



AGENCY FOR  
PEACEBUILDING



# CONFLICT ANALYSIS OF COASTAL AREAS IN KENYA AND TANZANIA

Research report

December 2023



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All the views expressed in this report are those of its authors and do not necessarily reflect those of CEFA or any of its partners.

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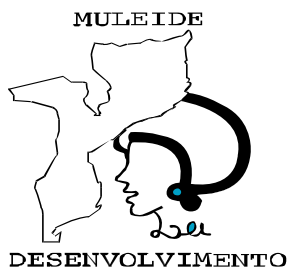
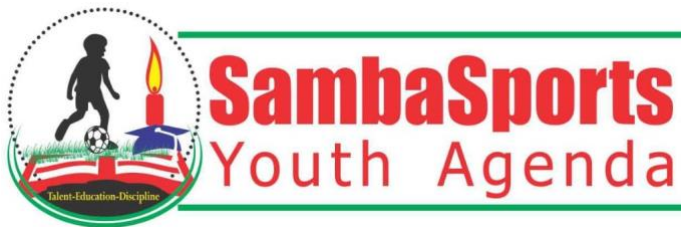


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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AP</b>	Agency for Peacebuilding
<b>CAP</b>	Country Action Plan
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society Organization
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>ISIS</b>	Islamic State in Syria
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan
<b>NSCVE</b>	National Strategy on CVE
<b>P/CVE</b>	Prevention/ Countering of Violent Extremism
<b>PWD</b>	People with Disabilities
<b>STI</b>	Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>WPS</b>	Women, Peace and Security
<b>YPS</b>	Youth, Peace and Security

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Kujenga Amani: Building peace on the Swahili Coast” is a project funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by a consortium of civil society organisations (CSOs) led by CEFA Onlus. The project’s vision is of an enhanced role for youth networks and grassroots organisations in mobilising young people living in selected coastal areas of Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania so that they can become agents of positive change within their communities. The project adopts a community-led approach that recognises that grassroots efforts are crucial for supporting lasting peace and the importance of empowering individuals, families, and community members to be stakeholders in peacebuilding efforts. The overall objective of the project is to have aware and mobilised young women and men living in target locations to act as peacebuilders and agents of positive change. The specific objective is for formal and informal youth networks and organisations to actively practice and disseminate learnings on building peace, preventing conflicts and promoting inclusion.

The conflict analysis was conducted to assess the conflict and peacebuilding dynamics in locations targeted by the project namely, Kwale and Mombasa in Kenya and Mtwara and Tanga in Tanzania. Specifically, the analysis aimed to identify barriers and factors that hinder and undermine social cohesion, especially those affecting the rights and participation of young women and men, and the full and harmonious development of their personality. In addition, the analysis focused on identifying entry points and opportunities to promote peacebuilding in each location. Research activities included an extensive desk review, 33 key informant interviews, and a quantitative survey with a total of 321 respondents under the age of 35 years old.

Throughout the data collection and analysis, a set of meaningful peace and conflict issues emerged in all project locations both in Kenya and in Tanzania.

Instances of gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence are widespread and worryingly common. They are the most common type of violence mentioned by youth survey respondents of all genders. Nevertheless, crimes of this type of violence are rarely prosecuted and accountability is rather poor. GBV and domestic violence are still considered a stigma and victims hesitate to search for help and reporting to the police is still rare. In addition, in a context where laws and practices regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance and land very often favour men over women, domestic conflicts are reportedly the most frequent situations in which mediation and conflict management skills are required.

Most interviewees consider violent youth gangs to be the biggest threat to peace. The young members of such gangs are often minors, primary school dropouts or unemployed youth, orphans or raised by

single parents, or kids from extremely poor backgrounds trying to provide for their families. In contexts such as Mombasa these gangs have literally become the foot soldiers of drug lords. Furthermore, the youth gangs are also instrumentalised by political elites in their quest for political power and sometimes even recruited to intimidate opponents and express their rage in public meetings.

Poverty and unemployment are the main factors pushing youth to engage in criminal gangs. In addition, jobless, idle and poor youth are particularly vulnerable to drug and substance abuse. There is indeed a close relationship between drug abuse and violence, especially gang violence. Most interviewees argue that drug abuse pushes young drug addicts to violence and crime. Drug abusers often commit crimes to pay for their drugs and many gang members are under the influence of drugs while committing crimes.

Intergenerational conflict and the negative perception of youth by community members are also key issues, which emerged in all project locations. Younger generations are generally perceived by most interviewees as the fulcrum of violence and the main security threat. In addition, youth are often described by adults as prone to a mix of laziness, discouragement and unwillingness to earn their money with honest, hard work. There are indeed tensions not only between youth and communities, but even more between younger people and security actors which are accused by youth of using heavy-handed security approaches and excessive use of force. Among youth there is certainly a feeling of marginalisation and disillusionment in a context with relatively low education and lack of job-specific skills. However, while youth are definitely vulnerable to violence and crime, they also appear to be disproportionately burdened by social and economic insecurities and exclusion and are often victims themselves of domestic violence, political violence or crime. In spite of this, the burden suffered by younger generations is often underemphasized while the focus is placed on the risk youth pose to society. For this reason, peacebuilding interventions need to work on improving the perception that adults have of youth. In fact, these biased opinions make it even more difficult to constructively engage the most vulnerable youth, establish intergenerational dialogue and have youth contribute positively to their communities.

So far youth have been involved in various peace, security and conflict resolution initiatives, usually on a small scale. They are indeed not only potential actors of peace, but already changemakers when engaged. However, there is a scarce dissemination of youth's contribution to peace and security. Much of the youth effort remains hidden and does not receive any visibility or financial and technical support. In addition, there are norms that hinder youth participation: youth are culturally perceived as not being capable of decision-making and are very often ignored because adults and elders are convinced that they know best and it is even harder to engage for girls and young women.

To conclude, Swahili culture is truly a unifying factor bringing people across communal divides together via a shared language and emphasis on hospitality and community. Gatherings and celebrations are seen as occasions bringing community members together and fruitful places for exchange and dialogue. Even if Swahili culture is seen to become less relevant, most survey respondents believe that it is something to promote and uphold.

There are the recommendations framed on the basis of the conflict analysis:

- Engage key youth target groups (those involved in gang violence, addiction, unemployed) and key stakeholders (institutions, elders, religious leaders, police and security officers).
- Ensure community ownership and capitalise on existing policies and structures.
- Design inclusive safe spaces.
- Build capacities on peace and security themes and offer Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
- Strengthen intergenerational understanding and dialogue.
- Ensure meaningful youth engagement and peer-to-peer approach.
- Address Reintegration and Rehabilitation gaps as well as youth drug abuse.
- Always ensure conflict sensitivity.



Photo description: Young Kenyan boys taking part in a sports tournaments (credit: Samba Sports Youth Agenda, 2020).



# PROJECT BACKGROUND

“Kujenga Amani: Building peace on the Swahili Coast” is a project funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by a consortium of civil society organizations (CSOs) led by CEFA Onlus. The project’s vision is of an enhanced role for youth networks and grassroots organizations in mobilizing young people living in selected coastal areas of Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania so that they can become agents of positive change within their communities. The project adopts a community-led approach that recognises that grassroots efforts are crucial for supporting lasting peace and the importance of empowering individuals, families, and community members to be stakeholders in peacebuilding efforts.

The action wants to support the creation of new opportunities for young women and men to engage in dialogue initiatives with community members and relevant decision-makers on security, conflict prevention and gender equality. In parallel, the action places a strong emphasis on identifying positive, peace-centred cultural traits of Swahili culture and on promoting these traits to prevent and minimize conflict dynamics and, eventually, revitalize traditional bonds of solidarity. Collaborative arts, cultural and sports activities will bring together different community members, artists and peace activists to reinvent and reimagine a contemporary culture that celebrates peace, gender equality and social cohesion.

The overall objective of the project is to have aware and mobilized young women and men living in target locations to act as peacebuilders and agents of positive change. The specific objective is for formal and informal youth networks and organizations to actively practice and disseminate learnings on building peace, preventing conflicts and promoting inclusion.

The project has four components:

- Developing knowledge and awareness for grassroots CSOs and youth to play an active role in building a more peaceful society;
- Strengthening capacities of youth to become agents of positive change within their communities;
- Practicing peacebuilding by creating new community-led opportunities of dialogues that contribute to peace; and
- Celebrating and advocating for peace, gender equality and social cohesion.

# METHODOLOGY

The general objective of the conflict analysis of the “Kujenga Amani” project was to assess the conflict and peacebuilding dynamics in locations targeted by the project namely, Kwale and Mombasa in Kenya and Mtwara and Tanga in Tanzania. Specifically, the analysis aimed to identify barriers and factors that hinder and undermine social cohesion, especially those affecting the rights and participation of young women and men, and the full and harmonious development of their personality. In addition, the analysis focused on identifying entry points and opportunities to promote peacebuilding in each location.

The methodology for the analysis was comparative and reliant on mixed-methods. The learning exercise was primarily qualitative, but also based on quantitative data. The activity sought to adopt an empowerment approach, which aimed to give prominence to undervalued knowledge, including that held by marginalized groups. Importantly, the methodology was designed with a focus on identifying dynamics at county and sub-county level. This approach was chosen to reflect the overall objective of the project, which is to promote change at local level, and also in recognition of the fact that this level of analysis tends often to be undervalued, or even missing, in conflict analyses. The empowerment approach was only partially realised, however, and more could be done in future research efforts.

Research activities included an extensive desk review, a series of key informant interviews, and a quantitative survey. The desk review included 100 documents including previous conflict analyses, research studies and reports, project evaluations, academic articles, official statistics, and so-called gray literature produced by relevant actors, such as CSOs, and peace and security in the three countries. The full list can be found in Annex N.1. Key informant interviews were held with key experts and stakeholders from local government agencies, law enforcement, civil society and local communities (including religious actors and elders). A total of 33 interviews were held, 16 in Kenya (9 in Kwale and 7 in Mombasa) and 17 in Tanzania (10 in Mtwara and 7 in Tanga). Lastly, a survey was conducted in all locations, totalling 321 respondents under the age of 35 years old, 143 in Kenya (66 in Mombasa and 77 in Kwale) and 178 in Tanzania (80 in Mtwara and 98 in Tanga). The female respondents to the survey were overall 161 whereas the male respondents 160. The survey captured information concerning many of the research questions identified for project indicators, and it allowed the disaggregation of data based on location, gender and employment status.

Overall, no significant challenges were encountered during the research. The main limitation can perhaps be seen in the quality of some of the information collected, which provided adequate information in relation to general trends, but was not always sufficient to provide insight into some of

the more nuanced aspects of the conflict dynamics identified. For example, while the research was able to identify gender-based violence and criminal violence as key dynamics, and to link to these structural dimensions related to perceptions of injustice and livelihood challenges, it was not able to delve in depth into the motivations behind young people's decision to join gangs. In this sense, the conflict analysis should be seen as a stepping-stone providing guidance for additional areas where future research could be launched.

# CONFLICT ANALYSIS: KENYA

Kenya, often perceived as a stronghold of peace, stability, and democracy in a politically fragile regional context, reveals actually a nuanced domestic conflict landscape. As multiple reports note, the country grapples with deeply rooted social conflicts that tend to escalate<sup>1</sup> with regularity. The outbreaks of violence often manifest as expressions of socio-historical grievances by Kenyan communities, many originating during the British colonial regime and persisting across generations. Currently, the most-often cited challenges facing Kenya, as a country, include an unequal distribution of natural resources, social inequality, severe poverty, high levels of crime, and the looming threat of violent extremism. In particular socio-economic exclusion or marginalization are seen by many analysts as the main triggers of various forms of violence.

In response to these challenges, the Government of Kenya has implemented legal, policy, and institutional measures to address development, peace and security concerns<sup>2</sup>. The establishment of an elaborate peace architecture, including peace committees in all counties, reflects a commitment to mitigating conflict, which can be seen also in a number of legal and policy frameworks. Among them the Kenya Vision 2030<sup>3</sup>, which aims to transform Kenya into an industrialising middle-income country capable of providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by 2030 in a clean and secure environment. The Vision is a long-term framework that focuses on macroeconomic stability, governance and land reforms, equity and shared wealth, science, technology and innovation (STI) and security.

On peace and security specifically, Kenya has also developed and implemented two National Action Plans (NAPs) to operationalise the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda<sup>4</sup>, the first covering the period from 2016 to 2018 and the second from 2020 to 2024. Kenya's NAPs have focused on addressing gender-based violence, promoting gender equality, and ensuring women's inclusion in all aspects of peace and security. More recently, the country has also sought to engage the young generation, which are an extremely important demographic group in the country, where nearly 80% of the population is aged 35 years old. The Government's efforts have recognized the engagement of young people in community-driven security and peacebuilding initiatives as vital<sup>5</sup>, and the Kenya Youth Development Policy<sup>6</sup>, adopted in 2019, even contains key provisions on youth, peace and security (YPS), recognising that lasting peace and sustainable development can only be achieved

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<sup>1</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), "Rapid Conflict Assessment-Mombasa County", 2021, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, "Report on Final Evaluation, Integrating Gender into Peace Support Operations in Eastern Africa", May 2019, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Government of Kenya, "Kenya Vision 2030", 2008.

<sup>4</sup> UNDP, "Kenya Launches Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security", May 2020.

<sup>5</sup> National Crime Research Centre, Crime and Violence Prevention Training (CVPT), "Kwale and Bungoma County Crime and Violence Surveys", 2016, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Kenyan Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs, "Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019", November 2019.

through meaningful engagement of youth, and by comprehensively tackling issues that affect young people.

Lastly, it is important to note the continuous importance of violent extremism in shaping the country's policies and responses to insecurity. Kenya continues to witness terrorist attacks, primarily on the border with Somalia, by Al-Shabaab, the terrorist organization. In terms of security, one of the main policies is, as such, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), which was amended in 2014 and defines counter-terrorism measures, investigations, and the prosecution of terrorism-related activities. Following the Act, in 2016 the Kenyan government launched the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism<sup>7</sup> (NSCVE), a comprehensive plan to address the root causes of violent extremism (VE) and prevent the radicalisation of individuals. By focusing on strategic interventions, community engagement, and cooperation between various stakeholders, the NSCVE aims to build resilience against extremist ideologies and promote a more secure and stable society and, importantly, it has given rise to the adoption of county-level strategies.



*Photo description: Women activists and civil society representatives participating in a dialogue organised by MWARP in Kenya (credit: MWARP, 2023).*

<sup>7</sup> UN Women, "Civil Society's Voices on Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Responses: Regional Perspectives From Eastern and Southern Africa", 2020, p. 9.

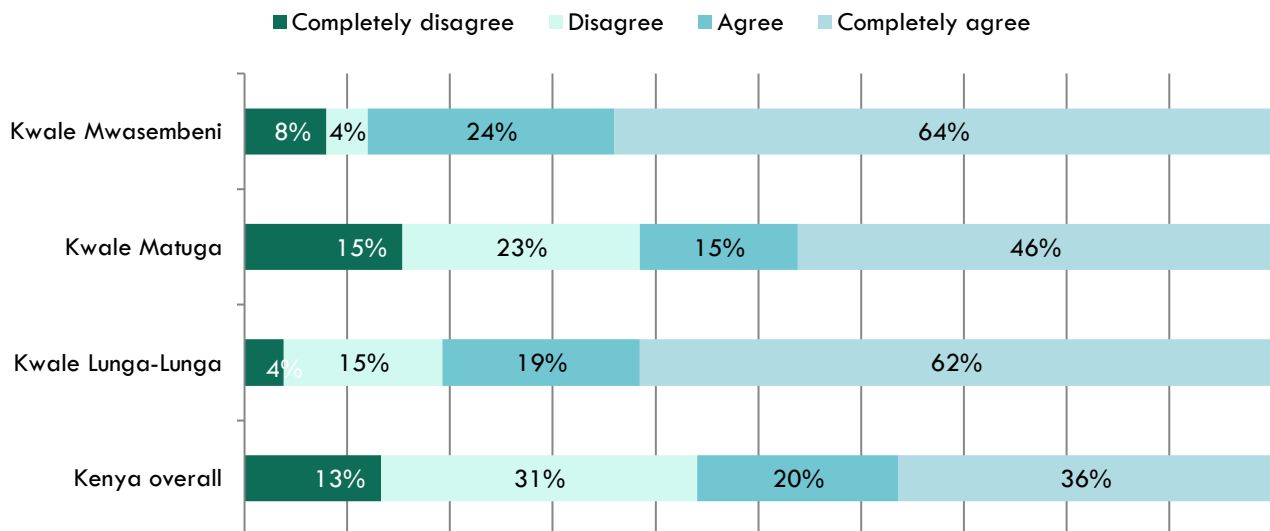
## KWALE

### Types of conflict and patterns of violence

Kwale is a county that is seen as largely safe and where the main types of conflicts are related to the activities of violent youth gangs and domestic violence. Poverty and unemployment are cited as the main drivers behind this violence. Youth unemployment is particularly high and many young people drop out of school at an early age. Joining a gang seems thus to be, for many young adults, the only way to earn money. The fact that most of the gang members are youth then contributes to negatively impact the perception that the overall community has of younger generations.

Kwale is considered among the counties that, historically, have faced social and economic marginalisation; today it indeed has some of the lowest human development indicators in the country<sup>8</sup>, and poverty and unemployment are extremely high<sup>9</sup>. This happens in spite of its wide natural resources, which can, in fact, be a source of conflict on their own: for instance, the extraction of the rich titanium reserves<sup>10</sup> that are present in the county risks, according to some analysts, to exacerbate existing tensions or create new conflicts over the control and benefits of these resources<sup>11</sup>. Education is also seen as falling behind the rest of Kenya, and school dropouts- particularly among girls- are frequently caused by planned marriages or early maternity<sup>12</sup>.

**Graph 1. People who say they feel safe walking home in Kwale County**



<sup>8</sup> UN Kenya, "Leave No One Behind: Peace And Conflict Analysis", March 2022, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> National Crime Research Centre, Crime and Violence Prevention Training (CVPT), "Kwale and Bungoma County Crime and Violence Surveys", 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Plan International, "Kenya Summary Report: Rapid Gender And Needs Analysis In Kwale", November 2022, p. 11 and p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> International Alert, "Going for Gold: Risks and Opportunities in Kenya's Extractives Sector", December 2021, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> National Crime Research Centre, Crime and Violence Prevention Training (CVPT), "Kwale and Bungoma County Crime and Violence Surveys", 2016.

Survey respondents, as already mentioned, perceive Kwale as overall safe. Graph 1 above shows, that, among survey respondents, 79% of women and 75% of men feel safe walking in their neighbourhood and 61% of women and 66% of men do not consider very common the occurrence of violent incidents in the area where they live. Survey respondents also mention that the most common types of violence in the county are domestic violence, crime and political violence, with women citing domestic violence and men stressing the risks of violent crimes.

Interestingly, the perspective from interviews is slightly different. Most of those interviewed consider violent youth gangs as the biggest threat to peace in the county. According to a young civil society representative, Kwale is unsafe because of youth gangs, which are on the rise. “Drug abuse is rampant and robbery with violence is on the rise because of illicit drugs”, he said, adding that “when street gangs attack people, they feel happy, they feel like heroes<sup>13</sup>”. According to various sources, most of the gang members are either minors or teenagers who abuse drugs, especially Rohypnol—which they call *bugizi*—and can attack social and religious gatherings as weddings and funerals or football matches<sup>14</sup>. According to several key informants, drug use is also driven by economic factors such as unemployment, or by the idleness that comes from not being in school. Everyone agrees that drug abuse pushes people to violence and crime<sup>15</sup>.

Youth unemployment is indeed particularly high in Kwale and the majority of young people are either unemployed or under-employed, engaging in informal petty trade<sup>16</sup>. In addition, there are many school dropouts due to many factors including low family income and a high number of dependents in a household, child labour, orphanhood, early pregnancy, lack of motivation and parental support<sup>17</sup>. Because of this, many regard parenting as a crucial issue in Kwale.

In a context where gender-based violence is on the rise, parental responsibility and maintenance of children is seen as the leading cause of violence in most homes<sup>18</sup>. Seven out of ten women in Kwale are victims of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence and violence over inheritance<sup>19</sup>. Parents are often very young and they struggle to make a living for their children. Indeed, what is known about young gang members is that most of them come from complex family backgrounds and they are often raised by single parents because the mother or the father are working abroad.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with youth civil society leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with religious leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>15</sup> In interviews with religious leader and local government representative, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>16</sup> James D., “Youth Unemployment and Security in Kenya: the Case of Kwale County (2010-2018)”, February 2021, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> UN Women, “From Where I Stand: Young people do care, and we have expectations of what we want in our communities and from our government”, November 2022; Otieno Airo M., Sika J. and Olendo C., “Determinants of Dropout and Transition Rates in Public Primary Schools in Kisumu East Sub-County, Kenya”, *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, Vol. 6, Iss. 2, 2022, pp. 197 – 209.

<sup>18</sup> Otieno G. C., “Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Students’ Dropout Rates in Public Secondary Schools in Msambweni Sub County, Kwale County, Kenya”, 2016.

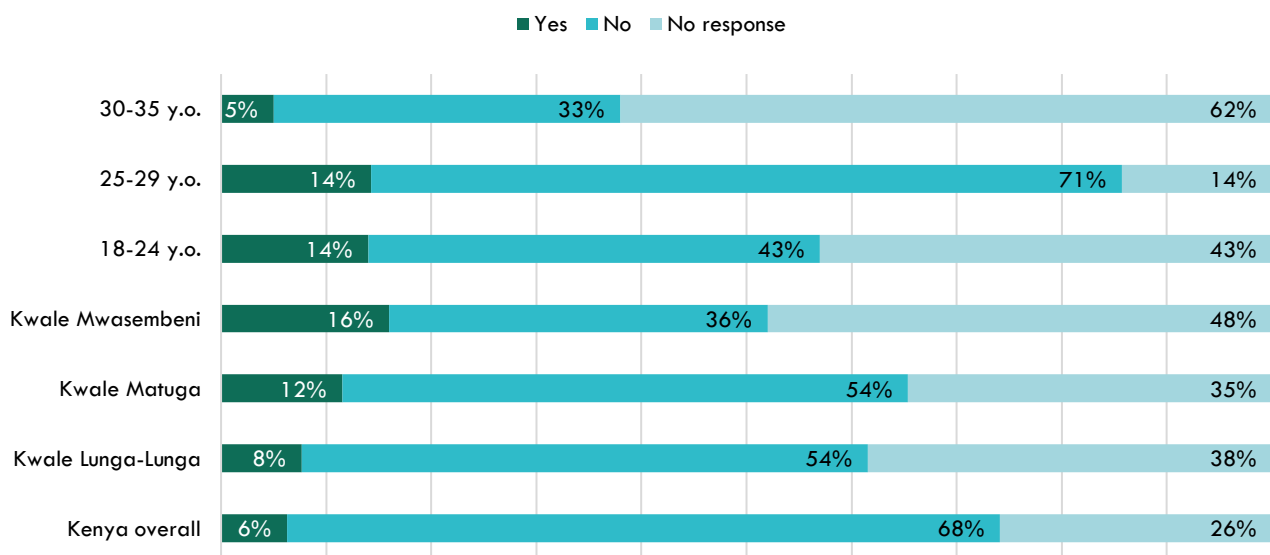
<sup>19</sup> Search for Common Ground, “Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Kwale County”, December 2020, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Zaka R. and Abdullahi H., Kenya News Agency (KNA), “Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence Kicks-Off In Kwale”, November 2021.

According to a young Kwale community leader: “The entry-point is the parents: they’ve given up!<sup>20</sup>”. Kwale is indeed among the Kenyan regions with the highest number of workers seeking employment in the Middle East and the Gulf, with Kenyan female domestic workers being in high demand in Saudi Arabia, according to a Haki Africa representative<sup>21</sup>. In spite of this being a key factor contributing to conflict and violence in the county, some believe that religious leaders, elders and the government do not take the issue seriously. “There is a lot of laxity by the key stakeholders”, one civil society representative noted, adding that there are, at present, no policies to guide parenting and, in addition, since most of these kids are minors, law enforcers do not know how to treat them.

The violence by and among youngsters is negatively impacting all the community. The clashes between youth gangs risk, in fact, triggering violence also between older people, as in the example shared by a community elder: “Youth from Waa cannot come to the Kitivo area and vice versa. The conflict is so high that the parents have slowly started becoming enemies as well<sup>22</sup>”. This creates a perception problem: youth are generally perceived by most key informant interviewees as violent and cumulatively blamed for what gangs do. This said, some are reacting. A religious leader, for example, said that in order to face the youth gangs he recruits and trains individuals on how to organize *sungu sungu*, which are local community-led security groups doing patrols by night to protect the neighbourhood<sup>23</sup>. *Sungu sungu* are conceived as alternative security groups on which community members can rely on.

**Graph 2. People who say that violent extremism is a common type of violent incident**



<sup>20</sup> UN Women, “From Where I Stand: Young people do care, and we have expectations of what we want in our communities and from our government”, November 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Onyango O., “Kilifi and Kwale lead in Middle East job seekers”, The Star, October 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with community elder in Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with religious leader in Kwale, August, 2023.



While youth gangs are seen as a major source of conflict, violent extremism is not: in the survey, only 11% of women and 13% of men perceived it as a common type of violent incident. Graph 2 above shows the data broken down by sub-county and also by age. It shows some differences between, for example, the perceptions of respondents in Mwasembeni, where the rate of those who say that violent extremism is a common form of violent incident is highest, and those of respondents in Lunga-Lunga, where it is lowest. This said, interviews indicate that most people in the county recognise at least one link between criminal and extremist violence: unemployment, which, according to most of those interviewed, makes the ground fertile for radicalisation and can lead young people to join violent movements and religious extremism, as has been reported by some<sup>24</sup>.

Violent extremism has, however, elicited a response from local authorities. In 2017, Kwale County developed a plan defining measures for countering radicalization and violent extremism. Linked to the NSCVE, the County Action Plan (CAP) provides a framework focusing on the challenges faced by Kwale specifically, and guiding interventions aimed at preventing or countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in the county, both in prevention and in restorative efforts<sup>25</sup>. An important feature of the CAP is how its implementation has been driven by the Kwale County Engagement Forum on P/CVE, a network bringing together governmental and non-governmental representative working on P/CVE at the community level<sup>26</sup>. The Forum promotes coordination and eases planning and implementation of joint trainings, reviews and reflection meetings<sup>27</sup>. Some see the Forum not just as a useful model to prevent conflict, but one that can also be improved if made more inclusive<sup>28</sup>.

### Connectors and dividers

Connectors are those elements, concrete or symbolic, that maintain a link between the groups in conflict whereas the dividers are the elements that divide conflicting groups and thus exacerbate the conflict. According to several male key informants, sport is the biggest connector in Kwale. It is defined as a crowd-puller<sup>29</sup>, able to unite people, which can also be used as a method to promote peace by working with youngsters<sup>30</sup>. A representative of the local government in Kwale argues that sport is a sustainable way to deal with conflict. "Sports can attract almost 3.000 youth at once", he said, "and they use minimal resources with a diverse key population"<sup>31</sup>. Besides easing the gathering of youth, sports can also partly bridge the gap between young people and community members, including

<sup>24</sup> James D., "Youth Unemployment and Security in Kenya: the Case of Kwale County (2010-2018)", February 2021, p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS), "Workshop Note No. 2: Reviewing Kwale County's Action Plan on P/CVE", October 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), "Special Report: An Assessment of the First generation Kwale County Action Plan Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism", November 2020, p. v.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with religious leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with civil society representative, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with local government representative, Kwale, August 2023.

elders, religious leaders, security enforcers and the overall community<sup>32</sup>. It must, however, be noted that sports can have two faces: they can be beneficial social gatherings, but they can also incite violence. As a civil society representative explains:

*“Sometimes the losers initiate fights against opponent teams, sports officials and even respective local community members if they did not agree with the results or certain decisions like penalty, red card, goal disallowed, etc. On the other hand, sports help to engage idle youths who are often thinking of engaging in crimes. In the sports they learn to follow the rules, be fair to each other, respect one another and this slowly changes them positively<sup>33</sup>”.*

Another fundamental connector mentioned by people interviewed is religion, because “it brings all community members together despite differences in political affiliation, tribes, colour and places of origin<sup>34</sup>”. This is confirmed by the survey data, where 89% of women and 97% of men stressed their high expectations in religious leaders when it comes to solving conflicts between communities or groups. Interestingly, young people also share the same expectation, with 89% of respondents aged 18 to 24 agreeing with the statement that it is the responsibility of religious leaders to resolve conflict between communities (the number is 100% for respondents aged 25 to 29, and 95% for those aged 30 to 35). The expectation is fully accepted and shared by religious leaders themselves. As one of them notes, “as religious leaders we have sleepless nights: we have tried to reach youth in social functions and on our platforms to preach peace and dialogue with them; it has become our agenda to always talk to them. We attend social functions for peace making<sup>35</sup>”.

Reports and informants alike also highlight how informal meetings can also act as important connectors. The barazas meetings, in particular, are spaces for community leaders to share information and interact even with the youth<sup>36</sup>. Baraza is a Kiswahili word meaning a public meeting that is used as a platform for creating awareness, responding to issues affecting a given community, sharing vital information, providing citizens with the opportunity to identify and propose solutions to concerns. It is also an avenue for information dissemination to the community, as well as a quick way of gathering feedback on the critical issues affecting that community<sup>37</sup>. Social and religious gatherings and celebrations can also serve as moments in which people connect. Marriages, for instance, can often bring people from conflicting communities together to celebrate<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> interviews with religious leader and civil society representative, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with civil society representative, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with religious leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with religious leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>37</sup> UN Uganda, “Human Rights Baraza: A Handbook on Conducting Community Public Meetings”, April 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with local government representative, Kwale, August 2023.

In the same category, albeit more formal, is the Kwale Youth Assembly, a non-partisan youth-initiated and driven social platform, which according to several informants is a space to bring youth together through debates and consultations<sup>39</sup> as well as the gender segregated dialogues with mothers and children, important to gather their specific needs and insights<sup>40</sup>. In general, CSOs are also seen as uniting the community by organizing activities to raise awareness and sensitize, bringing people together<sup>41</sup>.

The most often cited divider is the threat posed by youth gangs, and the perceived incapacity to effectively manage them. As already mentioned, the problem with youth gangs is also linked to drug addiction, and neither parents nor authorities know how to tackle this issue. This is the reason why, according to informants, there is a general reluctance by communities and the police in taking actions against youth gangs<sup>42</sup>.

Another important divider is politics, and specifically the perceived struggle for power and resources among political representatives. This is closely linked to negative perceptions of the political space, which many believe to lack transparency and accountability, and where ethnicity often becomes manipulated. Politics does not generally affect people in their everyday routines, but it affects how people and families clash over properties, inheritances and land<sup>43</sup>. As mentioned before, political violence is a common occurrence for 37% of female survey respondents and 31% of male respondents.

CONNECTORS	DIVIDERS
Sports	Management of youth gangs issues
Religion	Politics/ struggle for power and resources
Spaces to discuss	Family clashed over inheritance
CSOs activities	Ethnicity and Tribalism
Celebrations	Nepotism and Corruption

## Stakeholder mapping and engagement

A stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted as part of the conflict analysis to identify the main actors currently playing a role in conflict and peace dynamics in Kwale County. This section provides a description of each of the main groups identified, including additional information, where this could be found, on the attitudes and practices.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with religious leader, Kwale, August 2023.

## Government authorities

Key interviewees appreciate the work done by authorities to resolve or respond to violence and tensions in the area, and they recognise authorities' contribution toward peace and development. "County administration and national government", a youth civil society representative said, "have opened doors especially on peace matters<sup>44</sup>". The organization of barazas in hot spots for youth, elders and women has also been highlighted as highly appreciated because it has a positive impact and contributes to solving local conflicts<sup>45</sup>.

The views of authorities are negatively affected, however, by perceptions of corruption and nepotism. In addition, there is a sense of fear and distrust when it comes to reporting violent crimes to the police<sup>46</sup>. The lack of effective and timely actions by the security agencies leads to mistrust by the community members who then prefer alternative ways to address their grievances, sometimes in violent ways (such as mob justice)<sup>47</sup>. People therefore prefer going to kangaroo courts held by religious leaders, elders and trusted community members instead of resorting to government structures.

Trust of authorities depends on the individual, with much more respect and trust being given to those officers coming from the communities or working close to them, who visit neighbourhoods regularly. These individuals are perceived as locals or close to local challenges<sup>48</sup>, whereas higher-level officials are seen as corrupt<sup>49</sup>. Interviewees also argue that often development funds provided by the government are unfairly distributed and that some senior officers play favourites, causing frustration and anger.

Politicians have a great deal of power over conflict: they "control both peace and violence: when they say there are no demonstrations people listen and there is peace, but then they can command protests in the whole country<sup>50</sup>". For this reason, some interviewees noted that greater participation both by the county and national government, coupled with a more open dialogue with youth, could have significant impact<sup>51</sup>.

## Civil society organisations

CSOs are crucial for peacebuilding and security matters as well as for conflict mediation and resolution, according to all key interviewees. They effectively engage voiceless communities through

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>45</sup> In interviews with religious leaders and with a local government representative, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with community elder, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>47</sup> In interviews with religious leader and youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with religious leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with civil society representative, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with religious leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>51</sup> In interviews with local government representative and community elder, Kwale, August 2023.

fora, dialogues and cultural activities<sup>52</sup> and create awareness on various issues including juvenile violence, youth empowerment, women's rights, legal rights in succession and reproductive health<sup>53</sup>. They also commit to mentoring and supporting young people and discussing with them security issues. Efforts by CSOs have the characteristic of being, on average, participatory: for example, a civil society representative mentioned the Magnet Theatre, a form of community theatre that normally takes place in outdoor public spaces and raises awareness about the issues that are impacting the community, engaging the audience in a constructive discussion on how to deal with them<sup>54</sup>. CSOs are often the ones delivering civic education initiatives, which have helped to prevent post-election violence and misinformation, reduce crime and build greater trust in the community<sup>55</sup>.

In the interviews with key informants, the most mentioned NGOs are Samba Sports, already a project partner, Youth and Women for Peace and Sustainable Development (YOWPSUD), focusing on collective resilience against conflict, the pan-African organization HAKI Africa and Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), which is very active in all the Coastal Region, and Human Development Agenda (HUDA), youth organization operating in Kwale and focusing on PVE, child protection and human rights.

## Youth

In Kwale County, youth have been involved in various peace, security and conflict resolution initiatives, usually on a small scale<sup>56</sup>. Besides internationally-funded projects (such as those by the NGO Search for Common Ground), there are locally-based realities like the already mentioned Kwale Youth Assembly, a youth-led grassroots organization empowering marginalized communities with sustainable solutions; or Kwale Youth Governance and Consortium (KYGC), which works on promoting good and transparent governance. In these initiatives, youth have the opportunity to show their potential for change and peace, and there is evidence that they can have significant positive impact. All those engaged in the research also note a desire, on the part of young women and men, to be even more engaged, and a belief that greater engagement would lead to greater social cohesion.

However, much of the youth effort remains hidden and does not receive any visibility or financial and technical support<sup>57</sup>. In addition, there are still barriers hindering youth participation. Interviewees argue that youth often lack the necessary knowledge and skills which would allow them to meaningfully participate and that they are more interested in income generating activities than in participating in

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<sup>52</sup> In interviews with religious leader and youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with local level representative, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>56</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Kwale County", December 2020.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

decision-making meetings such as barazas. In addition, youth are often described by adults as prone to a mix of laziness, arrogance and discouragement, which makes them rather passive and not driven. Importantly, the negative perception of young people is not only seen among more conservative individuals, like religious leaders, but also most civil society representatives.

The perception that adults have of youth, as referred by several interviewees, deserves scrutiny. Youth occupy multiple roles in violent conflict and crime in Kwale<sup>58</sup>: they are perpetrators, surely, but also victims and potential actors of peace. While youth certainly are vulnerable to violence and crime, they also appear to be disproportionately burdened by social and economic insecurities and are often victims themselves of domestic violence, political violence or crime.

In spite of this, the burden suffered by younger generations is often underemphasized while the focus is placed on the risk youth pose to society. According to a young community leader from Kwale, older men do not realise that in order to involve youth in decisions about peace and security, a trusted and relatable figure must engage with the youth. In other words, youth must engage other youth in these processes. And there are frameworks like the Kenya National Action Plan that should be used and further strengthened in order to engage them<sup>59</sup>. In addition, young people often lack important information on how to participate because those are shared only among those who are already active or belong to a certain network or platform<sup>60</sup>. And there are norms that hinder youth participation: “the opinions and views of the few involved”, said a civil society representative, “are not taken seriously; it is taboo to speak against elders [whose] opinions are given higher priority than those of youth<sup>61</sup>”. Young people are all too aware of this bias against them: as one young community leader from Kwale said, “as a young woman it is hard to have your ideas accepted; our local elders don’t listen to you”<sup>62</sup>. According to her testimony, the narrative is however slightly changing, as some young people are becoming more engaged in politics.

Norms do not affect young men and women the same; rather they have more negative effects for young women. Inequality is subtle, however. For instance, while the majority of survey respondents believe that women have the same opportunities to participate in society as men have, with no significant difference between female and male respondents, plenty of studies confirm that women are under-represented in almost all spheres of life including education, political leadership and corporate decision-making organs. This points not just to patriarchal norms, but also to discriminatory

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> UN Women, “From Where I Stand: Young people do care, and we have expectations of what we want in our communities and from our government”, November 2022.

<sup>60</sup> In interviews with youth leaders, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with youth leader, Kwale, August 2023.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

laws and practices and deep-seated cultural biases<sup>63</sup>. In this regard, it is worth highlighting that, in 2022, Kwale County launched a (CAP) to localize the Kenyan NAP on Women, Peace and Security. This CAP could support the launch of specific initiatives for the meaningful involvement of women in peace and security.

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<sup>63</sup> Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS), "Conflict Assessment Report: Danida Peace, Security and Stability (PSS) Programme, Kenya 2016-2020", June 2017, p. 66.

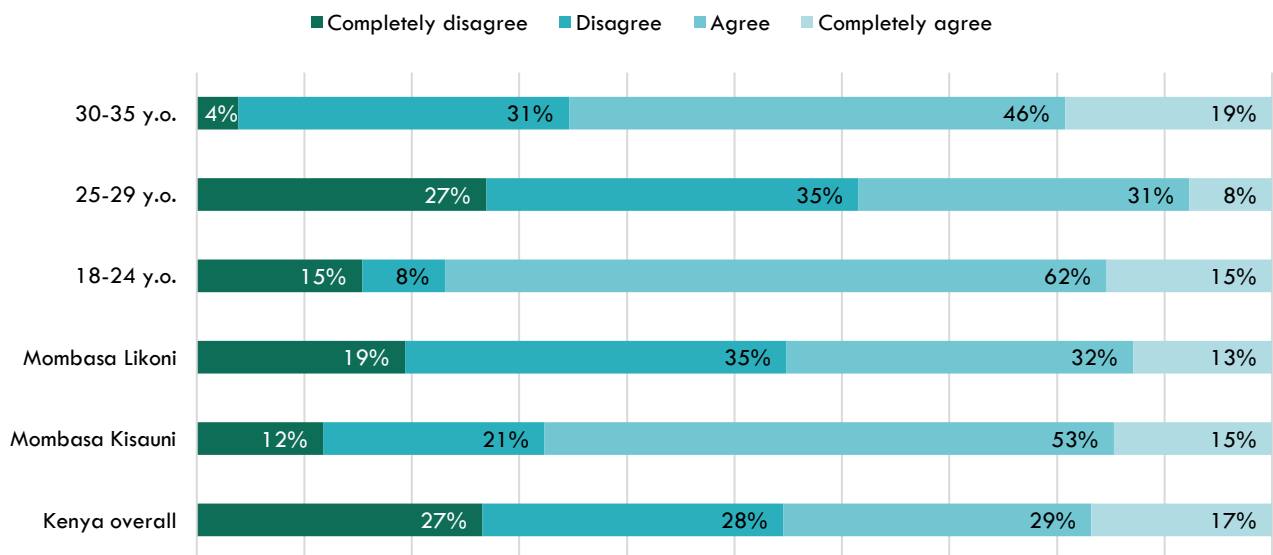
## MOMBASA

### Types of conflict and patterns of violence

Lack of security is a problem for Mombasa residents and the fear of violence is seen as an everyday occurrence. The main type of conflict occurring in Mombasa is violent crime, especially in the forms of violent youth gangs. The main drivers of violence are economic inequality and social exclusion, which are thought to push frustrated and jobless youth to join criminal gangs.

Mombasa County has a strategic position and hosts Kenya's largest port. The county's main economic activities include tourism, fishing, shipping, and import and export through the Indian Ocean. An important portion of the population also relies on agriculture for their livelihood<sup>64</sup>. Even if the county's literacy level is fairly high, standing at 86%<sup>65</sup>, Mombasa faces the challenge of a great inequality among its citizens and a lack of shared prosperity<sup>66</sup>. Widespread poverty alongside great opulence in Mombasa creates resentment and a sense of exclusion and inequality<sup>67</sup>.

**Graph 3. People who say that violent incidents are still common where they live**



While the situation improved in recent years, security in Mombasa still remains challenging and worrying for its inhabitants. Only 37% of female survey respondents and 42% of male respondents indicated feeling safe walking in their neighbourhood; 60% of women and 54% of men think that

<sup>64</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), "Rapid Conflict Assessment-Mombasa County", 2021, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS), "Conflict Assessment Report: Danida Peace, Security and Stability (PSS) Programme, Kenya 2016-2020", June 2017, p. 73.

<sup>66</sup> UN Kenya, "Leave No One Behind: Peace And Conflict Analysis", March 2022, p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS), "Conflict Assessment Report: Danida Peace, Security and Stability (PSS) Programme, Kenya 2016-2020", June 2017, p. 75.



violent incidents are still common where they live, especially crime, followed by domestic violence and banditry—see graph 3 above.

As in Kwale, in Mombasa also the main problem identified by interviewees is related to youth street gangs. Such gangs continue to operate with impunity and, although a law was passed against them and they were banned, their growth and fragmentation make it difficult for the police to control the phenomenon<sup>68</sup>. Indeed, some reports suggest that there has even been a recent increase in the recruitment into criminal gangs and a rise in criminal violent activities in coastal Kenya, including in Mombasa<sup>69</sup>, and these gangs have literally become the foot soldiers in Mombasa's drug trade<sup>70</sup>. This makes the gangs also a tool of political control: in every electoral cycle youth are, in fact, instrumentalised by political elites in their quest for political power and sometimes even recruited by them to intimidate opponents and express their rage in public meetings.

Gangs are particularly present in Kisauni and Likoni, the sub-counties of interest for the project. A majority of the members of these juvenile gangs are primary school dropouts and unemployed youth who have become drug addicts<sup>71</sup>. Jobless, inactive and poor youth are particularly vulnerable to drug and substance abuse. Juvenile members as young as 7 years old gather information while older ones, mostly teenagers, armed with knives and machetes, carry out attacks. They often do while on drugs, to gain the "courage and confidence" to commit crimes<sup>72</sup>. Some of these kids are orphans, others need to provide resources to their families and thus engage in violent crimes, as explained by a former gang member: "We have to provide for our families and we can only do so by giving our guardians some money<sup>73</sup>". Poverty is thus the main pushing factor when it comes to youth engagement in criminal gangs. This finding is supported by economic data, as Mombasa is disproportionately hit by unemployment compared to the national average, with a rate of 44% and even 66% if we also include people who only have informal employment, thus without security and decent work conditions.

As it happened in Kwale, due to the challenges posed by youth street gangs, most interviewees perceive younger generations as a security threat. There is, therefore, a high tension between security officers and youth groups as well as between young people and local communities<sup>74</sup>. However, if youth are perpetrators from one side, they are also the most vulnerable groups from the other, since they are disproportionately burdened by social and economic insecurities and are often victims of violence themselves<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Gumba D., "Gangs still drive Mombasa's narco-city image", Institute for Security Studies (ISS), September 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Mombasa County", December 2020, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Gumba D., "Gangs still drive Mombasa's narco-city image", Institute for Security Studies (ISS), September 2020.

<sup>71</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Mombasa County", December 2020, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Gumba D., "Gangs still drive Mombasa's narco-city image", Institute for Security Studies (ISS), September 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Ahmed M., "Inside the Deadly Gangs of Mombasa", Nation, August 2019.

<sup>74</sup> In interviews with youth and religious civil society organisation representatives, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Mombasa County", December 2020, p. 6.

The economic hardship and the lack of professional opportunities matched with the abuse of drugs are seen as the main driving factors for youth gang violence<sup>76</sup>. Many children and teenagers leave school to join gangs hoping to get the economic resources they need and want. A young member of a street gang explains: “This is the only way we make money: we have to attack people so that we can fend for ourselves”. In the face of this, the practices of authorities, and law enforcement agencies in particular, can be counterproductive and contribute, rather than rein in, the phenomenon. The police in particular are often seen with mistrust, and judged to be incompetent and corrupt. There are also allegations that the police have committed human rights abuses<sup>77</sup>.

Another major type of conflict affecting the county, especially Kisauni, is land conflict. Such conflicts can be triggered by competition over access to scarce land and water resources, pitting herders against farmers<sup>78</sup>. “Land is the key and most frequent issue that my office deals with”, highlights a county government representative<sup>79</sup>. The conflicts are mainly related with the lack of secure land tenure for indigenous coastal people in a territory in which there is the largest concentration of landless indigenous peoples in the country<sup>80</sup>. Conflicts are also animated and shaped by inequalities dating back to Arab and British rule, which affected historical cycles of land allocation, favoring some groups at the expense of others, and thus creating grievances that resonate to this day<sup>81</sup>.

On the matter of violent extremism, while Mombasa is identified in much of literature on the theme as the epicentre of radicalisation<sup>82</sup> community members seem to consider the phenomenon much less important. This might suggest a profound discrepancy between the perceptions by community and security forces on this issue. Regardless of this, it is however important to recall that Mombasa has a County Action Plan (CAP) for preventing and countering violent extremism. This was developed through a multi-stakeholder process and launched in 2017, and set to expire this year. To this day, it is cited as a positive model for citizen and community inclusion.

## Connectors and dividers

When asked about the main connectors in society, several male interviewees mentioned sports. According to a leading civil society representative: “Kisauni is mostly connected through football”. He stressed that boys in particular play football on a daily basis and, whenever it’s possible, they like to

<sup>76</sup> In interviews with youth leaders, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>77</sup> Search for Common Ground, “Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Mombasa County”, December 2020, p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with youth civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with local government representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>80</sup> National Crime Research Centre, Crime and Violence Prevention Training (CVPT), “Mombasa County: Crime And Violence Rapid Assessment”, June 2017, p. 20.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS), “Workshop Note No.5: Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism in Mombasa County: Youth and Gender differentiation”, October 2020, p. 1.

go and watch games together on TV<sup>83</sup>. Women on the other hand highlight that social gatherings and celebrations are events that strengthen personal connections, including, for example, weddings, funerals, barazas, and also village loan groups, women and youth only gathering, and religious celebrations.

Politics and tribalism are the most often cited dividers, and are often linked with nepotism, inequality and discrimination based on ethnicity, political affiliation and social class. Reports and interviewees alike indicate that politics in the county has become polarized along tribal lines, and that politicians exploit existing and latent tribal hostility to intimidate specific communities, resulting sometimes in violence. They use ethnicity and the population's fragile economic situation to win elections rather than facilitate political development and the interests of the county <sup>84</sup>. This discriminatory narrative, dividing Kenyans of Arab descent and those who are not Arab nor Swahili, draws from long existing fault lines between the Arab and the non-Arabs in Mombasa<sup>85</sup>. The narrative can also extend to how all resources are discussed, including land and development funds.

CONNECTORS	DIVIDERS
Sports (especially football)	Politics
Social gatherings (weddings, funerals, barazas, village loans groups, women and youth groups, interfaith meetings, religious celebrations, commemorations days)	Tribalism
Swahili culture	Nepotism
Religion	Inequality and discrimination (based on ethnicity, political affiliation, social class)
	Lack of economic opportunities
	Unfair distribution of development funds

## Stakeholder mapping and engagement

A stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted as part of the conflict analysis to identify the main actors currently playing a role in conflict and peace dynamics in Mombasa County. This section provides a description of each of the main groups identified, including additional information, where this could be found, on the attitudes and practices.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with youth civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>84</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), "Rapid Conflict Assessment: Mombasa County", 2021, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Community-led Conflict Assessment Report: Mombasa, Kilifi, Lamu and Tana River Counties", November 2021, pp. 2-3.

## Government authorities

An important role is fulfilled, in Mombasa, by community leaders and elders, who are engaged by local authorities as particularly trusted and esteemed community members, who can coordinate and deliver services to citizens, helping them to execute their mandate<sup>86</sup>. The fact that such people--elders or community leaders--are elected or selected by the people of the village ensures a certain level of closeness between authorities and citizens, which helps to promote social cohesion. The elders, for instance, are responsible to lead the barazas where they discuss important socio-economic and security issues with all participants. In these meetings, the elders and local leaders engage the community and share the security information received by the government, gathering also the concerns and updates directly from the participants. These traditional gatherings allow the government to easily engage relevant stakeholders at community level<sup>87</sup> and sometimes also CSOs<sup>88</sup>.

Security agencies are appreciated, but face a gap in trust. Interviewees appreciate the efforts taken by authorities to strengthen security in Mombasa for instance by creating a command centre that provides surveillance to strategic locations where there are crimes and gangs' activities reported<sup>89</sup>. Interviewees also mention the positive impact of community policing, an approach that promotes collaboration between the police and the community in order to reduce crime, social disorder, and insecurity in neighbourhoods. Kenyan Police define it as "an approach to policing that recognises the independence and shared responsibility of the Police and the Community in ensuring a safe and secure environment for all citizens<sup>90</sup>". Community policing is a style of policing that is responsive to the needs of local communities, a force multiplier that contributes to conflict management and in which police patrols can be supported by neighbourhood and citizen watch groups. This approach might partly mitigate the negative perception of some police interventions, which, according to several civil society representatives, are handled with an excess of violence and without thorough investigations<sup>91</sup> and discourage victims to report criminal incidents to the authorities<sup>92</sup>. Overall, however, security agencies still face a significant degree of mistrust. Only 55% of survey respondents of both genders are convinced that security agencies are accountable, responsive and respectful of human rights.

## Civil society organisations

Looking at the role of civil society and non-governmental organisations in responding to violence in Mombasa, 91% of women and 82% of men believe that they indeed have an important role in

<sup>86</sup> Kisia A., "Village elders could earn up to Sh12,000 monthly", The Star, July 2023.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with youth civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with local government representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>89</sup> National Crime Research Centre, Crime and Violence Prevention Training (CVPT), "Mombasa County: Crime And Violence Rapid Assessment", June 2017, p. 41.

<sup>90</sup> Kenyan Police define community policing as "an approach to policing that recognizes the independence and shared responsibility of the Police and the Community in ensuring a safe and secure environment for all citizens" (source: Kenya Police Service).

<sup>91</sup> Interview with religious civil society organisation, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with youth civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

resolving conflict between communities or groups. This perspective is reflected in the words of interviewees who recognise to CSOs a significant contribution in regards to peace and development<sup>93</sup>, highlighting that they nurture good relations with the community<sup>94</sup> and are perceived as extremely helpful<sup>95</sup>. CSOs create community awareness on important issues as governance and health and often coordinate community engagement and dialogues on social, economic and security matters. In the words of a government representative, CSOs “work on peace dialogues, planting trees, mangroves, and use the opportunity to preach for peace in the country<sup>96</sup>”. Importantly, given the role of gangs, in Mombasa there are CSOs offering psycho-social services and activities to support the reintegration of criminal offenders<sup>97</sup> -this in a context where there is otherwise no similar support for young people at risk of joining, or trying to leave gangs<sup>98</sup> or militia groups. The NGOs that are most mentioned by interviewees are Humanity Action Knowledge Integrity in Africa (HAKI Africa), Swahilipot Hub, the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) and Stretchers Youth Organization (SYO).

## Youth

Youth and women’s engagement is certainly increasing, but there are still barriers to the participation of young people, and interviewees are very aware of these challenges<sup>99</sup>. For instance, youth are culturally perceived as not being capable of decision-making and are very often ignored because adults and elders are convinced that they know best<sup>100</sup>. Intergenerational relations are often tense, which makes it even more difficult for youth to speak out and contribute positively to their communities. As we mentioned before, by condoning corruption and human rights abuses by police forces, the government fuels youth frustration and resentment. Many young people have allegedly been detained for months without being charged and there have been cases of suspects being shot and killed carelessly along the Coastal Region, frequently in the name of countering crime<sup>101</sup>. Another challenge mentioned by interviewees is the high competition when it comes to opportunities available for them highlighting that “often youth are five times more than any announced opportunity<sup>102</sup>”.

As in the case of Kwale, there is a perception bias to be reported. Key interviewees recognise that youth often lack meaningful participation, but, on the other side, they sternly argue that it is young people’s decision not to engage<sup>103</sup>, even that “they like being ignorant as they do not try anything

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<sup>93</sup> KII with youth civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>94</sup> KII with religious civil society organisation representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>95</sup> In KII with civil society representatives and government representatives, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>96</sup> KII with local government representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>97</sup> KII with youth civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>98</sup> Search for Common Ground, “Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Mombasa County”, December 2020, p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> In KII with civil society representatives, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>100</sup> Search for Common Ground, “Policy Brief: Promoting Youth Participation in Peace and Security Efforts in Mombasa County”, December 2020, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> KII with local government representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

positive for themselves<sup>104</sup>” and that “illicit drugs make youth useless in the community<sup>105</sup>”. This perception is something to be taken into account and to be addressed. There is indeed a scarce dissemination of youth’s contribution to peace and security. However, it is of the utmost importance to recognise that younger generations are already committed changemakers with a huge potential in preventing violence and addressing specific community-level conflict.

There are youth groups and organisations active in building peace, for example Shakirina Youth for development (SYD), which is empowering young people to positively contribute to their communities’ development as equal partners. This organisation is unique given that young women play a key role in implementation of its core activities in a context that is overall quite conservative. Another relevant example is the Likoni Development Programme (LICODEP<sup>106</sup>) and its network of youth groups operating in Mombasa, and also in Kwale. LICODEP’s aim is to let communities hear the voice of youth and women and address their needs and challenges with a gender equality and peacebuilding perspective. Among the interviewees, a young leader also mentioned the Youth Advisory Group (YAG)<sup>107</sup>. The YAG was created in 2021, when the CSO Swahilipot Hub became the partner in Mombasa of the Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN), a multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to create place-based systemic shifts for youth economic opportunity. YAG includes a team of young people from the six sub-counties of Mombasa, and its mandate is to ensure that the voice of young people is heard. YAG members organise events, participate in intervention design, and play strategic advocacy roles for collaborative organisations, engaging almost daily in the decision-making process on behalf of Mombasa youth.

Interestingly, among survey respondents, 66% of women and 58% of men affirm to be aware of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda; and 91% of women and 88% of men are aware of government policies to support the participation and well-being of young people, demonstrating the highest level of awareness, especially by women, among all analysed locations in Kenya and Tanzania. While it was not possible to already infer the reason for such an impressive awareness, this is certainly something to potentially use in project implementation in Mombasa. What is certain is that there is a strong desire by young people to play an even greater role, in peace and security, and in public life more generally.

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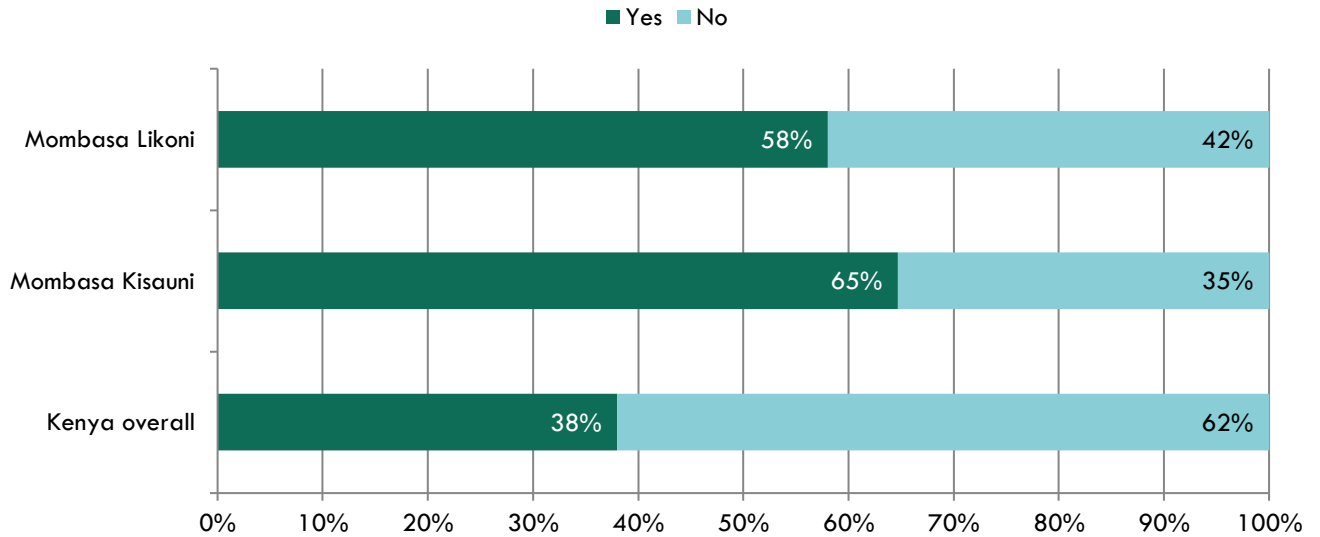
<sup>104</sup> Interview with civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with government representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>106</sup> Olawale I., Youth, “Peace and Security in Kenya”, December 2017, p. 22.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with youth leader, Mombasa, August 2023.

**Graph 4. People who say that they have heard of UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security**



When the focus shifts to other groups, which should be included in conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives, interviewees often mention people with disabilities (PWD) because they do not get equal participation chances and are mostly excluded from decision-making processes<sup>108</sup>. PWD<sup>109</sup> in Kenya represent around 10% of the population with the majority living in rural areas and being under 24 years old. Notwithstanding the national efforts exemplified by the institution, in 2004, of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008 and the recognition of disability rights in 2010, PWD in Kenya still face huge challenges and are highly stigmatised.

Another stigmatised and excluded group are certainly LGBTQI+ people who are widely perceived as abnormal and treated with contempt<sup>110</sup> and thus face harassment and discrimination, get limited access to social and health services, suffer mob attacks, violence, continuous arrests and expulsion from home, school and neighbourhoods<sup>111</sup>. Looking at the latest development, Kenya has seen several anti-LGBTQI+ protests after the Supreme Court affirmed the LGBTQ+ community has the right to associate<sup>112</sup>. In March 2023, for example, dozens of LGBTQI+ people left Mombasa following the announcement of those demonstrations, fearing for their lives. A number of NGOs are working to protect members of this community especially from violence and harassment by community and by the police<sup>113</sup>, but there is no yet structured attempt to engage them in conversations around peace and security.

<sup>108</sup> In interviews with civil society representatives and youth leaders, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>109</sup> Global Disability Rights, "Disability in Kenya", 2023.

<sup>110</sup> UN Kenya, "Leave No One Behind: Peace And Conflict Analysis," March 2022, p. 17.

<sup>111</sup> The Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK).

<sup>112</sup> Kaledzi I., "LGBTQ+ Community in Kenya Defies Anti-Gay Protests", Deutsche Welle (DW), October 2023.

<sup>113</sup> UN Kenya, "Leave No One Behind: Peace And Conflict Analysis", March 2022, p. 17.

Another issue raised by a government representative from Kisauni is the exclusion of Pemba community members from almost all social benefits in Kenya<sup>114</sup>. The Pemba<sup>115</sup>, who are traditionally fishermen from Pemba Island of Zanzibar in Tanzania, claim they came to Kenya before the Second World War but, in most cases, they do not have documents. For this reason, they do not have access to crucial government services. Their situation definitely improved after Kenyan President Ruto declared them a new tribe and issued them official documents, but the situation should continue being monitored to ensure their meaningful participation.

## THE ROLE OF SWAHILI CULTURE IN KENYA

According to 7% of surveyed women and 95% of surveyed men from Kwale, Swahili Culture defines the way of life in their community. The percentages are 78% for women and 85% for men in Mombasa. According to survey respondents, Swahili culture is related to food, cultural practices, social events like marriages, dress code, and social interactions. Hospitality is a cornerstone of Swahili culture, reflecting the warmth and welcoming nature of the coastal community. Swahili culture is also related from one side with a relaxed lifestyle, but from the other there is a deep integration with Islamic religion, with its behaviours and community practices.

Swahili culture is mostly displayed in its social gatherings, ranging from barazas to marriages, from religious to cultural ceremonies where people can meet, talk and discuss issues of their concern. The word Baraza itself is a Kiswahili word to define a public meeting for creating awareness, responding to community issues, sharing important information, engaging citizens in problem solving. Barazas are also an avenue for information dissemination to the community as well as a space to receive feedback and insights on critical issues affecting that community<sup>116</sup>. They are extremely important to enhance community transformative dialogue<sup>117</sup>.

In Swahili culture, maskanis are also important places of gatherings. In maskanis people gather informally to relax and be social with peers<sup>118</sup>. They are mostly attended by men who sit together, exchange information verbally while drinking coffee or tea, chewing miraa, and playing games. It is almost the main source of information in the entire Swahili Coast.

Most respondents believe that Swahili culture contributes to social cohesion in their community: 87% of women and 90% of men from Kwale and 72% of women and 78% of men from Mombasa. In their

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<sup>114</sup> In interview with local government representatives, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>115</sup> Okwembah N., "Pemba Tribe Destroys Fake Ids After Receiving Official Papers", The Standard, August 2023.

<sup>116</sup> UN Uganda, "Human Rights Baraza: A Handbook on Conducting Community Public Meetings", April 2014.

<sup>117</sup> In interview with civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>118</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Meet me at the Maskani: Mapping of Influencers, Networks, and Communication Channels in Kenya and Tanzania", June 2017, p. 8.



words, Swahili culture plays a vital role in fostering peace and social cohesion within the community. This is particularly evident during weddings and social gatherings where people come together to celebrate with a sense of harmony and togetherness, emphasising unity and non-conflictual relationships. According to a young civil society representative from Mombasa, “Swahili culture has helped to improve good practices to care for each other, both among locals and for the visitors including the tourists<sup>119</sup>”. A Mombasa civil society representative recognised that local CSO and grassroots organisations resort to Swahili culture to raise awareness and share messages of peace<sup>120</sup>. The community's ways of resolving conflicts internally, its shared language, and the adherence to communal cultural practices further strengthen social bonds. Swahili culture also transmits values from one generation to the next, representing thus an educational model that establishes which societal values to enhance.

Overall, Swahili culture serves as a foundation for building a peaceful and closely-knit community. According to a Kwale religious leader, “Swahili is a common unifying culture<sup>121</sup>” whereas a local government representative stresses that, in his view, religion and culture are strongly intertwined and they jointly promote peace<sup>122</sup>. In Mombasa almost the entirety of survey respondents (93% of women and 97% of men) believe that religion, even more than Swahili culture, define the way of life of Mombasa's communities.

The interviewees mention various aspects of Swahili culture, for instance those songs and poems condemning violence and promoting peace and cohesion, which “usually build up emotions and promote self-reflection”<sup>123</sup>, or the importance of elders who must be respected and obeyed. The respect for elders might however be a bit ambiguous in terms of intergenerational relations, as youth have also complained that they are not listened to by elders.

In addition, even if Swahili culture is mostly considered a culture of peace, when it comes to define it as a culture supporting gender equality, the answers of Kwale men and women diverge quite a bit: 72% of men believe that Swahili culture supports gender equality, whereas only 55% of women are convinced of it. In Mombasa, 59% of women and 58% of men believe so.

Swahili culture is becoming less relevant in Kwale for 84% of women and 74% of men, but it still must be promoted and upheld for 84% of women and 88% of men. In Mombasa 76% of women and only 48% of men believe it is becoming less relevant and 84% of women and 94% of men believe that it

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<sup>119</sup> In interviews with youth leader, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>120</sup> In interviews with civil society representative, Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with religious leader in Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with local government representative in Mombasa, August 2023.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with youth civil society representative in Kwale, August 2023

must be promoted. Some interviewees stress that the Swahili tradition is progressively vanishing<sup>124</sup>. A representative of a youth organisation from Mombasa shares, for example, that nowadays it is becoming increasingly rare to share the meal with family members, a moment that was considered of the utmost importance in the past.

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with you leader in Mombasa, August 2023.

## TANZANIA

Tanzania, regarded as relatively stable compared to its neighbours, has continued to experience an increase of violent conflict over the past two decades. The country has held regular multiparty elections since its transition from a one-party state in the early 1990's, but elections are a worrying driver of violence in the country. Furthermore, there are political, religious, and economic tensions that also contributed to violent conflict. Social-political grievances and marginalisation among groups exacerbates violence while the decline in civic space has undermined the relationship between government and other stakeholders, pushing some individuals and groups to resort to violent means to try and achieve their social, economic, political, or religious goals<sup>125</sup>. Yet, improvements have been recently seen under Samia Suluhu Hassan, who became president in 2021<sup>126</sup>. In 2022, for instance, the government expanded media space and restored the licences of several major newspapers, which were subject to previous bans or suspensions. In the same year, Freeman Mbowe, the chairman of the opposition *Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* (Chadema), was released from detention after terrorism charges were dropped. And more recently, the Government has lifted the ban it had previously decreed on political rallies.

The rise of violent extremist (VE) has affected how the country approaches peace and security debates<sup>127</sup>. This rise is primarily linked to Tanzania's proximity to Kenya and Somalia, where al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab have expanded their presence<sup>128</sup>, and more recently also to the porous boundary between Tanzania and Mozambique which favours the passage of radicalised individuals. However, violent extremist incidents remain under the radar: while radicalisation, recruitment, and small-scale attacks have happened in Tanzania, they are largely hidden from the public. The Tanzanian government and security forces are hesitant to acknowledge that the rising number of attacks against domestic targets is an example of violent extremism, preferring to portray them as criminal acts. The Tanzanian government's position has been enabled by a certain self-censorship by the local media and civil society, who have refrained from publicly discussing the topic for fear of a backlash from the government. Hence, there is little public awareness about the phenomenon in Tanzania<sup>129</sup>.

Another national issue of concern is gender-based violence (GBV), which is widespread and common in Tanzania. Sexual violence, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation (FGM) are common, but rarely prosecuted. Data shows that 40% of women and girls in Tanzania have experienced physical

<sup>125</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Baseline and Conflict Assessment: Jenga Amani Yetu", 2020.

<sup>126</sup> Freedom House, "Country Profile: Tanzania", 2023.

<sup>127</sup> Agency for Peacebuilding, "Final External Evaluation of the Jenga Amani Yetu – Building peaceful communities in Tanzania project by Search for Common Ground", July 2022.

<sup>128</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania", March 2019, p. 1.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

violence, 17% sexual violence in their lifetime, and 28% of girls have experienced sexual violence before adulthood<sup>130</sup>. Laws and practices regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance and other issues favour men over women, particularly in Zanzibar<sup>131</sup>. Notwithstanding these challenges, or perhaps in response to these challenges, Tanzania is now in the process of developing its first National Action Plan (NAP<sup>132</sup>) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Unlike Kenya, there are no other major policies reflecting the country's commitment to addressing internal conflict and to building peace.



Photo description: Young students in Tanzania taking part to the #VijanaNaAmani255 campaign (credit: Global Peace Foundation, 2023).

<sup>130</sup> Embassy of Ireland in Tanzania, "Addressing GBV and Gender Inequality Through the Tanzanian Criminal Justice System", October 2020.

<sup>131</sup> Freedom House, "Country Profile: Tanzania", 2023.

<sup>132</sup> UN Women, "Involving Women in Peace and Security: Good Practices in the Implementation of 1325 National Action Plans in East and Southern Africa", November 2022.

## MTWARA

### Types of conflict and patterns of violence

Even if the overall perception today is that Mtwara is quite safe, domestic violence and gender-based violence are worryingly common phenomena, according to survey participants and other sources. Also land conflicts and conflicts related to *bodaboda* drivers deserve to be mentioned, as highlighted by key interviewees.

Mtwara has long stood as an isolated enclave within Tanzania, forgotten by both colonial and post-colonial administrations and facing historical neglect and marginalisation. Farming and pastoralism remain the primary livelihood for 90% of the population. The recent discovery of natural gas, which could have been a positive economical shift, has instead triggered deep dissatisfaction: community expectations about wealth and development were not fulfilled, exacerbating tensions between community members and the government.

In spite of this, the region is currently experiencing a certain level of stability. External interventions and development projects have played a pivotal role in mitigating economic, social, and political tensions<sup>133</sup>. Among survey respondents, 86% of women and 90% of men indicate feeling safe in walking in their neighbourhood, whereas 93% of women and 100% of men are convinced that violent incidents are not at all common where they live. Furthermore, as highlighted by a village chairman, there is a huge difference between security and peace: the increased presence of security forces and security patrols is a sign that security is taken care of, but, at the same time, their presence clearly shows that the overall situation is not peaceful (6)<sup>134</sup>.

The most common violent incidents in Mtwara according to survey respondents are domestic violence (75% of women and 70% of men) and gender-based violence (65% of women and 68% of men). Interestingly, the 17 key informant interviews of Mtwara, eight of whom are women, did not mention much about domestic and gender-based violence. This also occurred in the other analysed contexts. This might be related to the fact that there is still some hesitation in talking about such themes just as there is still fear in reporting abuses to the security forces, since sexual harassment and gender-based violence are still considered a stigma and victims hesitate to search for help<sup>135</sup>. However, the fact that interviewees are mostly silent on GBV might also be ascribed to the way in which questions were asked, pushing interviewees to focus more on the “external” dimension of violence and conflict, namely

<sup>133</sup> Agency for Peacebuilding, “Final External Evaluation of the Jenga Amani Yetu – Building peaceful communities in Tanzania project by Search for Common Ground”, July 2022, pp. 8-9.

<sup>134</sup> This could be an indication of a situation of negative peace, where the presence of security forces has led to the reduction of conflict related to immediate causes. However, as structural causes of conflict remained unaddressed, positive peace still remains a faraway goal for the region.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with a woman farmer in Mtwara, August 2023.

on the community and neighbourhood, rather than on the household level, where most gender-based abuses occur. What can certainly be stated is that domestic and spousal disputes are extremely frequent in Mtwara as some of the interviewees declare that they are the most frequent situations in which mediation and conflict management skills are required on their side, together with disputes over land, which is another sensitive issue in the whole country<sup>136</sup>.

Land conflicts<sup>137</sup> are indeed very common and mainly due to competition over scarce land and water resources, gaps and contradictions in policies and laws regulating land disputes and land properties, unbalanced political representation in institutions, poor governance and corruption, human rights violations and the grazing of herders' livestock on farmers' properties. Land disputes, fuelled by such poor land governance, constitute a catalyst for violence and are a cause of loss of lives, property and disruption of livelihood<sup>138</sup>. Interviewees emphasise the problematic lack of awareness regarding land laws, with individuals buying and selling land without adhering to legal procedures or ignoring the demarcation and boundaries of plots or farmland. This causes tensions and disagreements between community members or between villages. There is also another layer of conflict, the one between community members and the government, park authorities or investors, which are a result of poor communication between communities and these stakeholders, or community land being taken without appropriate compensation<sup>139</sup>. Interestingly, GBV and land conflicts somehow connect: since violent tensions are common on, as well as during the inheritance process, when women are especially involved in both.

Reported tensions were also related to a specific incident, the Namoto border closure<sup>140</sup>. The crossing connects Palma, in Mozambique, with Mtwara and was shut in April 2021 following the attack by Islamic State-affiliated insurgents. A CSO representative<sup>141</sup> explained that the closure of the border constituted a challenge not only for people's movement, but even more for businesses. The closure disrupted cross-border trade between the two countries, which represents an asset for local economies<sup>142</sup> on both sides of the border. Finally, in September 2023, the vital trade route was reopened<sup>143</sup>. However, insecurity related to violent extremism, as well as the risk of future closures, constitutes a huge challenge for cross-border trade, affecting the flow of manufactured goods and agricultural products, including maize and cashews, as well as the trade of livestock and wood and fishing activities<sup>144</sup>.

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<sup>136</sup> In interviews with local government representatives and community leaders in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>137</sup> Mohamed A., "A Review on Unresolved Major Causes of Land Conflicts in Tanzania: A case of Kiteto District, Manyara Region", *International Journal of Research Publications (IJRP)*, Vol.58, issue 1, August 2020, p. 17.

<sup>138</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Baseline and Conflict Assessment: Jenga Amani Yetu", 2020.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Gould T., "Namoto border crossing reopens", *Zitamar News*, September 2023.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with civil society representative in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>142</sup> Makoye K., "Mozambique's insecurity endangers cross-border trade", *Anadolu Agency*, June 2022.

<sup>143</sup> Gould T., "Namoto border crossing reopens", *Zitamar News*, September 2023.

<sup>144</sup> Makoye K., "Mozambique's insecurity endangers cross-border trade", *Anadolu Agency*, June 2022.

Another important conflict involves bodaboda riders. *Bodaboda* riders are bicycles and motorcycle taxis that are very common in Eastern African countries, including in Kenya and Tanzania. These motorcycle taxi operators, providing a swift and accessible means of transportation, not only fill a crucial gap in the public transportation system, but also contribute to the local economy, creating employment opportunities. However, there are several challenges that encompass safety concerns, road safety, criminal involvement, and tensions with law enforcement representatives. The tension between *bodaboda* riders and the police is, in particular, considered worrying by several interviewees in Tandahimba<sup>145</sup>. Bodaboda drivers, who tend to be young men, have been identified as contributors of violent conflicts because of their involvement in many political and social altercations with the government, such as conflicts with police around road rules and safety<sup>146</sup>.

Becoming a *bodaboda* is often the only opportunity for youth to earn a living, however these riders are often both victims and perpetrators of road incidents and criminal activities as theft, transporting thieves or stolen goods, trafficking illegal substances<sup>147</sup>. There is also a growing apprehension due to the rising crimes perpetrated by using a motorcycle and an interviewee said that young bodaboda drivers are also at odds with farmers because they accuse the motorcyclists of carrying stolen products<sup>148</sup>. The situation needs to be cautiously managed even because often younger drivers do not have a driving licence or, anyway, are not sufficiently prepared when it comes to traffic laws and security<sup>149</sup>.

Once again young men are described as the fulcrum of violence and some of the interviewees do not hide the negative perception they have of youth, considered lazy, greedy and unwilling to earn their money with honest, hard work<sup>150</sup>. These biased opinions make it even more difficult to constructively engage the most vulnerable youth and, once again, it is crucial to emphasise that young people are the most impacted by economic hardships and lack of opportunities in southern Tanzania. They somehow feel like they have nothing to lose, according to multiple informants.

Mtwara is considered a hotspot of violent extremism, due to the violent attacks which occurred along the Tanzania-Mozambique border and the movements of violent extremist (VE) groups across it<sup>151</sup>, yet none of the survey respondents nor interviewees directly mentioned violent extremism or terrorism as a type of violent conflict affecting their community. In recent years, the Mozambique branch of the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS), which is called Al-Shabaab, is thought to pose a significant danger to

<sup>145</sup> In interviews with farmers and entrepreneurs in Tandahimba, August 2023.

<sup>146</sup> Search for Common Ground, "Baseline and Conflict Assessment: Jenga Amani Yetu", 2020.

<sup>147</sup> The Citizen, "DC: 'Boda Boda' May Be Useful in Combating Crime", March 2016.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with with woman farmer in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with woman farmer in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>150</sup> In interviews with various informants in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>151</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2021, Tanzania", 2021.

people living along the border. Even Tanzanian government officials have publicly acknowledged terrorist activities in the area, a departure from its previous position of publicly downplaying the threat and labelling such violence as "banditry". The divergence in the data should suggest that a significant difference in perceptions exists among communities and the government concerning the challenges posed by violent extremism compared to other forms of violent conflict<sup>152</sup>.

### Connectors and dividers

Looking at what connects people in Mtwara, business and trade seem to be important factors for several interviewees<sup>153</sup>. In the words of a young man working for Newala Radio: "Business is the key connecting factor in Newala District. We depend on business with people from northern Mozambique and southern regions of Tanzania<sup>154</sup>". Economic sustainability is indeed a major concern, one which brings people together despite differences in political views and religious beliefs.

Another connecting factor is religion, both Islamic and Christian, because during religious and social functions such as funerals, weddings and other celebration days people gather harmoniously. Also, social events such as traditional cultural, music and dance events and sports are mentioned by interviewees<sup>155</sup>.

Politics is instead described among the main dividers in Mtwara<sup>156</sup>. This is especially true during election periods, when supporters of the leading party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), often clash with supporters of the opposition parties, the Civic United Front (CUF) and the Party for Democracy and Progress (known as Chadema).

Economic hardships, lower cash crops prices and general widespread poverty also contribute to exacerbate conflict between people, as well as between local communities and the government as in the case of the Mtwara gas pipeline protests, which demonstrates clearly that if communities and citizens feel marginalised and left out of social and economic development plans, violence can result<sup>157</sup>. According to multiple sources, unemployment makes people, especially youth, more vulnerable and thus prone to engage in violence to sustain themselves and their families<sup>158</sup>.

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<sup>152</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania", March 2019, p. 8.

<sup>153</sup> In interviews with civil society, media and local government representatives in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with young journalist in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with civil society and local government representatives in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with civil society and local government representatives in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>157</sup> Mwesiga T. and Mikova K., "Mtwara Gas Project Conflict: Causes of Arising and Ways of Stabilization (Part 2)", *Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2017, pp. 73-84.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with woman farmer in Mtwara, August 2023.



CONNECTORS	DIVIDERS
Business and trade	Politics
Religion and religious celebration	Poverty and unemployment
Traditional culture, dance and sport	

## Stakeholder mapping and engagement

A stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted as part of the conflict analysis to identify the main actors currently playing a role in conflict and peace dynamics in Mtwara Region. This section provides a description of each of the main groups identified, including additional information, where this could be found, on the attitudes and practices.

### Government authorities

A total of 98% of women and 95% of men among the survey respondents believe that it is the responsibility of the government authorities to resolve conflict between community groups. People in Mtwara look to authorities, including law enforcement agencies, first and foremost for the provision of internal and border security<sup>159</sup>. Overall, according to young survey respondents, local authorities are much more responsive to the challenges faced by women (75% of women and 81% of men) than to the one faced by young people (61% of women and 63% of men). The majority of interviewees declare they are indeed satisfied by the fact that authorities are ensuring a satisfiable level of safety to the citizens. They overall trust authorities when it comes to the prevention of violence, border control and protection from criminal activities and violent extremism. There is, however, another side of the coin. People lament in particular the controls imposed on them, which are part and parcel of the security arrangements imposed on the area. Security agencies are accountable, responsive, and respectful of human rights, and in particular of the rights of youth according to 61% of women survey respondents and 71% of men, showing an interesting difference in gender perspective in which young women feel way less trust in security agencies than men do. As a female interviewee stated, “the government is trying to control people’s movements, but you can’t stop people from visiting their family members<sup>160</sup>”. This declaration shows how hard security approaches cannot be the only way to ensure safety, especially because this type of movement control is detrimental to freedom and the cultivation of economic opportunities.

In areas such as the economy and domestic affairs, people are more hesitant to rely on the government. There is some reluctance in trusting the political representatives mainly due to a

<sup>159</sup> Interviews with local farmers in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with woman working in hair saloon in Mtwara, August 2023.

perception that politicians have broken their promises. Local communities believe their concerns are not taken seriously by local leaders and would like to have more chances to share their perspectives with political representatives<sup>161</sup>. Interviewees ultimately continue to believe that Mtwara has been for too long forgotten by national authorities and they would appreciate more governmental support in the provision of simple loans and seed capitals and in the intervention on market prices<sup>162</sup>. Cash crop price is indeed mentioned several times as a major concern for local communities, because it is a key source of sustenance in the Southern part of Tanzania<sup>163</sup>. Furthermore, there is the deep disappointment vis-à-vis the gas industry, which was expected to speed up development in Mtwara. Reality turned to be less bright than expected, causing deep resentment in the communities<sup>164</sup>.

Ultimately, 98% of female survey respondents and 95% of male respondents believe government authorities to have a leading role when it comes to solving conflict among communities or groups. There are indeed conflict mechanisms in place already, such as village-level or ward-level land committees, police desks, and actors such as local authorities and elders who deal with conflict as this occurs<sup>165</sup>. Interestingly, among respondents, women seem to ascribe a greater responsibility to authorities whereas 100% men believe it is the duty of religious figures to solve these tensions.

### Civil society organisations

Some 82% of female survey respondents and 83% of men believe that CSOs are responsible to resolve conflict between communities or groups. Most of the interviewees believe that CSOs are fundamental in raising awareness on peace as well as in strengthening relevant competencies in the communities they work with. In addition, they play an important role in creating safe spaces for dialogue where they can invite relevant stakeholders to build a more peaceful community and reduce conflict, strengthening in this way social cohesion and reducing the gap between communities and institutional representatives. They can for instance ensure the participation of youth in *maskanis* or contribute to build a bridge between grassroots communities and government authorities or between police forces and bodaboda riders<sup>166</sup>. As highlighted for example by a village chairman: “Previously, community members and police or army were not easily interacting, but now with CSO engagement, both sides speak with the other side and exchange security details<sup>167</sup>”. Civil society representatives are also engaged in solving family and land conflict. Working with relevant institutions, CSOs can also ensure information sharing, awareness raising, capacity building and community engagement.

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<sup>161</sup> Interview with youth journalist in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>162</sup> In interviews with farmers, workers and civil society representatives in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with farmer in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with civil society representative in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>165</sup> Search for Common Ground, “Baseline and Conflict Assessment: Jenga Amani Yetu”, 2020.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with woman farmer in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with community elder in Mtwara, August 2023.

However, there are some challenges that are highlighted by interviewees. For example, most CSO activities are implemented in urban contexts, according to several informants. This can negatively affect inclusion, as rural communities are often the most segregated and vulnerable. In addition to this, CSOs' efforts depend on the resources available to them: when these are limited, as they often are, this affects the services provided or the number of people or communities engaged.

Interviewees mentioned several NGOs. Among them the most cited are the Tanzania Building Future Organization (TABUFO), with its peace dialogue engaging bodaboda riders and police, the international NGO Search for Common Ground, which has organised highly appreciated training on conflict resolution and management, Mercy Corps and Might Society Against Poverty (MSOAPO).

## Youth

Most of the interviewees highlight that those who are often excluded by peace initiatives and decision-making processes are people with disabilities (PWDs), women and youth. When people from these groups are invited into activities, they are seen as minor stakeholders with whom to share information and decisions taken without however engaging them in the decision-making process<sup>168</sup>. Women's participation is further limited by social norms: according to survey respondents, for instance, 53% of women and 65% of men believe that women do not have the same opportunities to participate in society as men have. The sentiment is echoed by people in government as well: as one representative said, "the exclusion of women must be attributed to a strongly patriarchal society in which even CSOs provide more opportunities for men than women". In regards to PWDs, many people believe that they can't make any positive contribution to society and therefore give up with them, without including them in any development initiative<sup>169</sup>. This is a sizeable demographic group, as there are more than 3.3 million people who live with a disability in Tanzania<sup>170</sup>.

There is certainly a general attitude that brings older men to participate whereas youth and women refrain to engage in public decision-making spaces. In this regard, the dynamic is similar to that described for Kenya: there is, in other words, a negative bias that adults have, according to which the small role young people play is, at least in part, due to their own attitudes, or the fact, as one informant put it, "[young people] choose to remain back<sup>171</sup>".

These spaces that are allegedly open to everyone are not, however, always truly inclusive. A journalist working in Newala FM Radio for example stressed that unless a young person belongs to the ruling

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<sup>168</sup> Interview with young representative of civil society organisation in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with local government representative in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>170</sup> UN Women, "Strengthening the voice and agency of women with disabilities in Tanzania", January 2023.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with woman farmer in Mtwara, August 2023.

party's youth wing, relevant information will pass without notice<sup>172</sup>. Furthermore, the economic environment is challenging and marked by a lack of information about available economic opportunities for young people<sup>173</sup>.

In this context, examples were found of interventions that recognize the potential of youth as agents of positive change. One is the "Amani Yetu-Uhai Wetu<sup>174</sup>" peace club, an initiative by the Global Peace Foundation (GPF) in collaboration with TABUFO, which showcases impactful youth peacebuilding in Mtwara. In 2023, GPF also partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to train peace champions and form peacebuilding clubs.

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<sup>172</sup> Interview with youth journalist in Mtwara, August 2023.

<sup>173</sup> UNDP, "#VijanaNaAmani255: youth lead the charge toward safer societies in southern Tanzania", February 2023.

<sup>174</sup> McDonough R., "Engaging Tanzanian Youth in Peacebuilding Activities to Build Resilience and Prevent Violent Extremism", Global Peace Foundation, September 2023.

## TANGA

### Types of conflict and patterns of violence

In Tanga the most common types of violence are also gender-based violence and domestic violence. As in the other locations, street gangs are a reason of concern for local communities.

Tanga is a strategic gateway to East Africa. Located on a porous border, Tanga is, however, vulnerable to the undetected entrance, including by violent actors<sup>175</sup>. Furthermore, the region is a transit point for the transnational narcotic trade, illegal migration, and human trafficking<sup>176</sup>. Crime does not worry residents, however: 98% of female survey respondents and 94% of male respondents feel safe walking in their neighbourhood, and only 30% of both genders consider violent incidents common.

Once again gender-based violence (43% of women and 45% of men) and domestic violence (33% of women and 45% of men) are indicated as the most common types of violence. Political violence and banditry are also mentioned, but by fewer respondents. In this regard, street gangs are identified as a major problem. An oft-cited example is of a gang called *Watoto wa Ibilisi* (Children of Satan), which mostly operate in the areas of Magomeni, Mapinduzi and Mikanjuni<sup>177</sup>.

The activities of gangs foment discord: Tanzanian media report that government and citizens keep blaming each other for these violent youth, with citizens calling on the government to stop the gang violence and the police accusing parents of not educating their children<sup>178</sup>.

What is known is that gang violence is entwined with the abuse of alcohol and drugs, especially heroin<sup>179</sup>. Heroin is indeed a huge problem in Tanzania since the country is a significant player in the regional heroin trade, both as a transit country and a destination for the drug. Estimates suggest that almost a half of the heroin destined for East Africa ends up in Tanzania<sup>180</sup>.

The presence of street gangs worsens people's perception of young people and increases tensions. Most interviewees described young men as the leading group when it comes to criminality and violence in Tanga, because, in their words, the majority of gang members are minors. Economic motivations related to poverty, family breakdown, homelessness, drug abuse, and unemployment are thought to

<sup>175</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania", March 2019, p. 14.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with *bodaboda* representative in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>178</sup> Burhani Y., *Watoto wa ibilisi walivyoutikisa mji wa Tanga*, Mwananchi, December 2022.

<sup>179</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania", March 2019, p. 12.

<sup>180</sup> See, for example, reports from the Global Organized Crime Index for Tanzania.

push these youth, mostly males, into violence and illicit smuggling activities, including drug trafficking. The opportunity to make quick and easy money<sup>181</sup> in a context where unemployment is a serious concern undoubtedly pushes youth toward criminal activities.

Once again, youngsters are treated as perpetrators of violence, but they start as vulnerable subjects. But some interviewees are extremely critical towards young people who engage in criminal behaviours and label them as not wanting to work<sup>182</sup>. Interestingly, blaming youth for being idle takes place also in situations where there are employment opportunities available, demonstrating the resilience of such negative stereotypes.

Another common type of conflict is over land, and according to interviewees this is a major source of insecurity<sup>183</sup>. Tensions between farmers and herders are frequent and sometimes they escalate into violence. The main drivers underlying these conflicts over the use of resources are crop damage by livestock, excessively large herds of cattle, and perceived government inefficiency in managing such conflict and corruption<sup>184</sup>. Interviewees add that many people are not aware or do not follow acquisition procedures as detailed in the Land Act<sup>185</sup>.

Another tension emerging from interviews with key stakeholders is related to *bodaboda* riders. As explained by a *bodaboda* representative, this group faces constant challenges by police who resort to disproportionate force in cases of ordinary traffic offences. The representative argues that awareness-raising and constructive dialogue between the drivers and the police would be much more beneficial than use of force, fine or bribes<sup>186</sup>.

In relation to violent extremism, Tanga is not only a centre for illegal smuggling that funds regional extremist groups, but it has also been the scene of several violent extremist attacks in recent years<sup>187</sup>. Nonetheless, survey respondents and interviewees almost never mention it as a major driver of insecurity in Tanga (0% of female survey respondents and 4% of male respondents). A different perspective is found among security forces representatives who rank terrorism as the top security risk, followed by illegal migration, illicit drugs, land conflicts, and family disputes<sup>188</sup>. Yet, the presence of transnational criminal networks in Tanga's coastal areas makes it harder for communities and police to ascertain whether violent incidents are criminal in nature or terrorism-related, or a combination of the two<sup>189</sup>.

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<sup>181</sup> Interview with community leader in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>182</sup> Interview with street chairperson in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>183</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania", March 2019, p. 12.

<sup>184</sup> The Chanzo Initiative, "Clash Between Farmers, Pastoralists Leave Two Injured in Tanga", July 2022.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with religious leader in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with *bodaboda* representative in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>187</sup> Bofin P., "Tanzania and the Political Containment of Terror", Hudson Institute, January 2022.

<sup>188</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania", March 2019, p. 13.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

## Connectors and dividers

Religion and religious gatherings are often perceived by key interviewees as a leading unifying factor and religious leaders are seen as being committed to conflict resolution, especially when it comes to family conflict, but not only that. As an example, a pastor serving a broad community in Pangani affirms: “I contribute to solve community conflicts when asked to do so based on my religious respect in the district<sup>190</sup>”. Religion indeed defines the way of life of Tanga communities according to 100% of the female survey respondents and 92% of the male respondents. Religious leaders, in Tanga as in the whole country, enjoy a high level of trust and esteem<sup>191</sup> and are therefore in a favourable position to intervene in community and family conflict, expressing their views on sensitive issues.

Sports act as a connector in the community and football in particular is able to bring people together, especially men, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, or tribal background. This has been the case, for example, of the support to the Coastal Union football team<sup>192</sup>, a club that is based in Tanga and plays in the Tanzanian Premier League. The passion for football extends beyond the matchdays, with fans engaging in discussions, debates, and social events centred around the sport or tournaments and friendly matches that foster camaraderie. In Tanga, football serves as a platform for social interaction, breaking down barriers and promoting understanding among diverse groups. The shared passion for the game creates common ground, allowing individuals to connect beyond their differences.

According to several interviewees, social events often bring people together as in the case of wedding ceremonies, funerals, other traditional events such as Maulid Day or the ceremonies for boys and girls entering adulthood. The specific inclusive nature of these events, in which everyone is welcomed thanks to the traditional hospitality of these communities, make them particularly useful to strengthen community bonds and create opportunities for dialogue and cooperation.

Last but not the least, economic activities and business interests are also thought of as a connector. Farmers organised in agricultural cooperatives, fishing communities optimising their catch, entrepreneurs fostering economic growth: the mutual benefits of cooperation in pursuing common economic goals is clear in Tanga. A positive example is the Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum (ANSAF<sup>193</sup>) focusing on social, economic and political inclusion and on the sustainable use of land. The work of ANSAF aims to promote inclusive equitable distribution of resources, power and risks among key players in the sector. The various programmes aim to provide a better opportunity for rural producers to actively engage in policy dialogue and decision making for a secure livelihood.

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<sup>190</sup> Interview with religious leader in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>191</sup> World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), “Faith and Development in focus: Tanzania”, September 2019, p. 1.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with *bodaboda* representative in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>193</sup> Cooperatives Europe, “Cooperatives and Peace: Strengthening Democracy, Participation and Trust”, May 2019, 25 p. 76.

Similarly, a women entrepreneur interviewed mentioned women credit and loan groups, which have emerged as powerful instruments for women's economic empowerment and community development<sup>194</sup>. These groups typically consist of local women who come together to pool financial resources, creating a communal fund from which members can borrow to invest in small businesses or address personal financial needs. These initiatives not only provide women with access to capital but, through shared financial responsibilities and the collective repayment of loans, promote entrepreneurship, cooperation and contribute to the overall socioeconomic advancement of the Tanga region.

Religion is instead mentioned as a divider. Tanga experiences various interreligious and intra-religious conflicts in a context where faith leaders are extremely vocal and involved in politics<sup>195</sup>. Tanzania's religious landscape is indeed complex, and, besides tensions for example between Christians and Muslims, major religious traditions are internally diverse and include opposing factions as in the case of Sunni and Shia or between Ansar al Sunna, hardliners and conservative Muslims, and followers of the BAKWATA, the Tanzania Muslims Supreme Council and official Muslim liaison to the Tanzanian government. This last one is the most worrying for those who have been interviewed. These tensions arise from differing interpretations of Islam, its theological beliefs and practices but they are also strongly linked with the struggle for influence, the control over mosques and religious institutions, and the interpretation of Islamic law.

While economic and business opportunities bring people together, their scarcity or absence can strain relationships and exacerbate the rage of people who remain without opportunities--and therefore act as dividers. As explained by an elder, "In Tanga, many people are against those who just came in the region and grabbed employment opportunities leaving Tanga people unemployed<sup>196</sup>". The scarcity of jobs can indeed fuel resentment and competition, with local residents feeling threatened by newcomers who are perceived as potential competitors for limited employment positions.

Lastly, politics and tribalism are also mentioned as dividers, especially when politicians and government representatives are chosen or evaluated based on their religion and tribe and not based on their performance<sup>197</sup>. This phenomenon highlights a challenge in the political landscape, where identity-based affiliations often take precedence over merit and capability.

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<sup>194</sup> Interview with woman entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>195</sup> World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) , Faith and Development in focus:Tanzania, September 2019, p. 11.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with street chairperson in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>197</sup> Interviews with a community leader and a entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.



CONNECTORS	DIVIDERS
Religion	Religion
Sport especially football	Lack of employment opportunities
Social events and ceremonies	Politics and Tribalism
Economic activities and business interests	

## Stakeholder mapping and engagement

A stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted as part of the conflict analysis to identify the main actors currently playing a role in conflict and peace dynamics in Tanga Region. This section provides a description of each of the main groups identified, including additional information, where this could be found, on the attitudes and practices.

### Government authorities

A total of 94% of women and 90% of men among the survey respondents believe that it is the responsibility of the government authorities to resolve conflict between community groups. The key interviewees often refer to the work done by authorities in ensuring safety in Tanga and seem overall appreciative of the security provided, as well as of the community policing programmes that are in place<sup>198</sup>. For example, the *polisi jamii*—a Kiswahili term meaning “community police”—consists of civilian volunteers from a village or neighbourhood who provide local leaders and police with information about safety and security issues and generally support them<sup>199</sup>. People overall feel more secure thanks to the security patrols operated by civilians and they believe that these initiatives are strengthening the collaboration and dialogue between community members and security agencies<sup>200</sup>. Even the *polisi jamii* lose people’s trust, as some of those interviewed talked about cases where the *polisi jamii* abused their position<sup>201</sup>.

Besides providing security at local level, interviewees stress that the government plays a key role in providing education on peace and security and organising meetings with local communities to discuss related issues. These gatherings are very appreciated because they help to reduce local conflict through constructive discussions and collective agreements<sup>202</sup>. Local authorities are considered responsive to the challenges faced by youth by 80% of female survey respondents and 67% of male respondents.

<sup>198</sup> Interview with small entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.

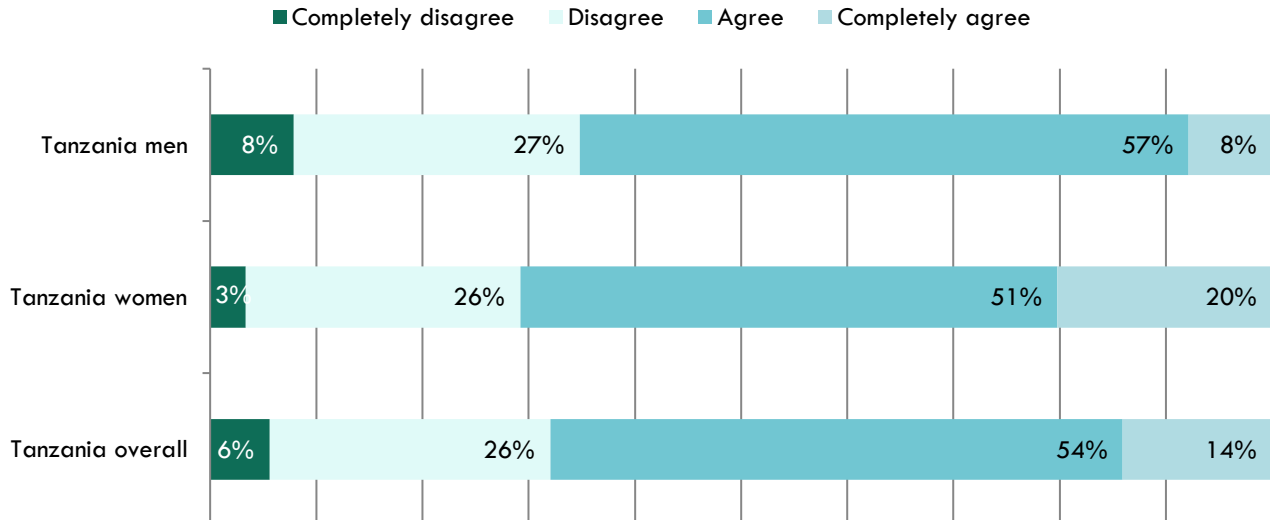
<sup>199</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), “Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania”, March 2019, p. 16.

<sup>200</sup> Interviews with a religious leader and an entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>201</sup> United States Institute of Peace (USIP), “Special Report: Violent Extremism and Community Policing in Tanzania”, March 2019, p. 16.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.

**Graph 5. People who say that local authorities are responsive to the challenges faced by youth**



Looking at women specifically, most of the respondents think that local authorities are able to improve the wellbeing of young women. Interestingly, female survey respondents have a much more favourable perception (86%) than male respondents (59%). The situation is flipped in relation to the perceptions of the support that women receive from public institutions, with male respondents having more favourable views than women (77% vs. 65% respectively).

Views of the government become more negative in relation to the criminal justice system and its ability to handle GBV cases and ensure accountability<sup>203</sup>. There are delays in disposing cases and dispensing justice, unharmonized laws related to sexual offences, and a concerning lack of resources as well as competences in managing such issues. In addition, reporting GBV by victims is still very rare and accountability is also rather poor<sup>204</sup>. Also, economic hardships and the lack of employment opportunities cause many tensions and complaints, especially among youth, against the government, which is accused of not making a concrete commitment to help the inhabitants of Tanga. For instance, an interviewee complains about the fact that the authorities disappointed local communities when they did not consult them on the construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP<sup>205</sup>) between Uganda and Tanga, nor hired local workers to work on it.

## The role of CSOs

Some 84% of women and 79% of men among the survey respondents believe that it is the responsibility of CSOs to resolve conflict between community groups. The general consensus is that CSOs have a positive impact on the local community and an important role to play especially when it

<sup>203</sup> Interview with female entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>204</sup> Embassy of Ireland in Tanzania, "Addressing GBV and Gender Inequality Through the Tanzanian Criminal Justice System", October 2020.

<sup>205</sup> The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), also known as the Uganda-Tanzania Crude Oil Pipeline (UTCOP), should be constructed by 2025 to transport crude oil from Uganda's Tilenga and Kingfisher oil fields to the Port of Tanga.

comes to raising awareness and building peaceful relationships. CSOs are indeed fundamental in raising awareness on human rights, peace and cohesion, especially in those marginalised areas that are hardly reached by the government due to scarcity of resources. CSOs are also able to build bridges and create safe spaces for constructive dialogues among different stakeholders, for example between local communities and government representatives or police forces. CSOs are, for example, one of the few actors that people see engaged in trying to foster inter-religious dialogue. The few services related to GBV and drug abuse are also provided by CSOs. On the negative side, NGOs also have their own challenges and limitations mostly due to limited resources and capacities and to the constantly changing political leadership, which oblige organisations to every time adapt their development and advocacy plans.

The most mentioned CSO in Tanga is the Tree of Hope Foundation. Established in early 2000's as Tanga Deanery HIV & AIDS Control Project, the organisation is currently working in three districts of Tanga, Pangani and Mkinga on women and youth empowerment, GBV and maternal health. Interviewees also mentioned UZIKWASA, an organisation dedicated to empowering communities for self-development, gender justice, and transformative leadership; the Confederation of PWDs CSOs in Tanzania (SHIVYAWATA), a network of twelve PWD-focused organisations; the international NGO MercyCorps; and the already mentioned Muslim Supreme Councils in Tanzania (BAKWATA).

## Youth

When asked which are the excluded groups, some interesting insights emerge from the conversations with interviewees. A female government representative pointed out for instance that “men are excluded: this is because these days everything is all about women empowerment”. Interestingly a religious leader highlights that GBV also impacts a lot of young males who are victimised by close family members<sup>206</sup>. According to an entrepreneur, “Elders are always left out since some believe they have nothing to add to the community<sup>207</sup>”. Another interesting testimony emphasises the need to further engage fishermen and fisherwomen in relevant decision-making processes, since they are subjected to constant pressure by competing Kenyan fishermen and Kenya forces along the borderlines<sup>208</sup>.

In Tanga the perception that those who are excluded wanted it this way affects these groups, too. Yet, a key difference with the situation of youth is that many among the latter, and especially those with no connections and recommendations, are already distrustful and believe they will never be

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<sup>206</sup> Interview with a religious leader in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with an entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with an entrepreneur in Tanga, August 2023.

consulted. The situation is even more challenging for women, who still face a lot of constraints to meaningful participation in a society that continues to see them as second-class citizens<sup>209</sup>.

There are several initiatives implemented in Tanga that involve youth in participatory conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Among the examples there is the Tanzania Youth Coalition (TYC). Founded by young people in 2002, TYC is an umbrella organisation that focuses on youth empowerment: it now includes more than 120 youth NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs), 249 Youth Enterprise Groups (YEG), and hundreds of youth individuals in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. Another example is Youth Peacemakers (YPM) Tanzania, an organisation based in Tanga, which focuses on providing knowledge, skills and empowerment to youth, women and the overall community.

## THE ROLE OF SWAHILI CULTURE IN TANZANIA

According to the survey, Swahili culture defines the way of life of communities for 85% of female respondents and 86% of male respondents in Mtwara. In Tanga, respondents believe that religion is more important in defining the community's life (100 % of women and 92% of men) than Swahili culture (88% of women and 81% of men). In general, Islam is thought to be closely associated with Swahili culture, to represent one of its key pillars.

Analysing the open answers from survey respondents, Swahili culture impacts the traditions, behaviours, and practices that shape the lives of people living in both Tanga and Mtwara. Swahili language indeed plays a central role in these communities' identity. It is a unifying language that binds diverse ethnic communities and strengthens the sense of belonging. The verbal exchange of information serves as a crucial channel for sharing and acquiring security information. The intricate web of interpersonal connections allows for the rapid dissemination of crucial updates, fostering a collective sense of safety. This grassroots communication method not only strengthens community relations and enhances community resilience, but also underscores the significance of local knowledge in navigating security challenges. Beyond language, Swahili culture includes, as in the case of Kenya, dressing styles, traditional cuisines and rituals. Swahili culture is depicted by survey respondents from Mtwara and Tanga as hospitable, but also as talkative and prone to gossiping. The cooperative way of living is evident in various practices mentioned by respondents, from traditional ceremonies to daily economic activities like fishing and seaweed harvesting. The culture is also seen as adaptive, incorporating changes over time.

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<sup>209</sup> Ramadhani I., "How Pangani villagers push for gender and climate justice", The Citizen, March 2023.

However, challenges are recognized. Some survey respondents from Tanga and Mtwara raise concerns, in the open questions, about enmity, gossip, and insults within the community, while others bring up laziness and conservatism. In addition, with the impact of technology, there is a clear friction between tradition and modernity. Survey participants express concerns over the progressive erosion of traditional customs and norms, with some perceiving the culture as unstable or influenced by external elements. Despite this, there is a prevailing sense of pride and unity, with the Swahili people valuing communal life, supporting one another, and participating in social-economic activities.

A total of 91% of female survey respondents and 98% of male respondents in Mtwara are convinced that Swahili culture should be promoted—96% of women and 94% of men in Tanga. However, the majority of respondents in Mtwara, especially female ones, do not think that Swahili culture supports gender equality (38% of women and 55% of men), whereas in Tanga 53% of women and 45% of men think the same.

The survey respondents highlight several reasons why Swahili culture contributes to peace. One significant factor is the inclusive nature of Swahili cultural practices, which foster a sense of belonging and unity among community members. Traditional dances and music accompany social gatherings such as marriages, funerals and rites of passage, which are considered a fruitful space to engage in transformative dialogues. These events are not only connectors, but also catalysts for community collaboration and dialogue, reinforcing social bonds. Swahili culture is seen as a tool for increasing community resilience. According to respondents, the cultural emphasis on helping each other during challenging times, contributes to social fairness and respect for human rights. Another interesting aspect is the fact that the cultural norms and customs associated with ceremonies pass down ethical values to the youth. This not only educates the younger generation but also strengthens intergenerational relationships.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the patterns described above, the following recommendations are offered in order to guide the implementation of peacebuilding activities under the Kujenga Amani project, and also beyond it:

1. **Engage key youth target groups including marginalised ones.** The challenge confronting the analysed contexts is very often poverty, exclusion and lack of opportunities. There is thus the need to promote inclusiveness at all levels, and to ensure that no one is left behind, especially those who are related, in a way or another, with violent conflicts. Seeking out and including marginalised youth that are most affected by the issue is therefore crucial to reach a sustainable impact. The project target group should include the most relevant youth groups related to violent conflict, namely members or former members of street gangs, and young people at-risk of recruitment by these groups, like those dependent on drugs, minors still attending school as well as young dropouts, and unemployed youth. In addition, since most of the initiatives target urban areas, particular attention must be ensured to engage communities living in rural and remote areas, those that are often forgotten by development initiatives and are thus voiceless.
2. **Engage key stakeholders especially institutions, elders, religious leaders.** Credible and trustworthy stakeholders should be involved in all phases of the project, from the assessment of community needs to project activities. These stakeholders include the local government representatives as well as community elders and religious leaders. Identifying champions among government representatives and community stakeholders. This would definitely ease project implementation by clarifying to each stakeholder how they can best support the project.
3. **Involve police and security officers in a dialogue with youth.** Another aspect on which it is important to work is the involvement of police: more trust between police and youth is needed to face the local security challenges. The abuses of police are indeed a major concern for younger generations. Dialogues between the youth and the police on peace and security issues should be organised to demystify the police force in the eyes of young people.
4. **Ensure community ownership.** It is fundamental to involve the targeted community from the beginning in order for them to be aware of the themes and feel ownership over the programme. It is crucial to encourage them to share their insights throughout the project implementation, in an open and constructive consultative process. The project should clearly emphasise that peace and security are everyone's responsibility. The programme should be highly flexible, respond to the local needs and be able to promptly adapt to the changing circumstances.

- 5. Capitalise on existing policies and structures.** The project should also, possibly, be able to make the most of existing dialogue structures and mediation processes. For instance, it is important to find synergies with the Kwale CAP on WPS. The project should also aim to coordinate with other local projects in order to support stronger and more coherent collective efforts to support the youths and the local communities in general. Align activities with existing documents, policies, structures and local practices to gain buy-in.
- 6. Focus on and build inclusion in safe spaces.** It is crucial that the project is able to engage different target groups and identities in a way that is inclusive and safe. In some cases, there will be the need to design gendered spaces and activities or to organise gatherings only meant for elders or for a specific religion, but overall all affected groups must be engaged safely and meaningfully.
- 7. Build capacity on peace and security themes.** In some cases, youth lack capacity and expertise to effectively participate in peace and security processes. Further developing awareness, as well as knowledge and skills, are critical. When people are informed, they get involved. In addition, youth can develop the capacity to facilitate and mediate in domestic violence and land issues. These competences are useful for those individuals that are, for their work or for the trust they receive, called to daily manage and resolve social and family conflicts.
- 8. Promote intergenerational understanding and dialogue.** There should be an improved understanding between elders and younger generations and elders and spaces for intergenerational dialogue should be designed. Local authorities and elders also need to increase their awareness on those psychosocial aspects useful to better understand and support youth. Linked to this there is also the need to help parents, who are often very young and unaware, to build strong and healthy relationships with their children.
- 9. Support meaningful youth engagement.** Youth need to be engaged in peace and security dialogues and initiatives. They should have a safe space to share their insights and inputs. Their capacities for peacebuilding and conflict mediation should be strengthened in order for them to resort to these enhanced capacities in their daily life, showcasing in this way the potential of youth for transformative change. Stakeholders must be involved in developing more opportunities for youth.
- 10. Address Reintegration and Rehabilitation Gaps.** In many cases, there is a lack of support for young people leaving gangs and militia groups who are then unable to find employment and to

be reintegrated into the community. It is important to help young gang members to reintegrate into the community.

- 11. Peer-to-peer approach.** Youth involvement in raising awareness of their peers on themes such as drug abuse or anti-social behaviours is key. These youth champions should engage their peers and understand their problems to jointly develop solutions.
- 12. Focus on drug abuse among youth.** There is a close relationship between drug abuse and violence. Drug abusers often commit crimes to pay for their drugs. Moreover, many criminals are often under the influence of drugs while committing crimes. Lack of awareness amongst the youth regarding the harmful effects of drug abuse is cited as one of the main reasons for the youth getting involved in this harmful behaviour.
- 13. Ensure conflict sensitivity.** While selecting participants and communities to work with is fundamental to avoid exacerbating tensions. Since often development funds and opportunities have triggered frustration if not violent reactions from excluded communities, it is important to pay attention when selecting the targeted wards and villages. The decision should be taken in a participatory way and following a bottom-up approach.





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