

# Radicalisation: Lessons learned in Eastern Africa

AWEPA: Talking Points  
8 October 2015

Dr Anneli Botha  
Senior Researcher: Institute for Security Studies  
[abotha@issafrica.org](mailto:abotha@issafrica.org)

# Introduction

- Understanding WHY & WHO not as simplistic
  1. Underlying reasons even within the same organisations involving different geographical areas can differ = Kenya & Somalia research
  2. Make a distinction between:
    - External circumstances = WHY
    - Psychology of the person who actually join = WHO
    - Will also not focus on HOW
- ★ Not all people confronted by the same circumstances will be radicalised
- ★ Not all people being radicalised will join the organisation (violent / non-violent radicalisation)
- ★ Not all people who join will take another persons life

# Socio-economic circumstances

- No link between poverty and terrorism: only 4% of Al-Shabaab in Kenya listed economic circumstances as the reason
- Disconnect between statements made by politicians around the world & what empirical research has proven
- Instead 'relative deprivation' = when I compare my situation with another & in my mind I deserve the same BUT (in my mind) I do not have what I deserve due to my ethnic/religious background
- Two elements:
  1. Identity - especially ethnic / religious identity bind us as human beings to belong = used by extremists & to justify (Al-Shabaab Kenya 87% joined for their religion)
  2. Perceptions - does not see the person, but the 'collective' = "us versus them" especially if there is evidence of corruption / nepotism

# Solution to relative deprivation

## Education

- Kenya research showed that the majority of members (Al-Shabaab & MRC) only had primary school education
- Without education person will not be able to have a career other than low-income employment
- Education even necessary to make a success after receiving micro-loans in setting up a business (Uganda research)
- Education opens up a persons world & mind to other realities
- Education determine whether & extend the individual will have access to information & being able to form his/her own opinions

- Those radicalised do not understand their own religion because they blindly follows a religious figure (authority BUT own agenda) = cannot read original text

## **INTRODUCED BY?**

Kenya: 38% friends + 34% religious figure

Somalia: 30% friends BUT only 4% by religious figure

- Limited ability to debate / refute the ideas of another "better qualified"
- Get children back in school followed by creating new opportunities = development

## **2. Development of the greater good & equal opportunities for all**

# Political frustration

- Most critical driving factor driving marginalization
- Trust in politicians? = research in Kenya & Uganda showed that all interviewed lost complete trust in politicians
  - ★ Politicians only look after their own interests & a few close to them
- Trust in the political process?
  - ★ Limited trust in Kenya, Uganda / more trust in Somalia
  - ★ Do not consider elections can bring change = WHY?
    - Corrupt & not even worth participating
  - ★ More extreme circumstances: Does not even recognize the political process

## Reason **WHY** respondents joined al-Shabaab?

- Kenya: 87% religion
- Somalia: 27% economic / 25% economic + religious reasons
- MRC: 25% ethnic & 21% political BUT 40% linked economic with ethnicity & religion

## RELIGION UNDER THREAT?

Kenya: 97%

Somalia: 96%

## WHO IS BEHIND THIS THREAT?

Kenya: 49% government & 24% other religion

Somalia: 44% External enemy & 34% external enemy & other religion

## WHO IS 'US'

Kenya: 68% al-Shabaab & 32% Muslim

Somalia: 58% al-Shabaab & Muslim & 30% al-Shabaab

## WHO IS 'THEM'?

- Kenya: 67% other religion & 30% Kenyan government
- Somalia: 55% other country (Ethiopia, US, AMISOM) & 27% other religion
- MRC: 52% Kenyan government & 43% other ethnic groups (Coast vs Nairobi)

Ability of extremists to manipulate religion to manipulate religious identity turning I to "us"



# Final catalyst

- Why did you join / what was the final 'push'?
  - ★ Kenya:
    - 'killing of my imam / leader' = extrajudicial killings
    - Government 'hate Islam'...
    - I / someone close to me was arrested = ethnic / religious profiling
- The way the state respond to terrorism is probably the most important factor driving marginalization & radicalisation
  - Corruption: local officials the face of government
  - Arbitrary arrests
  - Torture
  - Intimidation
  - Murder - Extrajudicial killings

# Urgent need to

- Conduct empirical research on the reasons why people join organisations & develop a tailored strategy = not copy & paste
- Develop a strategy to keep security agencies in line when it's being implemented
- Intelligence crucial to identify the suspect and investigate within the framework of the law = cannot allow police/military to act outside the framework of the law
- More important build an inclusive national identity while respecting the differences BUT equal access to opportunities / resources