as a way of ending violent extremism

CEFs are part of a national initiative in preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

**T**ana River County has been keen on working to empower the youth economically, socially, politically, and psychologically, but Alex Ojango, County Director of Youth Affairs in Tana River County, says that their previous attempts did not yield much.

“But with the coming of the County Engagement Forum (CEF) we have had some collaboration and our work has been

enhanced in one way or the other because at least now I can reach out to the youth, offer them some entrepreneurship training but someone else will come in and maybe offer linkages to some funds, training on savings culture and talk to them on effects of engaging in issues like radicalization, and also address the push and pull factors that cause them to get into violent extremism.

CEFs are part of a national initiative in preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). The





**Martin Matiode, Garsen resident, Tana River County.**

Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), was, launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), and has been supporting CEFs through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on PCVE.

It operates in 15 counties, including Tana River, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE has encouraged collaboration among partners, ensuring that PCVE activities are seamlessly integrated into new and existing programs.

“

*We were trained by Tana Peace and told that violent extremism in the Tana River Delta was brought about by radicalization due to lack of information.”*

**Martin Matiode**

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The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including the economic pillar, youth empowerment, arts, education, faith, media and online, mental health support, and women's empowerment. It also emphasizes practical efforts like youth engagement through extracurricular activities with the aim of building lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Martin Matiode, a Garsen North resident and peace champion working with ARIVE, started a program in Garsen to train youth on peace, and a project on digital skills.

“We were trained by Tana Peace and told that violent extremism in the

Tana River Delta was brought about by radicalization due to lack of information. So people take advantage of that. We observed that even if we were using community engagements through chiefs' barazas, most youths did not attend them," he says.

So he decided to use schools where youths were mostly found and create peace clubs. Through the training, he also learned that he could link the youth with online opportunities to make a living.

"Most youth get lost because they don't have opportunities so they become easy targets. We now have what we call Digital Peace Building, through which we help them understand how people can radicalize them digitally, even through Artificial Intelligence (AI).

They however faced challenges in terms of resources due to the vastness of Tana River County. All in all, he thanks ARIVE because as he says, people did not know what violent extremism was before, and now they do.

He also recommends using magnet theatre (a form of community theatre that typically takes place in outdoor, public spaces) which the youth love, which he says



*Most youth get lost because they do not have the opportunities so they become easy targets,"*

**Alex Ojango.**



will help reach more people fast and reduce expectations that they will get allowances for attending.

Ojango says that the combined efforts to empower the youth have made a huge difference. They reached 79 groups, exceeding their target of 50.

"It has really helped because as I speak right now, a group of drug-addicted youth came out through their own initiatives and said they want to leave the lifestyle. This is because we had people talking to them in the CEF," he says.

Through this group, they formed a group that used theatre, music, and poetry to spread the PCVE message.

"They became our ambassadors to other youth, and we would meet with them on Sundays to talk to them about the opportunities we have in the economic pillar," he says.

He however says that the work is far from done and that they need more support because Tana River is very vast, so they could not reach all areas especially because of logistical challenges. They also need to continue monitoring outcomes and results of the work done.

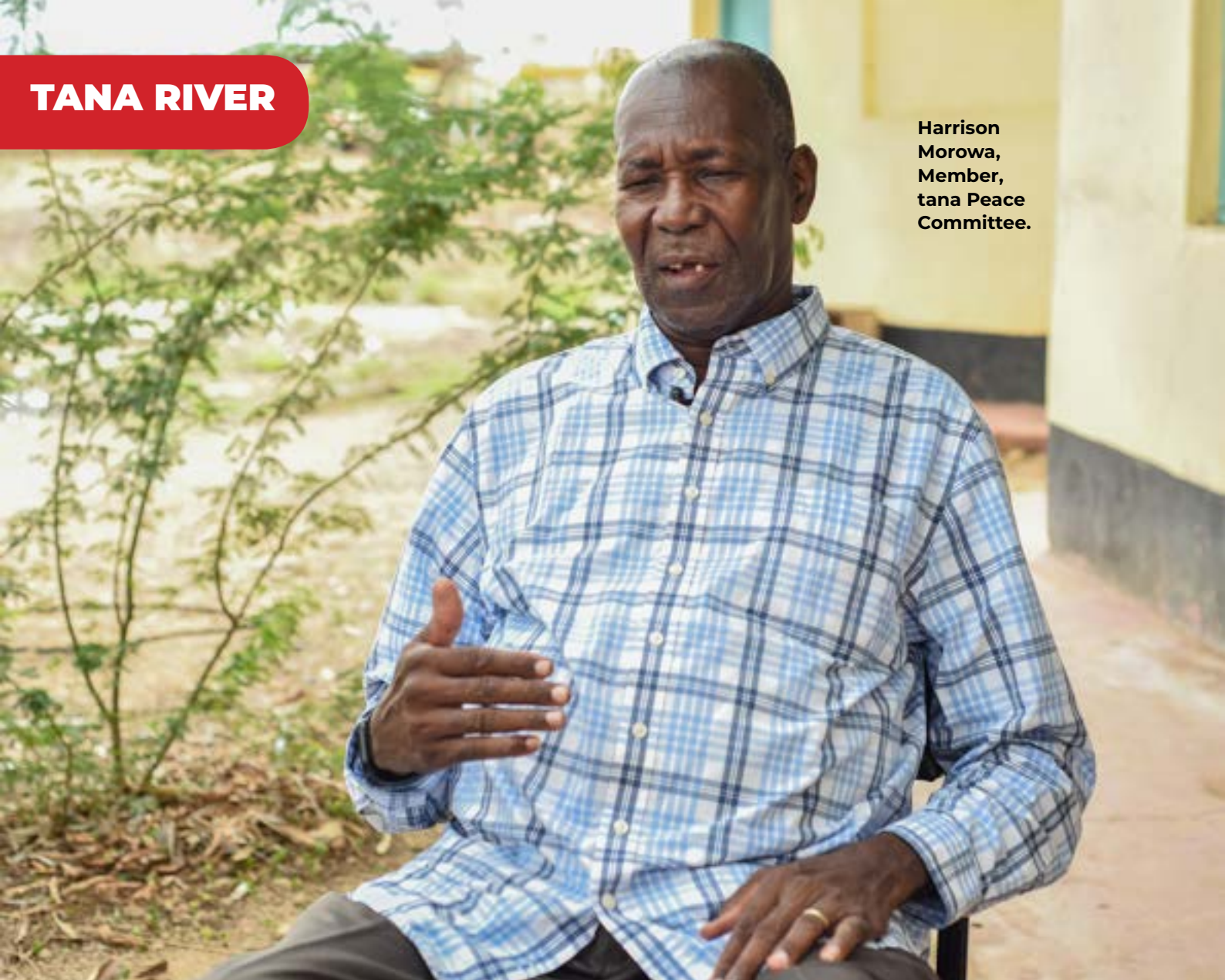
**79**

Ojango says that the combined efforts to empower the youth have made a huge difference. They reached 79 groups, exceeding their target of 50.





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# The place of humanitarian support in countering violent **extremism**

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county



**Irene Ndung'u, GCERF National adviser with a beneficiary from the Mwina Cluster Community.**

**B**eing displaced by seasonal floods has been the unfortunate order of the day for some Tana River residents, like Hussein Bwanamaka. He recalls first being displaced in June 2020, and he moved to higher grounds but had to live in tents since.

Heavy rains in December 2023 once again wreaked havoc in the Tana River Delta and hundreds more were displaced and rendered homeless in the process. During this time, Tana River Peace Reconciliation and Development (Tana Peace) had been partnering with ACT! on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) but the mission had to change tact in order to be effective.

“The floods disrupted the project because the homes of the people we would speak with had been flooded, so we asked ACT! to intervene so that people could see that we cared about them as human beings. When people are suffering with no food and a place to sleep, they are easy to radicalize because they will be told that

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*As much as we want to listen to messaging around PCVE, we have lost our livelihoods,”*

**Mwina cluster community.**

”

the government cannot help them but the recruiters can,” says Harrison Morowa, a member of Tana Peace.

ACT! reached out to GCERF, and the humanitarian mission became the first priority.

“GCERF works on countering violent extremism issues and at the center of our programs are the communities, so we can’t achieve any progress if we don’t meet the communities’ immediate needs,” says Irene Ndung’u, GCERF’s national adviser.

“In the course of implementing the programs on PCVE in Tana River County, in this particular area of Mwina Cluster, the community told us that ‘As much as we want to listen to this message of PCVE, we have lost our livelihoods through floods. How can you support us?’”

GCERF prides itself on adaptability, so the answer was to partner with them in



**GCERF and ACT!  
Representatives  
with Mwina  
Cluster residents.**





**Omar Ali Omar.**



**Said Ali.**



**Hussein Bwanamaka.**

building housing for them.

GCERF has been funding The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), which was launched in October 2021 by ACT! and operates in 15 counties, including Tana River, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE has encouraged collaboration among partners, ensuring that PCVE activities are seamlessly integrated into new and existing programs. By bringing together state and non-state partners, ARIVE aims to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Said Ali another Tana River resident who was also displaced by the floods. "My work was farming, but all my produce got destroyed. We had to move up here and live in tents and they would also get flooded sometimes," he says.

He and Hussein are two of the beneficiaries of 15 houses built with the help of GCERF so far, and they say it has changed their lives. While GCERF provided some resources, they also had to physically help build the houses.



*We partner with local governments as we cannot do this in isolation,"*

**Irene Ndung'u,  
GCERF.**



**15**

**Said Ali and Hussein are two of the beneficiaries of 15 houses built with the help of GCERF so far, and they say it has changed their lives.**



"My wife is very happy and the children are too because they know when I come home now, I have a good report for them," says Ali.

Omar Ali Omar, chairman of Mwina Cluster where the houses were built says that while the area is safer to live in now, it is also very far from most amenities, and they would benefit from some help with that. The area lacks water which is provided periodically by the county government. Tana River is also a very large county, so going to school for the children and to the hospital for the sick and mothers about to deliver is an ordeal as they are very far from the area.

"I'm asking that we get a school and a hospital here so that we can uplift this community. This place is much safer and the area is good, and plants grow. Everyone wants to come here now because they have seen the good work that Tana Peace has done," says Omar. They are asking donors to help build more houses, as Bwanamaka says that over 800 families were displaced, and still need housing. Fortunately, Ndung'u has good news in that regard:

"We partner with local governments as we cannot do this in isolation. So they have other plans in place to be able to build houses for the rest of the 800 displaced community members as well. GCERF is also planning to work in this county again, not under the ARIVE program but under more funding from the EU. We're hoping to continue working with communities to address their needs around countering violent extremism."



# Bridging

## the interreligious gaps for peaceful co-existence

At its heart, ARIVE works to reduce the mistrust between communities and the government, while uplifting the voices of those most at risk of radicalization.

It used to be almost taboo for a Christian and Muslim in Tana River County to be seen speaking together, according to religious leaders of both faiths in the county. That is how deep the animosity and suspicion between people was.

Pastor Shadrack Mukole is the chairman of the Interfaith Council in the county, and seeing the

ticking time bomb, all the religious leaders decided to come together and resolve the issue. According to him, religious leaders are trusted more than the police.

"I have had a former Al Shabaab member come to my house to confess. Another one came from Garissa. I helped him. People come



**Pastor Shadrack Mukole of the Redeemed Gospel Church, Hola.**

and confess to us as religious leaders because we do not condemn them. We know our youth are vulnerable because of lack of employment, illiteracy, and poverty. So we teach them through religion," he says.

Religion and faith are part of the ideological pillar under The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), which was launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

Mukole says that ARIVE has enabled them to have public meetings and also go on the radio.

It operates in 15 counties, including Tana River, in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). The program has been

“

*We know our youth are vulnerable because of lack of employment, illiteracy and poverty. So we teach them through religion,”*

**Pastor Mukole.**

”

supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like Tana River Peace Reconciliation and Development (Tana Peace) in each county, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

At its heart, ARIVE works to reduce the mistrust between communities and the government, while uplifting the voices of those most at risk of radicalization—voices often left out of mainstream policy conversations. The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, including faith, arts, education, media and online, mental health support, and women’s empowerment. It also emphasizes practical efforts like interfaith dialogues, aiming to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.



**Ustadh  
Said  
Jallow.**





“

*We have had many meetings as religious leaders regarding violent extremism and we have taught the community that despite our religious differences we are the same people,”*

**Ustadh Jallow.**

”

Ustadh Said Jallow, who is a former Imam in the Kenyan army and is the secretary of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (Supkem) in Tana River, says that as religious leaders, they had a responsibility to go where the people were to talk to them about violent extremism.

“We’ve had many meetings as religious leaders regarding violent extremism and we have trained the community as well that despite our religious differences, we are one people,” says Jallow.

He says that when they go out into the community as faith leaders of different religions, people, one quoting from the Quran and another one from

the Bible, people are still often shocked and ask why.

“We explain it to them and they understand,” he says. “Being in interfaith has really helped because now Christians and Muslims agree they can come together, speak, and understand each other without thinking of the other as a heathen. We all understand that we have to work together,” he says.

Jallow credits Tana Peace for the change of heart in the community but hopes for more support to continue the work. He says, “The fruits are good and if possible we would ask that the project continues or restarts because the community depends on it.”

Senior Chief Stephen Kihara at his office in Nakuru.



# Sometimes, All That is Needed for Peace To Thrive is a **Conversation**

MIDRIFT, a Nakuru-based CSO works closely with government officials like Chief Kihara, in preventing and countering violent extremism

**F**ree Area Location, very aptly named, has become something of a haven. This is Dr. Stephen Kihara's domain, where he serves as Senior Chief 1 of the location, a role he holds with immense pride.

A man with hearty laughter and a knack for storytelling, Kihara can seamlessly weave lessons from the Bible into daily conversations—a gift that has helped him thrive in his 15 years as chief.

In recent years, the population in the Free Area has

greatly increased, as people fled adversity in other regions.

“In 2007 and 2008, there were ethnic clashes in the Republic of Kenya because of election disputes. People started moving from areas with no peace, seeking refuge in safer places. One of those places happened to be Free Area,” Kihara explains.

Residents came from as far as Kuresoi and Kisumu, and by the 2019 census, the population stood at

70,000. “By my unscientific count, we are now more than 100,000,” he estimates.

With this influx came pressing challenges: joblessness, child marriage, and inadequate health services, all threatening to disrupt peace and security. Kihara knew these issues had to be addressed urgently to prevent crime and violence.

“This is where MIDRIFT came in,” Kihara says. “We realized we could solve problems through mediation, arbitration, reconciliation, negotiation, and other traditional mechanisms, as long as they were within the constitution.”

MIDRIFT, a Nakuru-based CSO works closely with government officials like Chief Kihara, in preventing and countering violent extremism through an array of interventions such as training state officers on the evolving nature of radicalization and violent extremism.

Through the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE) Project, MIDRIFT has trained chiefs, assistant chiefs, and administrators in conflict resolution and security strategies.

“We also learned that terrorism is broader than we thought. Initially, we believed it was only tied to Islamic extremists. But now, we know anyone can be radicalized, and that’s what we must fight,” he says.

From the engaging sessions with MIDRIFT, Senior Chief Kihara is now intentional about including women and youth in the fight against extremism. His requirements for the Nyumba Kumi initiative—local safety committees—mandated that women and youth leaders be part of the structure, provided they had integrity and leadership qualities.

“We integrated youth so they could voice their grievances through their leaders,” Kihara explains. “This blend of men, women, and youth working together has started yielding the results we hoped for.”

The Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE) program has been instrumental in tackling these challenges. Launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), ARIVE operates across 15 counties in collaboration with



*We integrated youth so that they could voice their grievances through their leaders,”*

**Chief Kihara.**



**By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE has enabled seamless collaboration between partners, integrating PCVE activities into existing programs.**

the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

Through grants to local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as MIDRIFT, ARIVE supports County Engagement Forums (CEFs) to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

Given their access to communities, chiefs and assistant chiefs identified at-risk youth and referred them to non-state partners like MIDRIFT. These efforts helped root out violent extremism early.

“MIDRIFT’s workshops brought together people who never thought they could sit together. We had youth from rival communities sitting side by side, working toward peace. Such things were unheard of here before,” he says.

The transformation has also reshaped community-police relations. “Now we interact with security agencies regularly, and both sides see each other as just people, not threats. That shift alone has had a profound impact,” Kihara adds.

As Kihara oversees this growing community, he couldn’t be prouder of the progress they have made together.

“We’ve proven that peace is achievable when everyone—men, women, and youth—works together,” Kihara says with pride.

By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE has enabled seamless collaboration between partners, integrating PCVE activities into existing programs. At its core, ARIVE seeks to reduce mistrust between communities and the government while uplifting the voices of those at risk of radicalization—voices often ignored in mainstream policy conversations.

The initiative uses key CAP pillars, including arts, education, faith, media, mental health support, and women’s empowerment. It also promotes practical efforts such as trauma healing, youth engagement, interfaith dialogue, and cooperation between communities and security agencies.





Mary Atayi, at her grocery shop in Nakuru.

# Hope springs eternal from the fountain of enterprise

With nothing to her name and only the clothes on her back, she had to start from scratch. Her children remained with their grandparents.

The day she was due to get out of prison, Mary Atayi had hardly gotten any sleep. She still laughs and smiles at the joyful memory of one of the most significant days of her life: September 15, 2023. She had packed her bags the previous night and gotten up at 3 a.m. to thank God because, as she says, it's not often that one gets out of prison alive and in good health.

Too excited to eat or drink, she bade her fellow inmates goodbye. After nine long years, she walked out of Naivasha Women's Prison and into the sunshine. Taking in the air of the free world, she made her way downtown to meet her uncle, who was waiting to take her to his home, where her children—whom she hadn't seen in years—waited. Her firstborn daughter was only five when she was imprisoned, and her son was barely a year old.



The hope of seeing her children again had been what kept her going in prison. But the tragedy that put her there had begun long before she ever met the victim.

“Life was good until my parents separated when I was 12, and my dad married another woman. I was full of bitterness because of how she mistreated us, so in that pain, I became hot-tempered, smoked bhang, and drank a lot,” she recalls.

Years later, it led to her downfall. After separating from her children's father and renting her place, she found herself in an altercation with her boyfriend.

“We got into a fight, and he collapsed at some point. He never got back up again. It turned out that he had internal injuries,” she says.

“

*Life was good until my parents separated when I was 12 years and remarried... I was full of bitterness because of how his new wife mistreated us,”*

**Mary Atayi.**

”

She was arrested and imprisoned for nine years. Life inside was tough, but engaging in meaningful pursuits, like various tertiary courses offered in prison, helped her survive. Yet, the thought of her children weighed heavily on her.

“There had been disagreements about who was to raise them, but eventually, their grandparents on their father's side took them in. I was worried because there was a time the girl refused to go to school, wondering where I went. It really disturbed her. I talked her through it, and eventually, she understood that I would get them back once I was out,” she explains.

However, life after prison proved equally challenging. With nothing to her name and only the clothes on her back, she had to start from scratch.

Her children remained with their grandparents, and though her dream is to reunite with them, rebuilding her life has become the first step.

This is where the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE) entered her story.

ARIVE, launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), operates in 15 counties in partnership with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

The program supports County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like MIDRIFT, enabling them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

By building the capacity of local stakeholders, ARIVE fosters collaboration, ensuring PCVE activities are seamlessly integrated into existing programs. At its heart, the initiative aims to reduce mistrust between communities and the government while amplifying the voices of individuals most vulnerable to radicalization—voices like Mary's, often excluded from mainstream policy conversations.

The initiative focuses on key CAP pillars, such as arts, education, faith, mental health, media, and women's empowerment. It also emphasizes practical efforts, including trauma healing, youth engagement, interfaith dialogues, and strengthening collaboration between communities and security agencies.



*The training helped me so much and I am grateful because I learned how to do business,”*

**Mary Atayi.**



**At its heart, the initiative aims to reduce mistrust between communities and the government while amplifying the voices of individuals most vulnerable to radicalization.**

By bringing together state and non-state actors, ARIVE aims to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Mary's journey with ARIVE began when someone from the Red Cross reached out to her. "There, I met a lady called Christine, who introduced me to Tabitha. Then Tabitha told me about the ARIVE meetings," she says.

The support she found through ARIVE changed the trajectory of her life.

"The training helped me so much, and I'm grateful because I learned how to do business. Even with little money, I realized I could start my life and do well. I really don't know where I would be today if I hadn't joined ARIVE," she says.

Her mother gave her a little money to start a small kiosk, which she now runs. The business may be modest, but it has given her hope and a sense of purpose.

With her involvement in ARIVE, the future she envisions for her children—now 15 and 11—no longer seems bleak. She is optimistic that she will expand her business and finally reunite with them.

"They even perform very well at school. The boy wants to be a lawyer, and the girl wants to be a nurse. As their mother, I believe they will have a good life," she says, a glimmer of pride dancing in her eyes.

Despite going through moments so dark that most people cannot fathom, the bright future she stepped into that day after prison now seems more possible than ever.



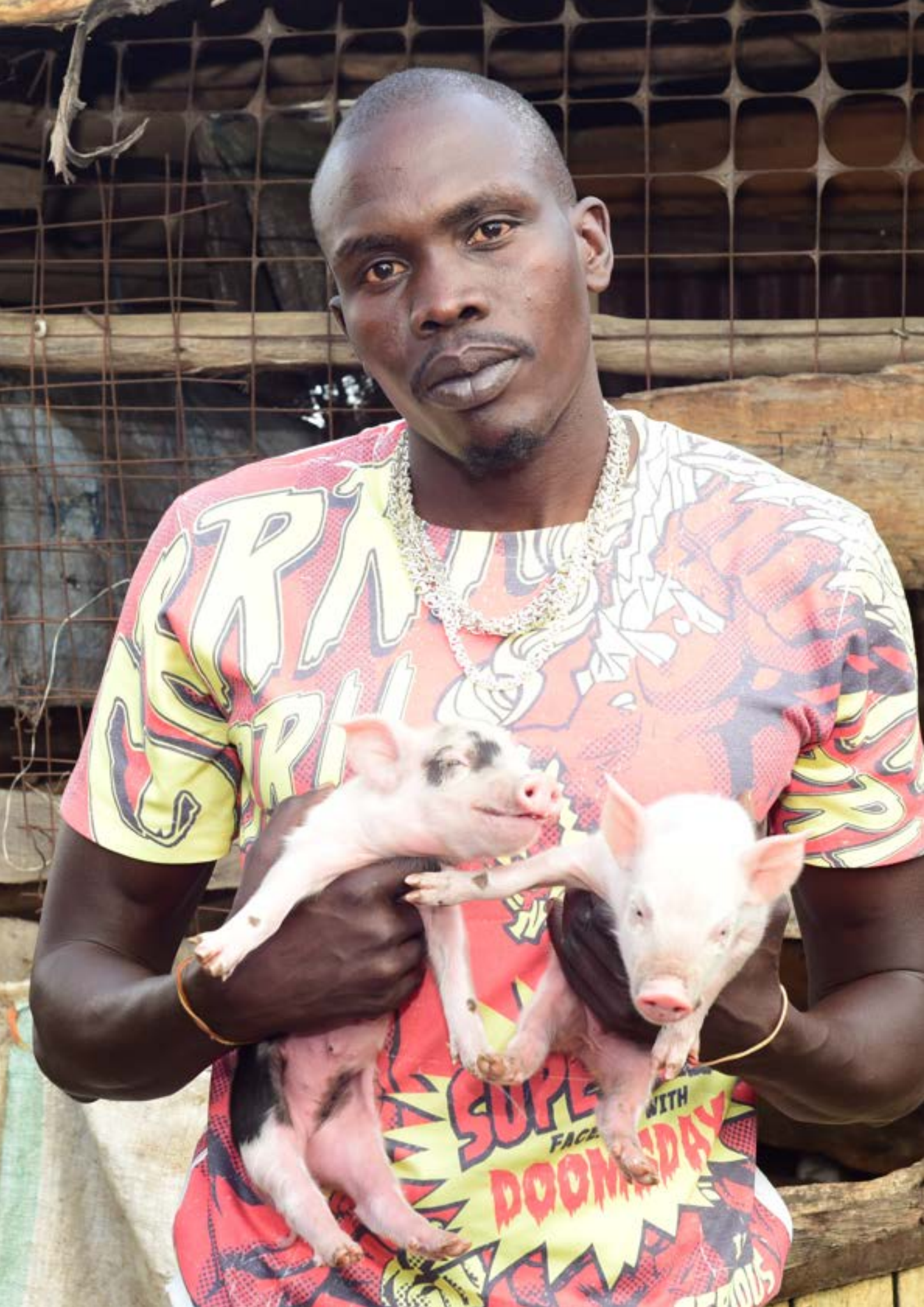
# Confirmed and Reformed:

## From a life of crime to one of hope

This farm project has been a life-changer, generating income for Joel and the youth group he serves as treasurer, called INUKA.

**A**t Flamingo, Lakeview, in Nakuru, Joel Moro proudly shows off the pigs and goats on the property. Against the backdrop of the beautiful Lake Nakuru, hugged by gentle slopes, he and his group of reformed young men have built structures for the animals they now raise with pride.

"This one is very friendly; she knows me well, and when I appear, she knows it is time for her food," he says, pointing to a pig with six piglets in tow. "That one over there is so tough though! You cannot joke with her; she will bite you."





This farm project has been a life-changer, generating income for Joel and the youth group he serves as treasurer, called INUKA. But the venture nearly fell apart before it even took off.

Joel used to be part of a notorious conman ring known as 'Confirm,' named after the familiar SMS prompt from mobile money services asking recipients to confirm their transactions.

"Crime was very normal to us; we didn't even view it as a crime. To us, it was just one way of making money. We believed conning people over the phone was better than killing like some others were doing," he says.

Peer pressure led him into the ring. "My friends in it were doing well—dressing sharply—while I had nothing. Sometimes I didn't even have food and had to ask my parents for help. So, I decided it would be better if I joined them."

“

*We believed conning people over the phone was better than killing like others were doing,”*

**Joel Moro.**

”

Through the grapevine, he and his friends heard about initiatives encouraging the youth to form groups to access government programs. Joel and his peers established INUKA, though they were skeptical that they would get help.

They would end up benefiting from the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE) program, launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF).

Operating in 15 counties in partnership with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), ARIVE has provided grants to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like Midrift Hurinet to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE).

ARIVE strengthens collaboration among local stakeholders, ensuring PCVE programs fit seamlessly into existing projects.

The initiative has helped reduce mistrust between communities and the government while uplifting the voices of those most vulnerable to radicalization—voices often left out of mainstream policy discussions.

ARIVE operates through key pillars such as arts, education, faith, media and online spaces, mental health, and women's empowerment. Practical efforts include trauma healing, youth engagement, interfaith dialogues, and fostering cooperation between communities and security agencies. By bringing together state and non-state actors, ARIVE aims to build lasting resilience against violent extremism.

Initially, INUKA struggled. Their idea to start pig farming was promising, but the cost of feeding the animals drained their funds. Morale within the group plummeted as they realized their initial plan to sell to large suppliers like Farmers' Choice was out of reach.

"We thought they would just come with their trucks and pick up the pigs, but we didn't have enough capital to raise pigs that met their standards. Feeding the animals wiped out our savings, and people began losing faith," Joel explains. That's when MIDRIFT, an ARIVE partner, stepped in.

Through MIDRIFT, the group received training in business management and realized they could cut costs by sourcing food from local schools instead of buying expensive feed. With renewed optimism, they resumed operations, gaining the confidence to continue.

"MIDRIFT taught us how to manage our business better and connect with funding opportunities like NGAAF, which gave us a grant of Ksh50,000. We used it to diversify into goat farming, which is easier to maintain. Now, both projects run side by side," Joel says.

“

*MIDRIFT has made such a difference because you could find youth from Flamingo seated with youth from Mauki,”*

**Joel Moro.**

”

The impact of ARIVE and MIDRIFT's interventions extended beyond financial stability. For the first time, rival gang members sat together peacefully in training sessions, building trust with each other and with law enforcement.

"Youths from Flamingo sat with youths from Mauki—rival gangs sitting together was a wonder to behold," Joel says. "It even changed how we see the police. Now, when we meet with security heads, both sides realize we are all just people. There is no more fear."

The pig and goat projects have since flourished. At one point they were able to sell five pigs for a total of sh75,000 and the project continues to be profitable.

At the same time, the extortion ring became less profitable, also because Kenyans got smarter so it just became an unattractive venture.

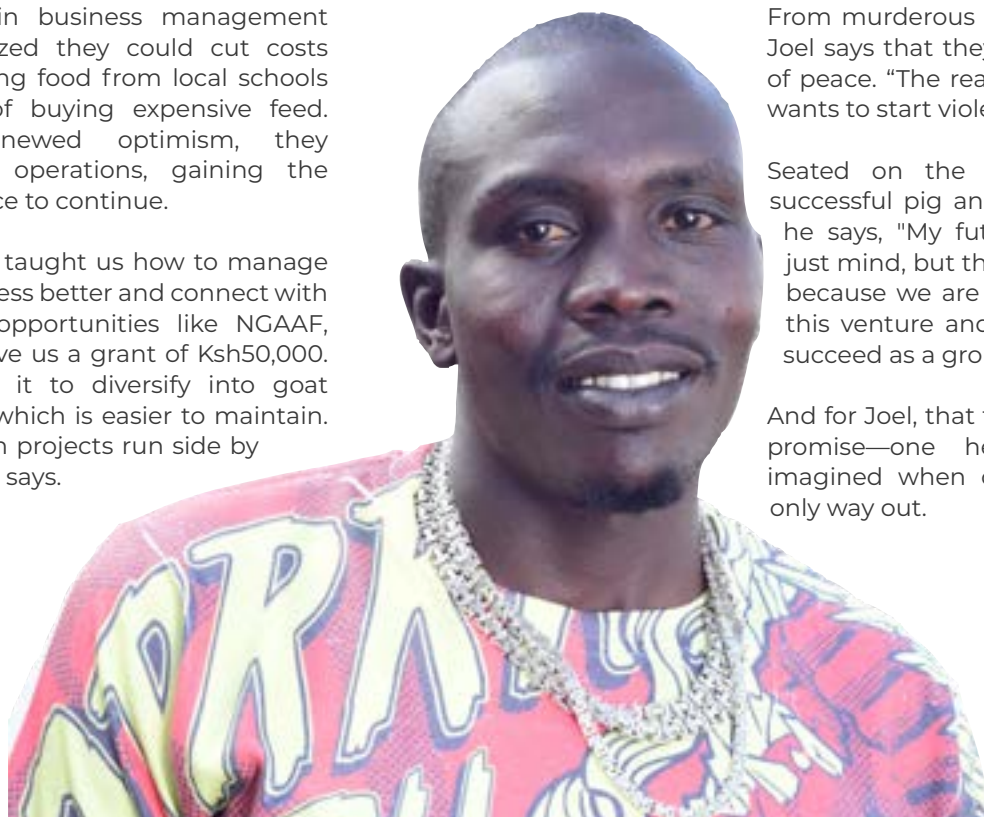
"MIDRIFT has made such a huge difference because you would find youths from Flamingo seated with youths from Mauki. Rival gangs seated peacefully together like that was a wonder to behold, completely unheard of in this area.

"It has had a huge impact on society. It has also gotten rid of the fear of police in me because we sit with the heads of police in those meetings and both sides realize that we are all normal people and should not be afraid of each other," he says.

From murderous rivalries just a year ago, Joel says that they are now ambassadors of peace. "The real enemy is anyone who wants to start violence."

Seated on the farm, flanked by the successful pig and goat-rearing projects, he says, "My future is bright. And not just mind, but that of everyone in INUKA because we are sacrificing our time for this venture and we know that we will succeed as a group.

And for Joel, that future now has tangible promise—one he never could have imagined when crime seemed like the only way out.





Joseph Omondi, MIDRIFT Executive Director.

# Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Unlikely Spaces

The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like MIDRIFT in 15 counties across Kenya.

**N**akuru County is the second-largest contributor to Kenya's GDP, standing at 6.9% of the country's GDP. This makes the county a strategic hub in Kenya, with major infrastructure like geothermal plants, a key road linking the rest of the country to its capital, and an incredibly important food basket too.

"Because of our position, Nakuru could become a soft target if we're not vigilant," MIDRIFT Executive Director, Joseph Omondi says from his office overlooking Lake Nakuru.

As a result, since its inception in 2008, MIDRIFT Human Rights Network (MIDRIFT Hurinet) has been at the forefront of peacebuilding, good governance, and institutional development. Now, through ACT!'s Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), the organization has worked on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) in

Nakuru County.

ARIVE was launched in October 2021 and is funded by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). The program has been supporting County Engagement Forums (CEFs) through grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like MIDRIFT in 15 counties across Kenya.

Omondi says that ARIVE came at a critical moment when NCTC was reviewing Kenya's national strategy to prevent violent extremism. This coincided with MIDRIFT's transition from earlier PCVE programs, creating an opportunity to expand their efforts. "We wanted to build on what we had done previously, especially through the County Engagement Forum (CEF) and our collaborations with NGAO (National Government Administrative Officers) officials," says Omondi.

The program's primary goal has been to build trust between communities and security agencies while addressing vulnerabilities—particularly among youth, who have been disproportionately targeted by recruiters.

"From studies, we knew that recruitment was taking place in Nakuru, and some young people from this region had been radicalized and later involved in violence elsewhere. ARIVE became a lifeline to reverse that trend," Omondi says.

Launched in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), ARIVE strengthens local stakeholders' capacity to implement County Action Plans (CAPs), focused on PCVE through interfaith dialogues, youth engagement, and trauma healing. ARIVE's mission is to uplift the voices of those most vulnerable to radicalization and foster trust between communities and the government, ensuring peace becomes a shared responsibility across all sectors.

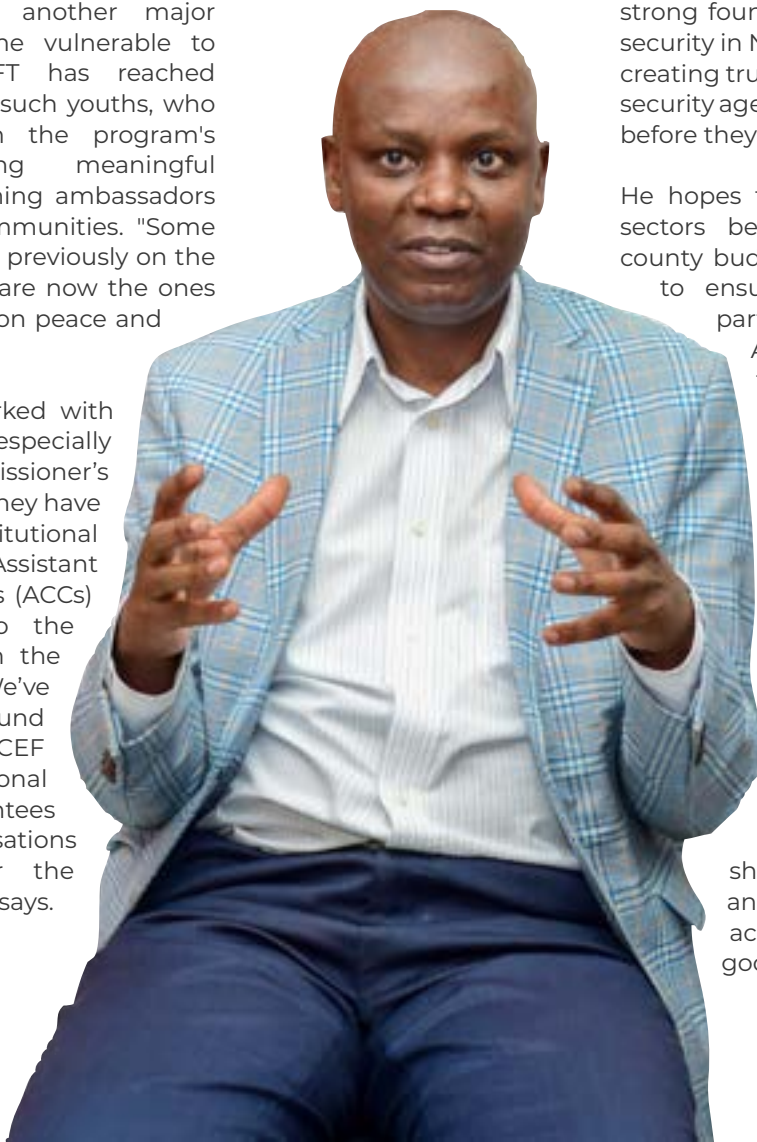
The program has succeeded through MIDRIFT's partnerships with universities, colleges, and religious institutions. With poverty being another major reason people become vulnerable to radicalization, MIDRIFT has reached out to more than 500 such youths, who have benefited from the program's interventions, finding meaningful livelihoods and becoming ambassadors for peace in their communities. "Some of these young people, previously on the path to radicalization, are now the ones leading conversations on peace and security," Omondi says.

MIDRIFT has also worked with government offices, especially the county commissioner's office, through which they have strengthened institutional frameworks, allowing Assistant County Commissioners (ACCs) to report directly to the national level through the Fusion System. "We've already uploaded around 50 reports from the CEF secretariat to the national database, which guarantees that these conversations continue even after the project ends," Omondi says.



*While donor support is valuable, the continuity of these conversations is crucial, even beyond the funding period,"*

**Joseph Omondi.**



The organization has also worked on integrating women into peace and security conversations.

"At first, cultural and religious norms made it challenging to, for instance, engage Muslim women in mixed forums," he says.

"However, incorporating women-only activities has allowed their voices to be heard. They bring unique perspectives about safety and security that were previously overlooked."

Despite its successes, ARIVE has faced some challenges in Nakuru. One of the biggest concerns is the government's reliance on donor funding.

"While donor support is valuable, the continuity of these conversations is crucial, even beyond the funding period," Omondi says. To address this, MIDRIFT has included PCVE conversations in other ongoing programs to ensure that the work that they began continues into the future.

If all goes well, sustainability should not be a problem. ARIVE has already laid a strong foundation for lasting peace and security in Nakuru. "Success for us means creating trust between communities and security agencies so people report threats before they escalate," Omondi says.

He hopes that PCVE discussions in all sectors become mainstreamed, from county budgets to education programs, to ensure peacebuilding becomes part of everyday life in Nakuru.

As terrorist groups evolve to recruit online, MIDRIFT is also deploying counter-narratives online to prevent the radicalization of tech-savvy youth.

Omondi says that building strong relationships among state and non-state actors has given everyone a blueprint for countering extremism at the grassroots level. The project's success lies in collaboration—working with everyone from peace champions and sheikhs to government officials and media partners, and according to Omondi, so far, so good.



Reformed youth Evans Juma at his clothes' stall in Nakuru's Mauki area.

# Gang wars, hip-hop bars, and Mauki's redemption.

ARIVE's essence lies in bridging the trust gap between communities and the government while amplifying the voices of those most vulnerable to radicalization.

**O**n the surface, Mauki Street seems calm—almost serene—but it has a fearsome reputation. In the past, thugs made it their playground, and police had a field day with its residents, especially the young men.

One of those who bore the brunt of the street's hostility—and sometimes returned it in kind—was

Evans Juma. His parents raised him and his siblings on busaa and chang'aa. "My mum was the famous 'Mama Oketch,' known for her busaa here at Kambi Marachi," Evans recalls.

Despite her reputation, the trade brought little income. The grinding poverty forced his parents to send his eldest brother to their grandmother

and another to an orphanage because they couldn't care for all five children.

These hardships, coupled with the vagaries of adolescence, led Evans to become a troublemaker in school. He was expelled two years into high school and soon found himself tangled in street life, often clashing with the law.

"As long as you lived on Mauki and you were a young man, police considered you a criminal," he says. With few options, Evans toughened up and became part of the street's unwritten survival code.

"You couldn't just let gangs from another area run you down; you had to fight back when they appeared. In the ghetto, we say it is an eye for an eye." Fights were a part of life, often erupting every Sunday.

The violence escalated when a rival gang called 'Watanzania' invaded the area. During a bumpy bodaboda ride, one gang member accidentally stabbed himself with his own knife, igniting an all-out war.

For Evans, the feud reached its peak when the rival gang hacked a young boy to death with an axe. "He wasn't even 18 yet. It really pained me," Evans recalls, his eyes wide and his voice lowering as he relives the moments.

It was during these harrowing moments that Evans realized he couldn't live like this anymore. "We might fight as a group, if you go to prison, you're alone. If you go to the grave, you're alone."

At a crucial point in Evans's life, a new opportunity presented itself. The Accelerated Response Initiative



*As long as you lived on Mauki and you were a young man, police considered you a criminal,"*

**Evans Juma.**



**2019**

**Evans's journey with ARIVE began unexpectedly. In 2019, he founded CBX Navigators Association, a youth collective that started as Mauki Production and Entertainment (MPE)**



Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), operates across 15 counties in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

It works with County Engagement Forums (CEFs) like MIDRIFT Hurinet and provides grants to leading Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), empowering them to implement County Action Plans (CAPs) focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). ARIVE builds local capacity by encouraging collaboration among partners, ensuring PCVE activities seamlessly integrate into both new and existing programs.

ARIVE's essence lies in bridging the trust gap between communities and the government while amplifying the voices of those most vulnerable to radicalization. It focuses on CAP pillars such as arts, education, faith, mental health, media and online spaces, and women's empowerment.

Practical solutions like trauma healing, youth engagement, interfaith dialogues, and fostering stronger bonds between communities and security agencies are at its core.

Evans's journey with ARIVE began unexpectedly. In 2019, he founded CBX Navigators Association, a youth collective that started as Mauki Production and Entertainment (MPE) but later rebranded to shed the negative associations with Mauki's name. Through CBX, Evans hoped to transform the youth by enabling financial stability through arts and talent development.



Snapdragon

Spotify

Emirates  
FLY BETTER

RIYADH AIR

betway

Snapdragon

betway

Emirates  
FLY BETTER





Seeking ways to expand their work, Evans told someone named Xray that he needed more networks. Xray directed him to an event at the National Library in Nakuru. It was there that Evans listened to Mr. Joseph Omondi, the Chief Executive Officer of Nakuru-based community-based organization MIDRIFT, discuss how ARIVE was looking to engage with the people of Mauki. Seeing an opportunity, Evans introduced himself, shared the challenges his community faced, and invited ARIVE into the area.

“The relationship was born that day. Before ARIVE, there were many things we didn’t know about the government—like youth funds, Talanta Hela, and other opportunities. I didn’t know how to write proposals or petitions, and we lacked access to information,”

“

*Before ARIVE, there were many things we didn’t know about the government—like youth funds, Talanta Hela, and other opportunities,”*

**Evans Juma.**

”

he says. ARIVE empowered them to organize as a legitimate business entity and advocate for themselves, creating self-employment opportunities and reducing crime.

“Instead of meeting to plan the next crime, we now meet to discuss how to get to the next level,” Evans says with pride.

He adds that they have realized that maintaining peace and security isn’t just the job of the police—it’s also their responsibility as members of the community. “Everyone wants a better life for themselves,” he says.

The young men who once fought side by side now collaborate on business ideas, create art, and advocate for peace. Thanks to ARIVE the narrative of Mauki is changing. Evans and his peers are now thriving on the once-condemned street of Mauki.



Youth leader Regina Njeri.

# Broken Dreams and Silver Linings

Already a victim of life's harshest realities, life would deal her yet another blow when she ended up in an abusive marriage after high school.

Regina Njeri had no idea that a meeting she attended just for the snacks on offer would change her life forever.

When she finished high school, Regina looked forward to becoming a nurse, but her dreams of going to university were shattered because of the lack of tuition fees. Her sister had a heart condition and her mother had a chronic illness, so she was the only one who had any chance of making money. Tears stream down her face as she explains that today, she is the only sibling left out of five.

Already a victim of life's harshest realities, life would deal her yet another blow when she ended up in an abusive marriage after high school. Eventually, when the abuse became too much to bear, she left with her eight-month-old son, who



was with her mum and headed to Nairobi to look for greener pastures as a house help, as the only breadwinner.

“Ten years after I had finished high school, my cousin who lived abroad offered to take me back to school,” says Regina.

“I joined school and she paid the first semester then was unable to pay the rest. I was renting a sh500 mud house together with another university student.”

When she heard about the women-only event organized by MIDRIFT Hurinet, her main motivation was to get free food, which was music to the ears of a broke university student like her. At that point, she was on the verge of deferring her semester for lack of fees.

The event was part of the Accelerated Response Initiative Against Violent Extremism (ARIVE), launched in October 2021 with funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). ARIVE operates across 15 counties in partnership with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), empowering civil society organizations (CSOs) like MIDRIFT to implement programs aimed at preventing violent extremism.

She used the Sh3000 total to buy a second-hand egg trolley to sell boiled eggs on the streets and borrowed an extra sh2000 from the Hustler Fund app which she used to buy her first stock of eggs. The business succeeded and she diligently used the proceeds to pay her university fees.

“You can make sh1,000 to 2000 profit per day depending on how hard you work. My school fees was sh65,800 and every day I would



*When I came here, I was dating out of desperation so that the man could support me. But when you are financially stable, you date out of love and that man respects you,”*

**Regina Njeri.**



**Sh3000**

**She used Sh3000 total to buy a second-hand egg trolley to sell boiled eggs on the streets and borrowed an extra sh2000 from the Hustler Fund app which she used to buy her first stock of eggs.**



make sure I paid sh1,000. If I made 1200 shillings profit, 1000 went to fees. So within 2 months, I had paid sh60,000,” she says.

Subsequent training by MIDRIFT on women in leadership even gave her the courage to run for elective office in her university and despite being bullied for it, she says that what she had learned at MIDRIFT kept her going, and eventually she was elected Vice President of Mt Kenya University, Nakuru. She also started a group called Young Mothers Association, at the university due to the high numbers of struggling students who were mothers, and she took them with her to MIDRIFT meetings. The group also started a merry-go-round fund, buying egg trolleys for each woman who needed it to run, and today there are several trolleys in the university and around Nakuru.

“This has helped prevent violent extremism because like for me, when I came here, I was dating out of desperation so that the man could support me. But when you are financially stable, you date out of love and that man respects you,” says Regina.

She no longer lives in a mud-walled house and the students she sold eggs to and the women she has helped support her now lovingly call her Mama Yao (Their Mother). All this difference in all these women’s lives, thanks to her chance encounter with MIDRIFT and the ARIVE program.

ARIVE helps foster collaboration between local stakeholders, state agencies, and communities, emphasizing trauma healing, youth engagement, and women’s empowerment to address the root causes of radicalization.



**GCERF**  
Global Community Engagement  
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