

The Contribution Of Community Capacity- Building Initiatives In The Management Of International Terrorism Along The Southern Kenya - Somalia Border

Ayabei Constance

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science, Kisii University

Dr. Godfrey Cotty Ungaya, Ph. D

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kisii University

Prof. Edmond Were Maloba, Ph.D.

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kisii University

Abstract: Transnational terrorism has continued to threaten community stability along the southern Kenya–Somalia borderland areas of Garissa County in Kenya and Dhobley District in Somalia. Although state-centric counterterrorism methods have dominated policy responses in Kenya, terrorism incidences have been frequent. In order to combat terrorism globally, The United Nations Resolution 71/291 emphasizes community capacity-building initiatives as one of the all-encompassing strategies in managing terrorism. The objective of this study was to examine the contribution of capacity building initiatives in the management of terrorism along the southern Kenya- Somalia border. A sample size of 400 respondents was used. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in a descriptive research design. For conceptualization purposes, the study employed securitization theory which provides an analytical approach in explaining the rationale behind security policies in states. Purposive sampling technique was employed in Garissa County to find respondents with pertinent experience and knowledge, while snowball sampling technique was used in the Dhobley District because of security and accessibility issues. Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and questionnaires were used to gather the data, which were then analyzed thematically and descriptively. The results show that community capacity-building programs greatly improve early warning systems, awareness, and trust-building in terrorist management. However, their overall efficacy is challenged by differences in implementation, scarce resources, and contextual fragility in Somalia. The study concludes that whereas capacity-building programs are essential for improving community resilience against terrorism, their implementation alone is insufficient. For effective management of terrorism along the Kenya-Somalia border, an all-encompassing strategy that combines capacity building with community policing and sociocultural engagement of the border communities is urgently required.

Keywords: Capacity Building Initiatives, international Terrorism, Community resilience; Securitization Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Office of Counterterrorism (2024) emphasizes the importance of state-led collaboration in education, training, and public awareness initiatives to prevent violent extremism, while promoting broad non-state engagement. The UN office further highlights capacity building as a critical component for advancing global counterterrorism efforts. Capacity building initiatives are

critical in supporting member states in aligning national security policy frameworks with global counterterrorism standards. Additionally, it enhances the effectiveness of law enforcement and justice systems through targeted training and resources that strengthen trust between the community and state in security management and criminal justice processes.

Capacity building plays a critical in terrorism management by strengthening the development of human resources, legal systems, and organizational capabilities

necessary to prevent, detect, and respond to terrorist threats (United Nations, 2006). The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy emphasizes capacity building as one of the core pillars in combating terrorism while protecting violations of human rights (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). Moreover, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), 2024 emphasizes that state and non-state capacity-building initiatives enhance law enforcement and judicial effectiveness by improving intelligence sharing and national security of states (United Nations Office of Counterterrorism (UNOCT), 2024). Further, UNOCT argues that sustained investment in capacity building promotes community resilience since it addresses structural weaknesses exploited by terrorist networks thus fostering interagency and international collaboration which is essential for comprehensive terrorism management.

Therefore, in order for a States to strengthen her capacity to prevent, respond to, and recover from terrorism attacks, capacity building is a crucial strategy. In conclusion, effective management of terrorism calls for a multifaceted strategy that includes fostering community resilience, improving the legal and law enforcement systems through training and finally embracing international collaboration.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

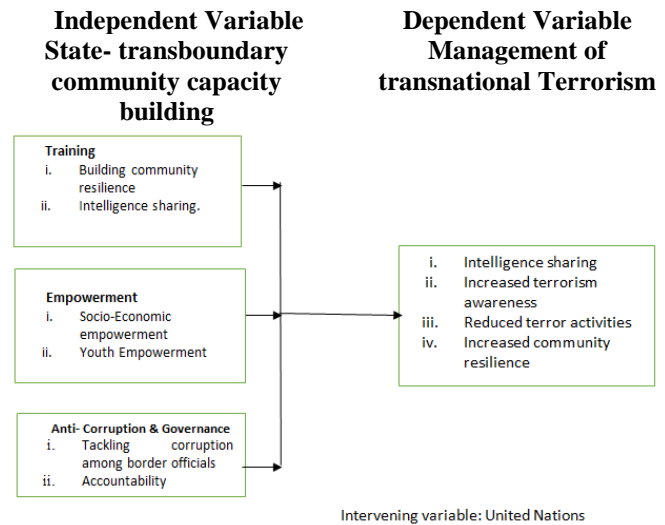
A. SECURITIZATION THEORY

Originating from the Copenhagen School, securitization theory provides a valuable analytical framework for understanding how terrorism is constructed as a security threat within political contexts. The theory argues that issues become security concerns because political leaders successfully frame them as existential threats that require extraordinary measures beyond normal politics (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). In the context of terrorism management, this theoretical framework explains how states justify the modification of security policies, emergency legislation, surveillance practices, and military interventions through emphasizing that terrorism is an imminent and exceptional danger to state and societal security. As such, securitization theory clearly explains the discursive processes through which counterterrorism measures are established and legitimized by states experiencing terrorists' attacks.

Securitization theory is relevant to this study since it explains the rationale behind counter terrorism measures implemented by governments. However, this theory has been criticized for being Euro-centric. Critics such as Wæver, 1995 caution that the theory undermine democratic accountability especially in the global south. It falls short of capturing the socio-political reality of all states in the global south where security practices are entwined with historical, colonial, and postcolonial power dynamics such as pluralistic structures and shattered legitimacy. For example, in many African borderland areas like the southern Kenya-Somalia border, security may be implemented through community-based mechanisms that are outside the original purview of the theory. Additionally, the theory oversimplifies complex local realities, politicizes security responses, and marginalizes

transboundary communities. These limitations make it less effective as a framework for analyzing counter terrorism strategies.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



The above framework posits that state-border community capacity building in terrorism management along the southern Kenya-Somalia border involves multiple interconnected variables that strengthen security, resilience, and cooperation. This involves training a, socio-economic development, and anti-corruption & governance. This conceptual framework supports various research done by UNDP, 2023; IOM, 2022; Mkutu, 2020. These studies examine some of the factors contributing to radicalization into violent extremism, including economic hardship, historical marginalization, land injustices, drugs, problems at the family level and poor relationships with state security agencies.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES AND TERRORISM MANAGEMENT ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA- SOMALIA BORDER

Kenya- Somalia border is one of the world's most dangerous border for transnational terrorism (Global Terrorism Index, 2024). Since 1963, this border has been characterized by prolonged and severe intra- and inter-state conflict, resulting in instability, poverty, and political isolation, thus becoming vulnerable to terrorist exploitation. Many scholars believe that Somalia's unstable situation, which has been without a fully functioning national government since 1991, contributes significantly to the spread of transnational terrorism. The security situation on Kenya's southern Kenya-Somalia border has deteriorated even more in recent years following her military intervention in Somalia in 2011 and also due to the rise of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) in Somalia, a terrorist-linked group that defeated a coalition of US-backed warlords in 2006 (Bloomfield, 2006).

Despite ongoing terrorism attacks in Somalia, the border along the southern Kenya-Somalia have long stretches of unsecured border territory. Further to this, the border does not have better developed communication equipment, roads and institutions such as schools and hospitals. On the other hand, lack of response by the government to rising expectations by border communities for better socioeconomic conditions has contributed to youth radicalization into violent extremism. Al-Shabab terrorism group has considered these to be more conducive to their operations. In addition, the region is characterized by religious assertiveness which has resulted in additional tensions between state and Muslim border communities thus creating another enabling environment for the community members to resort to terrorism.

To deal with this problem, a number of security efforts have been made. To begin with, the Kenya government deployed its Kenya Defense Forces in October 2011 to Somalia to respond to numerous Al-Shabaab subsequent infiltrations into the Kenya- Somalia border where several security personnel and foreign workers were attacked, taken into hostage and others killed (Oluoch, 2007). Although the Government of Kenya was prompted to implement a militarily intervention in Somalia to combat terrorism, the unprecedented reach and potential of al-Shabaab terrorist group and its affiliates constitute a new danger that still challenges standing security institutions charged with providing national security (Chumba, 2017). To manage transnational terrorism within this borderland region, capacity-building initiatives in training is required to increase community resilience, strengthen law enforcement and judicial systems, promote international cooperation and improve security measures.

B. TRAINING

Training enhances the abilities required for effective management of terrorism. It equips border communities and security officers with skills in local intelligence gathering. Capacity-building through continuous training enhances community resilience and strengthens institutional preparedness against terrorism

a. BUILDING BORDER COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO PREVENT RADICALIZATION INTO TERRORISM ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA-SOMALIA BORDER

In places where cross-border insecurity is prevalent, building border communities resilience is essential to preventing radicalization into terrorism. Terrorist organizations use narratives of grievance, identity, and economic opportunity to take advantage of structural weaknesses created by the porous borders, historical marginalization, very little state presence, and ongoing poverty within the borderland communities. According to research conducted by Adan and Oluteyo, 2025, the operational influence of terrorist networks in the Horn of Africa and governance deficiencies are intimately related to insecurity in the Kenya-Somalia borders (Adan & Oluteyo, 2025). Furthermore, Farah et al., 2025 determined that

socioeconomic marginalization and isolation are important elements maintaining the recruitment dynamics and resilience of extremists in the area (Farah et al., 2025). Therefore, tackling these structural weaknesses through capacity building initiatives is necessary to strengthen community resilience (UNDP, 2024a).

Along the Kenya- Somalia borderlands, community-led peacebuilding and capacity- building programs are essential for fostering community resilience and halting extremists from taking advantage of regional crises. This porous border has demonstrated that local self-governance structures and cross-border community engagement methods build resilience lower tensions and enhance cooperation between state and non-state actors (Institute of Development Studies, 2025). Furthermore, Sigsworth et al., 2025). found out that capacity- building programs with a resilience theme that include women, youth, religious leaders, and civil society organizations greatly increase trust and lessen susceptibility to violent extremist narratives (Sigsworth et al., 2025). Such programs address community's social division that extremist groups frequently exploit by encouraging inclusive engagement and enhancing conventional dispute resolution techniques.

Promoting social cohesion and inclusivity within the border communities also help build resilience against terrorism and violent extremism. Promoting inclusivity, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue within all community sectors helps counter extremist narratives. Cultural events, and youth mentorship programs, can strengthen community resilience. Organizing sports and art activities to engage youth and provide a sense of belonging and positive community interaction thus strengthen community resilience and prevent youth radicalization to terrorism.

In this border region that is susceptible to radicalization into terrorism, socioeconomic empowerment of youth and women can prevent recruitment into terrorism. build community resilience. Weak economic infrastructure, high rate of unemployment, and restricted access to education make youth more vulnerable to recruiting incentives provided by extremist organizations (Farah et al., 2025). To advance sustainable peace and security in the borderlands, development programming that supports economic livelihoods and , vocational training, and cross-border trade has been identified as crucial (UNDP, 2024a). Additionally, as safeguards against radicalization, targeted preventing violent extremism (PVE) programs have shown a strong emphasis on enhancing youth involvement and community economic resilience (UNDP, 2024b). Terrorism organizations like al-Shabab become less appealing when border communities see real economic prospects and participation in development processes.

For the southern Kenya-Somalia border to be more effectively in preventing future radicalization into violent extremism, multi-stakeholder, coordinated initiatives that integrate capacity-building programs, governance, and security strategies are necessary. The Kenya's counterterrorism framework places a strong emphasis on collaborative efforts between national and local governments, civil society organizations, and security forces (National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), 2026). According to Adan and Oluteyo, 2025, regional organizations such as Africa

Union highlight the necessity of building community resilience-oriented and capacity- building strategies as opposed to use of state military interventions alone (Adan and Oluteyo, 2025). If long-term resilience is ingrained in the Kenya- Somalia borderland societies, early warning systems are strengthened, and state legitimacy is increased through consistent collaboration between government agencies and border communities.

C. SOCIO - ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN TERRORISM MANAGEMENT

Socio-economic empowerment prevents youth radicalization into terrorism by addressing marginalization and unemployment. Additionally, it promotes social inclusion and discourage vulnerable youth from radicalization.

a. SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF BORDER COMMUNITY ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA-SOMALIA BORDER TO PREVENT RADICALIZATION INTO TERRORISM

Border communities along the southern Kenya- Somalia border is prone to radicalization into terrorism due to lack of economic opportunities. Creating meaningful and sustainable empowerment through economic opportunities can promote resilience to terrorism recruitment. Botha, 2014, identified that high youth unemployment and limited livelihood opportunities in Northern Kenya have been identified as push factors that al-Shabab exploit through financial incentives and promises of belonging (Botha, 2014; NCTC, 2016). Vocational training, small enterprise development, cross-border trade facilitation, and education initiatives can reduce economic precarity while promoting constructive civic engagement. Evidence from development-based prevention programs suggests that when young people perceive viable economic futures and social mobility pathways, their vulnerability to recruitment into violent extremist networks declines significantly (UNDP, 2017; World Bank, 2015).

Economic empowerment of women and youth is key to managing terrorism in fragile and porous border regions of Kenya-Somalia border. Badurdeen, 2023 notes that socio-economic marginalization creates fertile ground for terrorism recruitment. Similarly, Wario et. al., 2024 demonstrates that economic hardship and social grievances are among the major drivers contributing to recruitment by Al-Shabaab. These findings directly apply to current study, where socio-economic marginalization, porous border and lack of full state presence in the border intersect to promote transnational terrorism.

Ng'ayo (2023) states that economic disempowerment is actively exploited by terrorist groups, and that addressing these vulnerabilities through inclusive economic and socio-cultural interventions can significantly reduce radicalization into violent extremism. When situated within the Kenya-Somalia border context, these arguments support the idea that economic empowerment as a capacity building initiative aimed at managing transnational terrorism. Similarly, Mesok (2022) criticizes Kenya's state centric counterterrorism strategy for failing to embrace capacity- building initiatives

that enhance local community economic autonomy and decision-making power. In 2011, the Kenya government employed state-centric strategy by deploying Kenya Defense Forces to- Somalia to fight al-Shabab terrorists. This study is of the opinion that combining the above strategy with the socio-economic empowerment of border community could have translated translating to stronger border community networks, and increased resilience against terrorism infiltration. transnational terrorism.

Empowering women and youth enhance participation in local peace committees, strengthens trust between communities and state actors, and improves information-sharing on terrorism threats. In the Kenya-Somalia borderland, such integrated approaches are particularly crucial. By addressing both the economic deprivation and radicalization and recruitment drivers of terrorism, economic empowerment becomes a cornerstone of sustainable peace and state sovereignty in the region.

In conclusion, it is important to note that economic empowerment of border communities along the southern Kenya- Somalia border is central to terrorism management. It reduces vulnerability to recruitment into violent extremism, builds community resilience, and enhances local peacebuilding capacities. This underscores the need for policy frameworks that prioritize inclusive economic development as a key pillar of counter-terrorism strategy in border regions.

b. ENGAGE YOUTH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF TERRORISM ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA-SOMALIA BORDER

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security emphasizes the significance of involving youth as leaders and partners in peacebuilding and urges on member states to expand inclusive youth representation in decision-making at all levels to prevent radicalization into terrorism (UNSC. *Resolution 2050 (2015)*). This Resolution urges member states to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism.

Globally, terrorists' organization have caused violence, destruction, and instability in areas where they operate. In the meanwhile, combating and preventing terrorism particularly in Africa, continues to be difficult due to a lack of adequate knowledge on the phenomenon. Engagement of youth is a key effort that promotes safe spaces and long-term opportunities for managing terrorism.

Youth are in a much better position to foster a culture of tolerance and peace among their peers. They have a talent for communication and mobilization. Engaging and collaborating with them remains a viable way of managing transnational terrorism. Capacity building initiatives such as youth economic empowerment, training and mentorship programs, contributes to peace and development (Piazza, 2006; Botha, 2014). Youth are often targeted for recruitment into violent extremism but also serve as effective partners in prevention efforts. Initiatives such as economic empowerment programs can help them discern right from wrong and reject revenues

from terrorists' propaganda. Youth-led Action integrates them into local and national decision-making processes thus promoting peace will manage transnational terrorism.

c. STATE-YOUTH INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF TERRORISM ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA SOMALIA BORDER

Kenyan government has carried out a number of youth programs in the fight against terrorism through the following ways:

✓ *Policy-related action*

Kenya's counterterrorism architecture has adopted a more all-encompassing framework that includes youth participation as a key element in managing terrorism along the Kenya-Somalia border. These frameworks are the Kenya Anti-Terrorism Bill (2006), the preventive of Terrorism Act No. 30 of 2012, and the National Taskforce on Countering Violent Extremism (2017) which offer institutional, legal, and social frameworks that allow youth to participate in managing terrorism. These initiatives are crucial along the southern Kenya-Somalia border where unemployed youth have historically been at risk of being radicalized into terrorism.

The Kenya National Taskforce on Countering Violent Extremism (2017) advocates a community-centered approach that explicitly recognizes youth as both an important resource in managing terrorism and a victim to terrorism recruitment. Based on Kenya's broader CVE strategy, the County government have institutionalized youth engagement in counter-radicalization initiatives peacebuilding and early warning systems (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2017). In counties along the southern border, such as Garissa and Lamu, youth-focused programs including training, civic education and interfaith dialogues to counter extremist narratives have been implemented. These initiatives are transforming youth from victims of radicalization to active agents of resilience, contributing to intelligence gathering, social cohesion, and the disruption of recruitment networks (Botha, 2014; NCTC, 2017). Thus, this policy framework underscores the importance of addressing unemployment and identity exclusion which are often exploited by Al-Shabab.

The Kenya Anti-Terrorism Bill (2006), established the intellectual framework for identifying terrorism, making radicalization illegal, and setting up institutional coordinating mechanisms. Its tenets guided surveillance strategies and early awareness programs which shield youth from radical indoctrination along the Kenya-Somalia border, where madrassas and unofficial networks have served as recruiting outlets. Nevertheless, the Bill's requires further amendments due to its insufficiency in tackling the socio-cultural aspects of radicalization.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act No. 30 provides a practical legislative framework that incorporates both coercive and participatory aspects of counterterrorism. The Act specifically make radicalization into extremism illegal (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Crucially, it also requires the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) to develop youth awareness campaigns in order to fight terrorism. This has

resulted in youth engagement in community policing activities, reporting suspicious cross-border movements, and taking part in deradicalization and reintegration programs for Somali returnees in border districts like Garissa and Mandera. Kagwanja, 2006, notes that these initiatives show a move toward a hybrid approach that blends social reintegration with law enforcement, acknowledging that youth participation in security governance is essential to successful long-term counterterrorism achievements (Kagwanja, 2006).

✓ *Youth economic empowerment programs and the management of terrorism along the southern Kenya Somalia border*

Economic empowerment has emerged as a key component in the management of terrorism along the southern Kenya-Somalia border, where persistent youth unemployment, poverty, and sociopolitical marginalization lead to radicalism. Capacity-building initiatives like Kazi Mtaani, Ajira Digital, and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund which are built upon Kenya's broader development and security framework, recognizes that long term counterterrorism must address structural drivers of vulnerability (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2017; United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

By empowering economic well-being of the youth, these programs act as a deterrent to radicalization in the Kenyan counties along Kenya-Somalia border. For instance, the Kazi Mtaani program targets unemployed youth and engage them in community service projects including road upkeep, environmental preservation, and urban cleanliness. Kazi Mtaani has alleviated complaints related to marginalization and state neglect hence promoting trust and cohesiveness between the state and the community (Botha, 2014).

Ajira Digital Program creates youth employment by giving young people digital skills that allow them to participate in the global online job market. This program has made it possible for young people to find freelance work in border regions like Garissa, where formal employment possibilities are few (Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs, 2019). Because it increases the potential cost of participating in illegal or extremist activities, this type of economic inclusion is especially important in combating terrorism along the southern Kenya-Somalia border. Since economic vulnerability is a major factor in radicalization in the Horn of Africa, as noted by UNDP (2018), Ajira Digital undermines the financial incentives that terrorist organizations use to entice recruits across the southern Kenya-Somalia border by offering sustainable income flows.

Youth empowerment is further enhanced by the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, which encourages youth entrepreneurship by providing loans, training, and business support services. The Fund has helped build small and medium-sized businesses in industries like livestock trading, retail and transportation in counties of Garissa and Wajir (Republic of Kenya, 2012). In addition to producing revenue, these businesses improve social stability and local community economic resilience, which reduces reliance on illegal cross-border networks. Additionally, engaging youth in Enterprise Development Fund challenges the violent extremists'

narratives and fosters a sense of resilience and self-reliance. In a similar way, the World Bank (2016) highlights the importance of youth economic empowerment programs in marginalized areas such as Garissa County since they minimize youth radicalization into violent extremism.

Economic empowerment initiatives targeting young people requires tackling with the underlying reasons of radicalization, namely economic exclusion and lack of job opportunities. However, integrating them with more comprehensive governance and security measures are necessary for their long-term efficacy and sustainability. The risk of radicalization into violent extremism only persists where there are implementation gaps, but when these measures are successfully implemented, they greatly improve community resilience and lessen the susceptibility of youth to extremist influence (NCTC, 2017; UNDP, 2018).

Engaging youth enhances participation in community peace committees, strengthens trust between border communities and state actors, and improves information-sharing on security threats. These integrated approaches are particularly crucial along the southern Kenya- Somalia border. Engaging youth and empowering them enhances sustainable peace and state sovereignty in the region.

D. ANTI-CORRUPTION, GOVERNANCE AND TERRORISM MANAGEMENT ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA- SOMALIA BORDER

Corruption at border points has been identified as the main cause of insecurity along the frontier. Mutahi, 2018 states that bribery among customs and immigration officials along the Kenya- Somalia border facilitates the smuggling of arms, contraband, and the infiltration of Al-Shabaab operatives into Kenya. This undermines Kenya's sovereignty in regulating cross-border movement and as well as eroding public trust in her security institutions. Botha, 2014 highlights that in Garissa and Mandera counties, corrupt practices among border police have allowed al Shabaab operatives to bypass security checks, contributing to attacks such as the West Gate attacks in Nairobi in 2013 and Garissa University College massacre in 2015. Therefore, anti-corruption reforms are central to strengthening border governance and reducing terrorist infiltrations.

The porous borders and inadequate institutional monitoring have contributed to the long-standing terrorism threats along the southern Kenya-Somalia border. Hoffman, 2017 argues that corruption among the border officials has promoted illegal trade, smuggling, and infiltration by terrorist organizations. Corruption at the Kenya- Somalia porous border has allowed terrorists to obtain weapons, build logistical networks, and cross borders covertly. In Somalia, weak governance structures further compound the problem. Somalia's fragile state institutions have created insecurity vacuums which are exploited by Al-Shabaab (Menkhaus, 2014). Additionally, governance challenges in Kenya have manifested in overlapping jurisdictions between national and county governments, leading to uncoordinated responses to terrorism threats (Anderson & McKnight, 2015). These governance failures not only weaken counter-terrorism

coordination but also lead to mistrust between the border communities and the Kenya government.

The over reliance of militarized approaches as a terrorism management strategy in both Kenya have produced mixed results. Lind et al., 2017 notes that by not implementing effective governance structures in both countries, terrorism cannot be managed effectively. He further says that Kenya's Military intervention (Operation Linda Nchi) in Somalia in 2011 disrupted Al-Shabaab's operations but also provoked retaliatory attacks within Kenya. Kagwanja, 2019 observes that Somalia's reliance on AMISOM and clan-based militias has similarly struggled in vain to dismantle Al-Shabaab's terrorist organization.

Other studies underscore that effective terrorism management requires integrated governance reforms. Mkutu, 2020 states that in Kenya, community policing initiatives in Garissa and Mandera have enhanced trust between border communities and the state, though corruption remains a barrier to its sustainability. Additionally, Hassan, 2021 observes localized governance experiments attempted to restore legitimacy in Somalia is challenged by deep rooted clan politics and weak central authority. In order to address terrorism, anti-corruption initiatives, improved governance, and socioeconomic development must be included into terrorist management along the Kenya-Somalia border. Similarly, Ibrahim and Wario. 2022 posits that governance reforms are necessary for long-term stability in Kenya since radicalization has been facilitated by inadequate governance systems in marginalized border regions.

By incorporating local leaders in decision-making and bolstering community policing, Kenya can decrease dependence on corrupt intermediaries and increase resilience against radicalization (Dawson, 2009). Additionally, reforms pertaining to border security must incorporate anti-corruption measures. This entails strengthening oversight organizations, introducing digital monitoring systems, and screening and rotating border officials (Australian Security Intelligence Organization, 2025). These actions restrict terrorist infiltration and illicit trade by lowering the likelihood of bribery and collusion (Owens IV, 2010).

Despite these initiatives, problems still exist. Governance reforms are too slow to take hold, and corruption is still pervasive. Terrorist organisations are quick to adapt, taking advantage of corruption networks and flaws in governance (Dolnik, 2007). Therefore, to guarantee that reforms are not thwarted by vested interests, sustained political will and regional cooperation are required (Winger & Wilner, 2012).

In summary, combating extremist threats requires addressing corruption among border officials, establish governance systems, and improve regional collaboration. Without these steps, corruption and weakened institutions will leave a governance vacuum where terrorists will continue to flourish.

V. METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was gathered along the southern Kenya-Somalia border. A mixed method research approach was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews were used as methods of data collections. A sample of 400 respondents was drawn from a population of 141, 394 household residing along the study area. Respondents were obtained using purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. In Garissa County in Kenya, 370 respondents were selected, three sub-counties along the Southern Kenya-Somalia border were clustered, with a border community purposefully chosen for questionnaire administration. Similarly, due to terrorist attacks in Dhobley District in Somalia, 30 respondents were selected employing a snowballing sampling technique. The study's method and sources were triangulated to ensure the validity of the findings. Data collected via questionnaires were entered into the SPSS data editor for processing. Both the descriptive and analytical statistics used in this study were generated using the SPSS file.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Following a brief discussion on the contribution of community capacity building- initiatives in the management of international terrorism along the southern Kenya- Somalia, theoretical overview and the study design, this article presents the study findings,. The analysis explores the contribution of state- border community capacity building initiatives in the management of international terrorism along the study region as shown below.

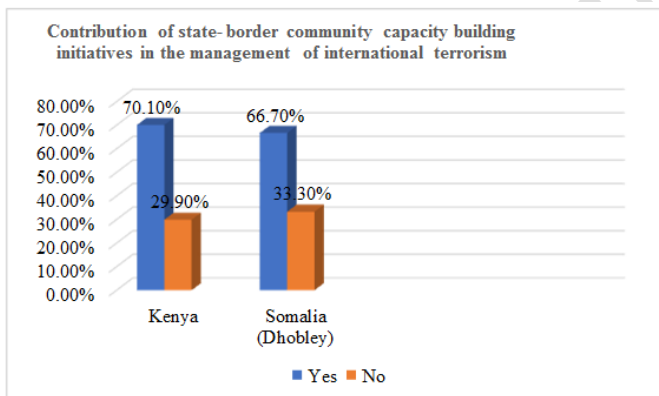


Figure1: Contribution of state- border community capacity building initiatives in the management of international terrorism

The analysis explores the views on contribution of state-border community capacity building initiatives in the management of international terrorism along the southern Kenya- Somalia border. Among 370 participants from Kenya, 280 individuals (70.1%) assert that the government cannot only guarantee complete border security without capacity building, while 100 individuals (29.9%) hold a contrary opinion. In Somalia, specifically in Dhobley District, out of 21 respondents (66.7%) also believe that state- border community capacity building initiatives are crucial in the management of international terrorism, while 9 respondents (33.3%) disagree.

Regarding the crucial role that border communities play for preventing international terrorism along this border region, these findings show a strong consensus in both domains. The general consensus is that effective management of transnational terrorism requires not only community policing efforts but also enhancing capacity building initiatives. Supporting this viewpoint is Neumann (2016), who argue that strengthening local institutions and empowering local communities reduces the appeal of extremist ideologies. According to Neumann, counterterrorism strategies that integrate capacity-building initiatives are more effective than purely coercive measures. Similarly, the Kenya National Crime Research Centre (2018) which stated that apart from using community policing strategy, enhancing capacity building initiatives of the border communities is essential to effectively managing international terrorism.

Types of state- border community capacity building initiatives used in the southern Kenya- Somalia border

The data presented outlines various strategies that state-border community use in managing international terrorism along the southern Kenya-Somalia border.

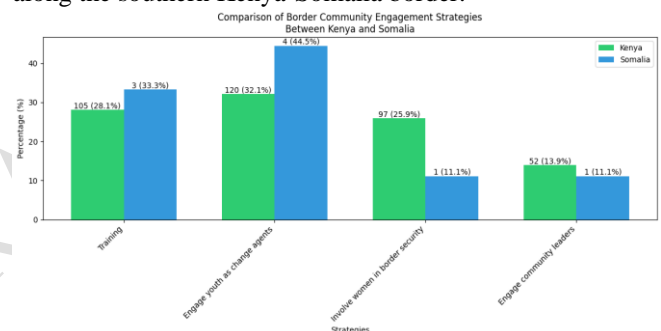


Figure 2: State -Border community Capacity-building initiatives in managing international terrorism along the southern Kenya-Somalia border

a. TRAINING

In Garissa County, Kenya, a total of 113 respondents, representing 28.1%, identified training as a crucial capacity building initiative in management of transnational terrorism. Similarly, in Dhobley, 7 respondents, or 33.3%, highlighted the significance of training. A considerable number of respondents from both Kenya and Somalia acknowledge the critical role of training. Comprehensive training programs enhances community resilience against terrorist threats.

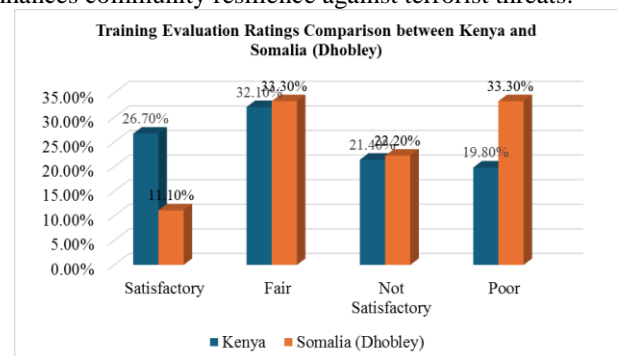


Figure 3: Training and Terrorism Management

From the figure 3 above it is noticeable that while some respondents find the training on local intelligence sharing for terrorism management effective, a considerable number regard it as fair, unsatisfactory, or poor, suggesting that the training initiatives may not adequately address the expectations and needs of the border communities. From the interview, a key informant in Garissa, Kenya noted that: “Most of these trainings are foreign. They have not been tailored to fit into the local setting.” This is supported by Chowdhury (2019) who notes that donor-led training programs often impose foreign models that do not align with local realities. He warns that this undermines sustainability and advocates for context-specific training curricula developed with local community.

Effective training empowers border community members with the necessary skills to recognize and report suspicious terrorist activities, thereby promoting a cooperative relationship between security agencies and the communities. This was alluded by a respondent number 104 in Garissa County Kenya who said: “From 2017, the United States Institute of Peace's Border Security Training Program has played a crucial role in training Kenyan police officers from the Border Police Unit.” This finding is supported by Forest (2012) who emphasizes that specialized training for youth, women, law enforcement and judicial officers equips them with the necessary skills to deter terrorism effectively. He argues that without structured training programs, institutional responses remain weak and vulnerable to extremist exploitation. Additionally, this is also highlighted by one of respondent number 008 in Dhobley District who said: “Training here has transformed the approach to terrorism management. It has built trust between the security officers and border communities thus creating a more effective security network.”

b. ENGAGE YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF TERRORISM ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA- SOMALIA

Globally, youth engagement in the fight against terrorism is increasing (FBI, 2016; Rose & Vale, 2023; Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO), 2025; Ayad, 2025). Most states and non-state actors advocate the use of young people as change agents in narratives that counter terrorism. At the same time, some young people are becoming more susceptible to radicalization due to the extreme poverty affecting their families.

This vulnerability is exacerbated when governments fail to integrate youth in meaningful ways, leaving them marginalized and more likely to be drawn into radicalization into terrorism. Yet, despite these risks, youth continue to play an important positive role in terrorism management by acting as promoters of social cohesion and resilience within their communities. The United Nations Resolution 2242 (2015) urges states to ensure the empowerment of youth as a central strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

Youth as Agents of Change: Kenya vs. Somalia

Survey Responses on Youth Empowerment as a Countermeasure to Radicalization

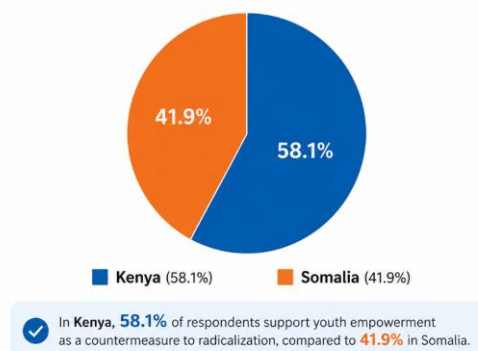


Figure 4: Youth as agents of change in terrorism management

The above findings demonstrate that 58.1 % of the respondents in Kenya strongly endorses youth empowerment as an effective strategy to counter terrorism than 41.9% of the respondents in Somalia. The above disparity suggests that border communities in Kenya may possess relatively greater confidence in youth engagement initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism. The findings further exhibit that youth empowerment initiatives are increasingly perceived in Kenya as effective strategies of building community resilience against terrorism recruitment. These findings are similar to those of the United Nations Development Programme, which established that unemployment, marginalization and socio-economic exclusion are major drivers of radicalization among youth populations in Africa (UNDP, 2017).

Comparatively, the highest percentage in Kenya may also be as a result of expansion of government-supported youth empowerment programs such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Ajira Digital and Kazi Mtaani. These economic empowerment initiatives have contributed to enhancing youth engagement in community resilience-building processes and economic activities. According to Ibrahim and Wario (2022), community-based organizations in Kenya have increasingly engaging vulnerable youth in anti-radicalization campaigns. Similarly, Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom (2017) argue that in Kenya local interventions have strengthened community cohesion and minimized extremist recruitment, especially among unemployed youth living within porous border environments.

The findings are also consistent with the studies conducted by Mercy Corps in 2015 which observed that marginalization, social injustice and high rate of unemployment significantly increase the likelihood of youth engagement in extremist recruitments. This reflects growing recognition that socio-economic inclusion in Kenya can manage transnational terrorism. Furthermore, the Institute of Development Studies, 2023 contends that sustainable youth empowerment initiatives strengthen community trust and enhance state legitimacy, all of which are critical components in managing terrorism within porous border regions.

Conversely, 41.9% response rate in Dhobley, Somalia reflect the enduring systemic challenges affecting youth empowerment efforts in the fragile state. Decades of weak governance, clan and armed conflicts have hindered the implementation of sustainable youth initiatives. Botha (2024)

indicates that youth radicalization into violent extremism in Somalia is driven by economic vulnerability and ideological indoctrination, insecurity, and political grievances. Further, Botha observes that al-Shabab exploits perceptions of marginalization, state failure, and identity-based exclusion to mobilize youth into violent networks. Consequently, these findings acknowledge that youth empowerment alone may be insufficient in the fragile state due to absence of effective governance reforms.

Youth radicalization into violent extremism should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon requiring psychological support, education, and regional cooperation frameworks. This argument is supported by UNDP (2017), which postulates that recruitment into terrorism arises from marginalization, injustices and socio-economic grievances.

Overall, the findings support the wider scholarly position that youth engagement as agents of change in terrorism management constitutes a significant preventative mechanism particularly within contexts where institutional support structures and community engagement mechanisms are relatively functional, as observed in Kenya. Nevertheless, the Somali findings exhibit the limitations of economic empowerment strategies in fragile state characterized by persistent insecurity and weak governance institutions. Therefore, for effective management of terrorism along the southern Kenya–Somalia border, a multidimensional strategy integrating effective state governance, economic empowerment and border community resilience-building is required to address socio-political and economic structural dimensions of terrorism.

Involvement of Women in Terrorism management along the southern Kenya- Somalia border

The engagement of women in terrorism management along the southern Kenya–Somalia border is increasingly understood as both practical and strategic, particularly in Garissa County. In Garissa County borderlands, women occupy key positions within households, markets, and religious networks and these enable them to observe and analyze behavioral changes linked to youth radicalization into violent extremism. Most women traders in this county operate in cross-border markets where they interact with both border communities, enabling them to notice unfamiliar or suspicious movements. Ibrahim and Wario (2022) contend that such embedded social roles make women as the “first observers” in community-based early warning systems. A respondent from Dhobley District in Somalia number 018 recognizes the value of women's involvement in security-related decisions and stated that:

“The experience of women in the management of terrorism here in Dhobley that some al-Shabab are influenced to stop terrorism activity when faced with the prospect of having to explain their actions to their mothers.”

In Garissa County, women's participation in community policing structures such as Nyumba Kumi has also enhanced terrorism management efforts. Women representatives within Nyumba Kumi clusters have been able to identify new arrivals suspected of links to extremist networks by sharing information with chiefs and police officers. Omwakwe and

Muiya (2025) note that despite limited institutional recognition, such grassroots reporting has strengthened intelligence flows between communities and formal security agencies, improving preventive response mechanisms to terrorism attacks.

Women also play an important role in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former individuals exiting extremist involvement. In Garissa County, women involved in Nyumba Kumi and peace committees have supported reintegration by mediating community suspicion against families linked to radicalisation, encouraging acceptance of “at-risk youth” returning from detention or screening, preventing social exclusion that could push individuals back to extremist networks. Additionally, In Fafi Sub-County along the Kenya-Somalia border corridor zone, female religious teachers (*ustadhat*) have facilitated reintegration through Qur'anic teaching that emphasizes on peace and non-violence, correcting extremist interpretations of jihad and counselling youth about radicalization into violent extremism. Mutisya (2023) highlights that such women-led reintegration efforts significantly reduce recidivism by addressing economic vulnerability, which is a key driver of extremist recruitment along the Kenya- Somalia border.

Despite the role of women in managing terrorism, however, their engagement is limited by due patriarchal factors. In areas like Liboi and Fafi along the Kenya–Somalia border, women who report suspicious activity often face intimidation or social exclusion and this discouraging their active participation. This finding is consistent with sentiments expressed by a respondent number 230 in Kenya, who asserts that some community members do not significantly report any terrorists suspects due to fear of retaliation: “I am afraid to report any location of terrorists; they may retaliate by hanging me in the middle of the night.” This response affirms how perceived risks of punishment undermine women engagement in counterterrorism efforts and elucidates the pervasive climate of insecurity, particularly in along the southern Kenya-Somalia border regions. Similarly, these concerns have been documented by Ibrahim & Wario, 2022; Botha, 2014 where they advanced the view that the fear of retribution from extremist groups discourages information sharing between the community members and the security agencies thus weakening community-based surveillance mechanisms.

c. ANTI-CORRUPTION GOVERNANCE AND TERRORISM MANAGEMENT ALONG THE SOUTHERN KENYA- SOMALIA BORDER

Various studies support the contention that corruption weakens state sovereignty and creates conducive environments for terrorism. Shortland and Varese (2014) highlight a causal relationship between corruption and terrorism across a large cross-section of countries. They found out that higher corruption levels significantly increase terrorist activity across a large cross-section of countries. Similarly, Chayes (2015) did a cross-regional analysis of selected countries and noted that deep-rooted political corruption sustains terrorism since it weakens rule of law and erodes institutional legitimacy. The findings supports that of Kenyan case of 75% which clearly indicate that anti-corruption

frameworks plausibly contribute to more intelligence sharing, and enhanced trust between state- citizen (Transparency International, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

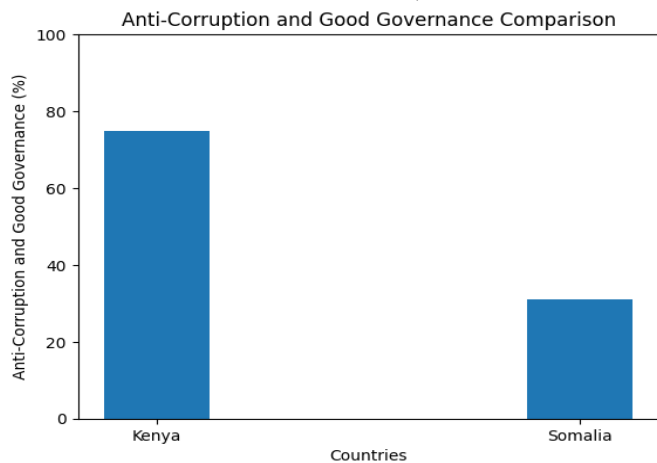


Figure 5: Anti- Corruption governance and terrorism management along the southern Kenya- Somalia Border

On the Somalia side of the above chart, 31% of the respondents believe that there is good governance and anti-corruption measures in Somalia. This reflects a significantly weaker performance in anti-corruption and good governance. Somalia's low score is consistent with its prolonged history of state fragility and state failure in 1991. Rotberg (2004) contends that failed states typically exhibit weak governance structures in which corruption becomes systemic problem due to the absence of effective government. This has been translated into fragmented authority which is not in total control of her border. Similarly, Le Billon (2003) and Chêne (2009) note that in conflict zones, corruption is often embedded within survival networks, where political elites, militias, and business actors engage in rent-seeking behavior. This perhaps explains why al- Shabaab terrorists have been able to sustain their operations for decades,

In addition, Menkhaus (2014) highlights that in Somalia, corruption and weak governance structures have enabled Al-Shabaab to exploit governance vacuums, provide alternative systems of governance on taxation, and erode state sovereignty. Nevertheless, this is also supported by Fearon and Laitin (2003), who postulate that terrorism is significantly common in failed states. This therefore reflects not only administrative inefficiency but also broader security implications.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

The findings underscored that training, youth engagement, anti-corruption measures and inclusive governance initiatives are central to effective terrorism management along the Kenya-Somalia border. While Garissa demonstrates stronger institutional engagement, corruption remains a critical challenge. Dhobley reflects weak governance structures and border community rely on informal mechanisms. Addressing corruption and empowering youth are therefore central to building resilience and trust between

the communities and the states. The study also established that although capacity building initiatives contribute to terrorism management, it may not be sufficient to address the complexities of terrorism management. It highlights the need for integrating capacity-building efforts with other strategies, such as community policing and socio-cultural engagement to enhance their effectiveness in the management of international terrorism.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlighted the need for more rigorous research and policy action to address some of the changing dynamics on the role of capacity building initiatives in the management of terrorism. There is a need for both civil society actors and government officials to undertake initiatives to resolve some of the root causes of terrorism as well as clan conflict along the southern Kenya- Somalia border. This will create more robust mechanisms for curtailing the influence and role of Al-Shabaab in such conflicts. The findings of the study underscore the need to address the political and resource-based nature of clan conflicts to respond to Al-Shabaab's exploitation of clan conflicts by pitting clans against each other, supplying weapons and/or fighters, and fueling clan and ethnic grievances. The following are the recommendations proposed by the study with the aim of managing terrorism:

✓ *Build a strong transboundary community resilience through training*

This could include building community resilience through specific programmes and initiatives that could include the establishment of agricultural support programmes, microfinance, education and literacy programmes and finally access to credit to provide micro loans to women and youth. Given the nature of al-Shabab recruitment, these programmes directed at empowering and equipping young people with skills and capacities for formal employment or providing grants to youth to set up their own businesses.

✓ *Resolving underlying drivers of clan conflicts.*

There is a need for both the state and non-state actors to build and strengthen platforms for clan-level dialogue for conflict resolution. Currently, civil society organisations and NGOs have sought to address longstanding concerns, especially regarding natural resource sharing and border disputes. These platforms need to be strengthened to foster equitable distribution of resources and employment opportunities across all clans and thereby reduce cases of marginalization and promote clan cohesiveness. Additionally, such platforms also need to contend with how external actors such as Al-Shabaab may be mediating such conflicts and engage with the positions that clans need to take collectively to mitigate the risk of such involvement.

✓ *Investing in Modern security technology at the border*

Kenya and Somalia should invest in modern surveillance technology and strengthen patrol routes along the Kenya

government should invest in modern surveillance technology and strengthen patrol routes along the border. Given the proliferation of small arms and the smuggling of goods owing to the porous nature of the border, investment in modern surveillance technology will significantly disrupt the free movement of goods for al-Shabab.

border. Investing in modern technology will lead to improved communication, improved engagement in peace talks and reconciliation initiatives among the security forces and the border community hence enhancing early-warning systems and response framework.

✓ *Promoting anti-corruption Governance.*

Both countries should tackle corruption among border officials to reduce illegal infiltration of al Shabab. This is possible if accountability mechanisms are effectively implemented in the law enforcement institutions. Corruption governance will reduce grievances of extremists exploit and enhance the legitimacy of state security officers at the borderland.

✓ *Integrate capacity-building efforts with community policing initiatives*

While capacity building alone may not be sufficient to address the complexities of terrorism management, there is need for integrating capacity-building efforts with other strategies, such as community policing and communities' socio-cultural engagement, to enhance its effectiveness.

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