

**SPACE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN TACKLING VIOLENT EXTREMISM:  
ENGENDERING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN KENYA**

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## ABSTRACT

In Africa's history of peace, conflict, and security, one of the most challenging dynamics is the evolution of violent extremism. Despite the magnitude of this problem, most of the programmes for mitigation still over rely on Western donor support as opposed to national financing by the affected African states. Many interventions are therefore designed based on the Western epistemology. The programme design, consequently, confound exclusion of subaltern voices, that also affect available space for indigenous African women in the initiatives for tackling violent extremism. The study, therefore, seeks to examine the dynamics of exclusion based on the provisions of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. Phenomenology was used to design a qualitative research, based on Constructivist Grounded Theory (CTG). This design takes a constructivist approach that moves beyond the basic problem-solving methods. Primary data was collected through interviews with 22 participants, purposively sampled among programme staff of state and non-state agencies. Secondary data was capture by document review to complement the interviews. Analysis was guided by Conflict Transformation Theory in concurrence with Afrocentric reflections.

Consequently, empirical findings demonstrate that most interventions for countering violent extremism are technically limited by conceptualisations and constructions about terrorism and violent extremism, intrigued in the knowledge systems of the foreign supporting agencies. These dynamics do not only manipulate the local understanding about violent extremism but are also likely to suppress the local voices and subaltern knowledge structures. Interviews, for instance, demonstrate how indigenous practitioners and local beneficiaries struggle to be relevant, and to 'fit in' to the 'international domain'. Given the underlying contextual circumstances, African women unfortunately, find themselves isolated in the subjugated space of the informal interventions. Incidentally, it is within the 'informality' where indigenous knowledge is produced, shared, and actualised, hence, crowding out indigenous knowledge as being informal substantially obscures the desired space for African women to take active role in tackling violent extremism.

Despite the underlying systemic issues, findings provide evidence that sustainable inclusion of women is a possibility without creating some polarising binary of male against female actors. Indigenous intervention frameworks, for instance, creates agency exercised by women and enhances opportunities for increasing the visibility of women in the interventions. Enhanced agency is thus drawn from an empowerment approach based on an Afrocentric model of Transformative Agency. The *Africanness* of the framework is devised in the three firestones model, called *Hamasisha*, which espouses local positionality in the knowledge production process to contest the [mis]representation of African women as victims, jihadi brides or as mothers. Instead, the *Hamasisha* model recognises [African] indigenous women as substantive knowledge producers in tackling violent extremism, portraying that the universal or 'global knowledge' in CVE can preclude gender inclusion.

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## **DEDICATION**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ACSRT	African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATPU	Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (Kenya)
AU	African Union
BKBM	Being Kenyan Being Muslim
CAPs	County Action Plans
CGT	Constructivist Grounded Theory
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMT	Conflict Management Theory
CRT	Conflict Resolution Theory
CSOs	Civil Society organisations
CT	Conflict Transformation
CTS	Critical Terrorism Studies
CTT	Conflict Transformation Theory
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DfID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
GAD	Gender and Development
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
GWOT	Global War on Terror
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
KTI	Kenya Transition Initiative
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission (Kenya)
NCRC	National Crime Research Centre (Kenya)
NCTC	National Counter Terrorism Centre (Kenya)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSC	National Steering Committee

ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
PBA	Peacebuilding Architecture
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
PREACT	Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
SEED	Sustainable Employment and Economic Development
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
STRIVE	Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism
TSCTP	Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US or USA	United States of America
USAID	United State Agency for International Development
VE	Violent Extremism
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

## **PART I: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **CHAPTER ONE: PRELIMINARIES**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The preliminaries chapter presents the mission of the study which is embedded in the challenge that requires Africa and Africans to be accountable for their initiatives for security and peace purposely to address violent extremism. The contextual dilemma in both knowledge production, and to a great extent, the constrictions in contemporary interventions for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), are highlighted to explain how many countries in Africa continue to struggle with foreign influence to create balance between the preventive approaches led by the Civil Society organisations (CSOs) and military interventions by the state. While emphasising the situation in Kenya, the chapter provides the connection between response mechanisms and the prevailing gender inequalities which excludes the indigenous African women from the mainstream interventions. The statement of the problem and the rationale for this study, therefore, brings about the intersection between the lack of participation by African women based on local paradigms, and the global prospects based on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

As we progress through the first quarter of the 21st century, different forms of violent conflicts continue to adversely affect many African countries. The conflict situation is compounded by elusive peace that also pervades countries considered stable on the continent. This has drawn a lot of concern, culminating in the rallying call that “Africa needs to pay more attention to its peace and security and, more vitally, pay attention to the increasing interest that attaining peace should be the responsibility of Africans themselves” (Burgess, 1998, p. 37). Evolving peace and conflict situations confront African countries with the dual demand that they generate their own national frameworks for peacebuilding and the work to guarantee the protection of human rights and equality in the process.

In line with the clarion call, Africa should take responsibility for organizing its multilateral continental operations, especially for building peace in this era of scarce resources and fragile governments (Burgess, 1998). The call also points to



the imperative need for home-grown initiatives for peace that shift attention from international support to local processes for sustainable peace and stability. Such change has been elusive in many contexts of the African post-colonial experience (Karbo & Virk, 2018). While problems associated with violent conflicts throughout the history of Africa may not necessarily be a new phenomenon, it is apparent that the situations are rapidly evolving as the nature and dynamics of complex conflicts keep shifting (Karbo & Virk, 2018).

One of the dynamics in African peace, security and conflict history is the evolution of violent extremism. In the recent past, the evolution of violent extremism alongside its destructive impact has been cause for great concern. It not only sets in motion crucial aspects of reversal to development gains already made in the continent, it also threatens to stunt prospects for social welfare for decades to come (United Nation Development Program [UNDP], 2012). A few countries seem to experience a paradigm shift; from celebrating paltry industrial advancement attained through technological revolution, to being pre-occupied with engagements in violent extremism as a threat (Ganor, 2009; Hellsten, 2016; Sheikh, 2016). In the same way, some countries continue to experience sharp declines in the tourism industry that has been the strength and source of foreign capital in different countries (Hellsten, 2016). Increasingly, their economies are more threatened by the fear of violent extremist attacks than by inter-state wars in different parts of the world.

The *African Journal for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism* has, on several occasions, reported that violent extremism has emerged as the worst risk to human security in Africa over the last three decades (Kah, 2017). More specifically, Africa has suffered escalating wave in extremist violent attacks, with the several “incidents rising from about 3000 in 2006 to nearly 18,000 in 2015” (Adelaja & George, 2019, p. 111). Moreover, between 2015 and 2017, additional incidents of attack in Africa were estimated to average 1,500 attacks annually (African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism [ACSRT], 2017). That intensity of violence is widespread in the Eastern parts of Africa, the North West of Africa, and Central regions of Africa (African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism [ACSRT], 2017; Williams, 2018).

Based on the Global Terrorism Index, deaths resulting from terrorism made the highest increment (up by 80 percent) in 2014. This presents the largest annual increase in the last two decades (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP], 2015). Although core extremist activities globally keep shifting by geographical focus, the problem is rapidly spreading to more countries, with those experiencing more than 500 deaths per year rising from five to eleven, which constitutes a 120 percent increment in the last decade.

On the contrary in Europe, mortalities from violent extremism fell from more than 200 before 2017 to 62 by 2018. Within a span of one year, only two attacks claimed more than five lives after their decade-long peak of 11 mortalities from an incident in 2015. Likewise, the frequency of incidents of violent extremism also declined by 40 percent by 2018 (Institute for Economics & Peace [IEP], 2019). This forms a major paradox compared with circumstances in the territories most affected by activities of Al Qaida and ISIS in Middle East and South Asia, as well as those affected by Boko Haram and Al Shabaab in Africa, which accounts for 93 percent of all mortalities from violent extremism between 2002 and 2018 (IEP, 2019).

Based on statistical facts documented by IEP, a paradox emerges from the very sense that prevalence in the Western world has accounted for just 2.6 percent of the reported victims of violent extremism worldwide between the years 2000 and 2014, reflecting a relatively small proportion of mortality rates. That small number includes about 3000 people killed in one incident on September 11, 2001 in the United States (Chaliand & Blin, 2016).

In essence, if the single incident dubbed 9/11 is removed, the prevalence to terrorism in Western countries drops to a meagre 0.5 percent. Despite such evidence, it is the rare attacks in the West that dominated global intervention budgets and received the highest attention of global media agencies (Chaliand & Blin, 2016). In the same manner, global P/CVE interventions are, seemingly, more likely to be determined by the West than by the evidence or experience of most devastated locations in Africa. In that context, there are six new countries (*Cameroon, Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Yemen*)

that report over 500 deaths per year (globally). Nigeria has been classified under a higher impact level alongside Syria and Iraq (IEP, 2015). It is already evident from such data that most of the countries affected are in Africa. Kenya is ranked at position eighteen while Nigeria is ranked among the top five out of 162 countries (IEP, 2015). Going by such statistics, Africa continues to experience real escalation in violent extremism that puts more lives at risk.

The situation in some of the most affected sub-regions of Africa is worsening as the extremist groups continue to gain ground and occupy significant locations (Okereke, 2017), recruiting local community members and successfully running “criminal economies” from there (ACSRT, 2017; Falode, 2016). In a few cases, the extremist organisations have worked to win the local support (Agbiboa, 2014; Iyekekpolo, 2016). Extremist groups like Boko Haram also continue to cause devastating havoc as their means of terror evolves from the use of crude weapons to bombs, kidnappings and the abduction of children, some of whom are later deployed as suicide bombers. Boko Haram has infiltrated beyond Nigeria, expanding its reach into neighbouring West African countries (Iyekekpolo, 2016).

Similarly, the greater Horn of Africa is among the regions of the world with highest concentration of violent conflicts. Having set strong base in Somalia, Al Shabaab has conducted some lethal attacks, in most of the neighbouring countries over last two decades, and just like Boko Haram, has persistently pledged allegiance to the Al-Qaeda group (Kessels, Durner, & Schwartz, 2016; Mkutu & Opondo, 2019). As a result, most Eastern Africa countries continue to fall victim to the Al Shabaab extremist group and, in response, witness increased state-perpetrated violence.

To demonstrate the significant and adverse impact of violent extremism (VE) in some African countries, the United Nation Development Program [UNDP] (2012) reports, for instance, how there has been a drop in the tourism revenue in Kenya - estimated at 25 percent- as a result of threat by Al Shabaab. Similarly, Nigeria experienced a decline of 21 percent in their foreign investments between the years 2000 and 2015 following increased attacks by Boko Haram. Such challenges bring about extreme inequality and marginalisation, mostly affecting women. Young women have since become easy targets for recruitment - blamed on such

marginalisation - that also pushes some women to claim active roles in extremist organizations (DiLanzo, 2018).

In this regard, elaborate mitigation approaches gradually gain the attention of state and non-state actors globally, with expanding cross-border collaborations. This draws from literature that shows how Western powers have invested a lot of resources in Africa supporting a couple of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs (Lakhani, 2012). In fact, some international interventions in Africa have been criticised for lacking contextual considerations. This occasionally reflects on political policy often informed by intelligence surveillance rather than context based empirical research (Aldrich, 2014; Ali, 2017). Consequently, Malinda Smith (2016) raises several questions about the numerous military campaigns by the Bush administration, and more specifically for securing Africa, in the pretext of the global war on terrorism after 9/11. Further doubts emerge about the reasons behind designating of Africa as a frontier in the “Global War On Terror” (GWOT), while three years before then – August 1998 – they saw no interest in supporting the African citizens who perished in Kenya and Tanzania after the simultaneous attacks of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. This concern raises valid questions about “whether the emphasis placed on counter-terrorism measures on the African continent has anything for securing Africa” (Smith, 2016, p. 10).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In comparison with other African countries, Kenya is a common target of extreme violence. In the past, most tragic attacks have been witnessed in Kenya like the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998, killing at least 220 Kenyan citizens (Cannon & Pkalya, 2017; Counter-Extremism Project, 2018). More recently, a series of attacks have been conducted by the Al-Shabaab group including the Westgate attack in 2013 that left 67 people dead and the Garissa University attack in 2015 where 148 students were killed (Counter-Extremism Project, 2018; Mkutu & Opondo, 2019; Mueller, 2018). The later incidents from January 2019, when the Dusit-D2 Hotel in Nairobi was attacked, leaving 23 people dead and scores injured, manifest the continued escalation. Despite the magnitude of the problem, most of the programmes that focus on preventing and countering violent extremism tend to rely on Western donor support, are designed based on a Western epistemology and

continue to significantly adopt donor policy initiatives – and ignores indigenous perspectives.

Noting that many studies on violent extremism emerge from within the dominant Western views some of the local discourses are likely to be missing in the African response to issues of violent conflict (Mkutu & Opondo, 2019). Some studies might have simply adopted Western assumptions, despite some generalizations of universal context scenarios, hoping that what works in one country (in the West) can easily be adopted in another (in Africa). Analysis of international and policy research should therefore question not only the relevance of their strategies, but also their applicability to analysis of the issues in the contexts of the global South. Lemke (2003), for instance, argues that any “unquestioned assumptions of universal patterns, coupled with unwillingness to conceive of political entities existing at different levels of empirical statehood render research on violent extremism poorly equipped to understand Africa’s dynamics” (p.114). This can be said of the continental and local programmes supported by US and EU based agencies. Consequently, “critical facts and perspectives of Africa would be effectively omitted from prevailing peace and conflict studies theorizing and data set construction” (Omenma & Hendricks, 2018, p.765).

To comprehend these dilemmas, this study explores the possibilities of developing contextual explanation about the initiatives for P/CVE that not only seek sustainable peace, but also to incorporate aspects of equality and social justice. While interrogating the local understanding against the dominant perspectives for CVE as a source of exclusion, the study also seeks to examine the prevailing gender perspectives as one such form of exclusion. The connection between response mechanisms and gender issues brings about the link between local paradigms and the global peace initiatives based on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai (2016) ably point to this crucial desire to address the inconsistent situation of violent extremism on women, which emphatically reveals the conditions for gender-inclusive interventions through conflict transformation.

### **1.3 Purpose, Objectives and Research Questions**

The study aims to explore the potential of existing programmes that tackle violent extremism in Kenya to become more gender inclusive and reflective of, and responsive to, the experiences of women in the local African context. Beyond this broad purpose, there are three specific objectives that the study aims to achieve:

- i. To establish how dominant perspectives, based on Western constructions about violent extremism, influence local mechanisms for tackling violent extremism in Kenya.
- ii. To explore how interventions or programmes generate structural barriers that undermine the space for African women to address violent extremism.
- iii. To improve on the theory and practice of conflict transformation in order to accommodate Afrocentric attributes for enhancing the space for indigenous women in the CVE interventions.

Contemplating these objectives, this study navigates the crucial debates linking practice and theory for addressing violent extremism by asking the following questions:

- i. How do Western constructions of violent extremism influence contextual mechanisms for tackling violent extremism in Kenya?
- ii. How do interventions or programmes generate structural barriers that undermine the space for African women in addressing violent extremism?
- iii. How can the space for indigenous African women be enhanced in the practice of CVE interventions using the theory of Conflict Transformation, based on an Afrocentric model?

### **1.4 Rationale for the Study**

Contrary to some popular expectations in parts of Africa, the removal of direct imperial encumbrance from the continent did not “usher in an era of peace and stability” (Karbo & Virk, 2018, p. 23). Based on such a background, Schmelzle and Fischer (2009) observe that the building of peace remains at a crossroads. They question the inherent capacity and intentions of the international community for solving conflicts while they remain inadequately informed about the intense risk of

the more complex conflicts, like violent extremism. Due to further limitations such as the denial of, or inadequate access to basic rights and ineffective participation in society, Adelaja and George (2019) and Schmelzle and Fischer (2009) argue that armed conflicts and extremist violence have since received scant attention in many affected African countries. A first justification, therefore, points to the need to engage effectively with peacebuilding approaches to inform the contemporary strategies for CVE, and to generate “real” peace and security.

#### **1.4.1 Interrogating ontological and epistemological shortcomings in CVE approaches**

Concerns around inadequate context-sensitive research on violent conflicts points to the broad international interventions that often neglect the micro-conditions shaping local conflicts. To a degree, the studies on CVE in the African context, “perpetuate ontological violence”, which sustains “the suppression and silencing of indigenous ways of conceptualisation” (Walker, 2004, p. 527). It, therefore, implies that the attainment of political independence in Africa, for more than half a century, has not significantly changed the hegemonic relationships between colonial powers and their former colonies in Africa. The biased relationships continue to thrive through military partnerships (Karbo & Virk, 2018). This study therefore pursues the strategic call by Walker (2004) to address the “ontological violence of westernization by decolonizing” the strategies used in the interventions for tackling violent extremism (Walker, 2004, p. 526).

Thus, it is critical to examine what constitutes the lived experiences of communities that directly experience, witness and interact with the actions of violent extremists and how they respond within their own settings (Iyekekpolo, 2016; Njeri, 2019). Deconstructing the colonial continuities in CVE interventions can illuminate the local dynamics, including institutional support systems, by highlighting existing spaces for both men and women to take active roles in the resilience processes. These initiatives thus, seek to examine different aspects of culture and other informal institutions, if any, that expands the understanding of how societies interpret issues related to violent extremism based on their social relations and the system of stratification, of which they are part (Bülow, 1992; Sommers, 2019). This

research therefore attempts to question, among other issues, the overemphasis by some CVE research on Islamism, as “an equivalent” of violent extremism, based mostly on the predominant Western paradigm that is closely connected to the GWOT campaign.

Similarly, the study explores issues of epistemological exclusion in CVE. In this case, the study seeks to explore how ideas generate meanings “through interactions within different contexts as people explain their predicaments, voice their challenges, and make their own claims” (Bülow, 1992, p. 523). So far, much of what is known about violent extremism in Africa is widely dependent on the international (foreign) policies and interventions. Such situations are more connected to what Dunn (2004, p. 384) refers to as the “Western tourist gaze that often aims at fixing the circumstances in Africa, both in spatial and temporal sites”. It engages with violent extremism as constructed and expressed in Western epistemology and its related interventions that are rooted in Western views by exploring their relevance to the African context.

#### **1.4.2 Pursuing Social Justice Through Enhanced Space for Women in CVE**

Besides the pursuit of indigenous ontological and epistemological balance, this study problematises the predominant Western-informed interventions for CVE that rely on the knee-jerk reactions by actors in Africa. Such models are, often, determined by external interests that use some already developed indicators. Rooted in a constructivist approach, the study emphasises community participation and how gender roles can be mainstreamed within a transformational approach to peacebuilding. Conflict transformation is therefore applied in CVE to deconstruct some orthodox literature that tends to limit the presentation of African women within the prism of the public-private binary stereotypes. The transformational approach also engages with orthodox ideas as portrayed by Badurdeen (2018), for instance, emphasising the traditional gender roles of women as the main values exploited by extremist organizations. Such a stereotypical view tends to dominate the conception of the CVE initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa. Obviously, this perspective has great potential for reinforcing a gendered stereotype, against which the feminists make a stern caution.



This study assumes that such perspectives can deny women – in this case, African women – their agency and capacity to make substantive decisions on violent extremism. Hence, the voice of women is likely lost in the process through the invisible structures and systems like culture, education levels, institutional commitment and other local dynamics that are often widely ignored. The result is the perpetuation of different forms of inequality, part of which include the gender dimension. Accordingly, there is a consensus that substantive inclusion of women in CVE remains to be a limitation in many local programmes in Africa (Azmiya & Goldsmith, 2018; Badurdeen, 2018). It is on such a basis that this study questions the impending stagnation (Jayakumar, 2019, p. 4; Sageman, 2014), especially on P/CVE research in Africa. The question of stagnation delves into the functional operation of power relations as displayed in policy research in the past, which has become a tool of imperialism in Africa under the full control and influence of the West/East and Northern/South archetypes.

#### **1.4.3 Delimitations**

Finally, the study navigates through the concerns of gender and women studies, subject areas that have, sometimes, been seen as predominantly a preserve of women. Cockburn (2013), for instance, observed that women have quite often responded to violent conflicts against them through women's movements. However, this does not necessarily mean that issues affecting women can only be studied or be conceptualised by women. Partly, some justification can be drawn from thoughts expressed by Cockburn (2007) that researching subjects reflecting about gender relations or on issues touching masculinities and femininity, deserves a look at "the bigger picture" (p. 231). Hence, navigating the dominant subject of patriarchy, in resolving violent conflicts, not only merits analysis embedded in gender perspectives as part of the 'big picture', but also ingrained in the "ethno-national relations" that generate conflict (Cockburn, 2010, p. 34).

Consequently, the study tackles in different sections of this thesis some questions raised by gender-cynics on the feasibility of a study on women being undertaken by a man. For instance, while feminists and gender activists might be quite clear about the meanings and theoretical underpinnings about gender concepts, it is more likely to find gender related functions, to be strongly but biasedly associated with

women even in the academic institutions of higher learning. Leveraging on my positionality, therefore, mean that I be conscious right from the onset that confronting such subtle stereotypes about “gender” being falsely equated to “women” was inevitable.

Deciding to focus on the inclusion of women as opposed to addressing the gender binaries between men and women was then subjectively determined, at conception of the very idea of this study, based on my experience in practice of peacebuilding that informs the methods used. This subjective predilection can also explain why this thesis is not about the binaries of masculinity and femininity. This approach, therefore, seeks to contribute significantly to the expanded need for alternative voices in conflict transformation and hope to achieve the necessary repositioning of both men and women by researchers in terrorism studies, irrespective of one’s gender *vis a vis* the gender norms. The views of a male researcher would perhaps provide another perspective that may reinforce the voices of the African women, some of whom are better qualified, to make the urgently desired change on this research gap in the continent. Hence, analysis in this study acknowledges the necessity for men, as part of the patriarchal structure, to make a significant contribution to expanding the space for African women in CVE.

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

This study is organized into ten chapters which are grouped into four parts. Part One comprises the background literature analysis, while Part Two includes the analytical frameworks and methods. The next two parts provide the findings of the study: Part Three includes the empirical results and outlines the theoretical implications of the findings. The first chapter, therefore, forms the preamble to the study. It provides the general overview of violent extremism (VE) and its impact in Africa and outlines the need for transformative approach to CVE. A review of the literature is presented over the next two consecutive chapters. These chapters focus on the concept of VE. The review opens with an analysis of different perspectives, conceptualisations, and the prevailing contextual understanding of violent extremism. Chapter three also captures the gender implications of CVE programming and brings into focus a new perspective on peace and conflict research.

Chapter four provides an analysis of the diverse theoretical approaches applied by different schools of thought and practices to help understand the perspective of gender-inclusion in the African context. In Chapter five the methodology which includes phenomenological design and qualitative methods based on a bottom-up approach as informed by Constructivist Grounded Theory. The findings of the study commence in chapter six, which partly responds to the central question by exploring how violent extremism is understood in local contexts and the respective conditions that influence the prevailing knowledge. The chapter also tackles sub-question one by unpacking phenomena like what constitutes violent extremism in day-to-day conversations based on the tension between the international donor perspectives and local knowledge. Chapter seven responds to the second sub-question that demonstrates how practitioners struggle to oscillate between peacebuilding activities and programs for CVE to make themselves relevant for international funding irrespective of the local situations that may need actions.

The chapter eight commences by highlighting additional contentions faced by African women, how they arise, and the consequent clash in the systems of knowledge production between the Global West and Indigenous African contexts. Chapter eight responds to the third sub-question which considers how the theory and practice of Conflict Transformation Framework can be adapted to provide for an expanded space for women based on an Afrocentric model. The last chapter then provides a discussion of the findings before highlighting the conclusions, from the study, and finally suggests some theoretical and empirical recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CONCEPTUAL CONCERNS ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter analyses the key concepts and perspectives around VE and terrorism as encountered by this study. Commencing by highlighting the conceptual debates on violent extremism, it provides the background for contextual understanding. In that sense of debates, commonalities between violent extremism and the related concepts like terrorism and radicalisation are explored for the purposes of much needed clarity, especially with points of intersection. The chapter provides the first part of the literature review where the central argument is that how one conceives of a phenomenon is likely to shape how the response is designed. So, from one vantage point, relying on a particular set of local terminologies makes the CVE and PVE approach suitable, but when we broaden the lens to include other conceptualisations within different contextual viewpoints, CVE and PVE might be woefully inappropriate. Hence, the need for an alternative approach that is responsive to contextual factors and to the voices that might have been ignored in that context. The intervening gender perspective, therefore, sets the basis for equal space for both women and men in tackling violent extremism.

#### **2.1 Conceptualising Violent Extremism**

Given the continued rise in threats associated with “transnational and domestic” violent extremism, “countering the appeal of extremist ideologies” and organisations has progressively been prioritised by governments and other practitioners around the world (Barzegar, Powers, & Karhili, 2016). Crucial to the increased attention on violent extremism by researchers and policy agencies, Zeiger (2018) points out that violent extremism is both a global threat which directly destabilises the peoples freedom, as it is a produces human rights challenges. It thus and remains a major security concern in different contexts (Zeiger, 2018). These concerns cover across national borders, culture, religious systems and ideologies, but the situations are constantly evolving (Barzegar et al., 2016; Zeiger, 2018). It is thus important to acknowledge the “continued need for more context-specific, and localised studies, contributing to the evidence base and shape, and influencing

policy decisions and programming choices on violent extremism” (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2018, p.16).

Within this concurrence, CVE has not been free from challenges associated with many counterterrorism strategies that are in place globally. The consistent use of pre-emptive mechanisms such as intelligence gathering, military force and law enforcement may have exacerbated the problem of violent extremism (Romaniuk, 2015). Mastroe and Szmania (2016), for instance, conducted a comprehensive literature survey of dozens of studies on CVE evaluation. They documented several “unintended consequences” of the CVE programmes whose outcomes “bring into focus negative impacts such as enhanced insecurity” (Holmer, 2014, p. 7). Such outcomes include “increased racial tensions, discrimination and human rights abuse, and lack of citizen ownership of the processes due to readjusting of national security without the input of community members” (Mastroe & Szmania, 2016, p. 4).

As a precursor to the CVE discussion, it is crucial to first consider the conceptual domains which builds on the analysis of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), in the form of language (Jackson & Hall, 2016) as a source of establishing meanings based on local terminologies describing violent extremism (Lindahl, 2016). In fact, Harris-Hogan, Barrelle and Zammit (2016) reinforce this necessity by asserting that “CVE initiatives throughout the world vary dramatically, from projects aimed at changing behaviour to ones that challenge ideas and beliefs, through to activities aimed at building social cohesion” (p.6). Unfortunately, “many CVE approaches cannot define the specifics of what they are preventing” (Harris-Hogan et al., 2016, p. 6) due to different conceptualisation of VE in such different contexts.

The debates on the conceptual understanding of violent extremism (VE) also point to the differences that prevail between Western epistemology and local meanings or terminologies. On this note, a threefold approach is adopted to enhance the contextual analyses of meanings (Aziz, 2017). First, it is important to understand the challenges with local languages (Aziz, 2017; Metre, 2017), which refocus the meanings, definitions and operationalisation of violent extremism (Selim, 2016). This relates to the second approach which centres on the policy dialogue (World

Bank and United Nations, 2017) that calls for a shift from international ideas shaping local policy, to instead appreciate local understanding to inform the international knowledge (OSCE, 2014). Finally, it is important to examine the male voices who have dominated the academic and policy debates (Fink, Zeiger, & Bhulai, 2016). Doing so can reveal some of the aspects that have been collectively described as sources of structural violence (Galtung, 1967).

### **2.1.1 Critical Perspective on Terrorism Research**

Based on their strategy of questioning many assumptions, critical scholars have been often blamed for offering few or no solutions to their own questions. However, the value of any critical approach lies not only in the insights provided through critique and deconstruction, but also in their provision for an alternative and credible research agenda (Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, & Breen-Smyth, 2011; Toros, 2016). Research based on a critical perspective broadens the subject areas to include issues that other scholars are likely to ignore, by bringing out different voices in the wider social context, including the nature and causes of violence, and its gendered aspects (Gunning, 2007a; Jackson et al., 2011). While acknowledging the contribution with regard to introducing critical thinking in terrorism studies, Horgan and Boyle (2008) posit that the unilateral call for an explicitly critical terrorism studies (CTS) should equally be questioned. They argue that CTS comes with an erroneous assumption “that it represents a departure from what can only be assumed to be uncritical terrorism studies, while what it has produced so far is not always grounded in a fair-minded appraisal of a complex, multi-disciplinary research, that often is either flawed or imperfect as a field of study” (Horgan & Boyle, 2008, p. 62). Despite its growth, there are concerns that critical terrorism research in its present form fails to meet its own standards and expectations of criticality.

Nevertheless, there is a rare consensus that a critical approach broadens the scope of any conceptual analysis. Understanding violent extremism within this perspective, therefore, begins by seeking to appreciate the myriad ways of knowing either terrorism or violent extremism conceptualisations, with regard to how these concepts are “perceived in reality – ontology, and how we know what we believe is already known within this reality, that is, epistemology” (Fitzgerald, 2016, p.

50). This captures both the language and conceptualisation of violent extremism, as constructed within the expansive and rich perspectives of critical studies (Toros, 2016). In this regard it becomes essential to first examine the broader debates within the paradigm of CTS (Gunning, 2007; Jayakumar, 2019; Toros, 2016)

The concept of violent extremism within the lenses of CTS, then, comes to be understood by taking a “reflexive standpoint on the nature of knowledge production”, while touching on the “methodological and conceptual shortcomings of prevailing terrorism research” (Fitzgerald, 2016, p. 49). This perspective provides for the critical approach that widely expands the reflections within the discourse analysis, which remains cautious and sceptical in regards to meanings (Jackson, 2015; Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, & Breen-Smyth, 2011). In this perspective, therefore, an understanding of violent extremism is provided to “emerge from words, or language, that help out in building the meaning, into what it is understood to be” (Holland, 2016, p. 203). It is therefore worth noting that a “discourse, with respect to violent extremism, would occur when language becomes the basis for producing its meanings in different contexts as a set of things, concepts and ideas in a fairly systematic, regular and predictable way” (Holland, 2016, p. 204; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

The basis of language, thus, becomes very informative by reinforcing what Harris-Hogan et al. (2016) refer to as the “definitional ambiguity which extends into the policy response, thus posing the dilemma making CVE programming to lack precision and focus” (Harris-Hogan et al., 2016, p. 7). Based on discursive ontology and sceptical epistemology as fronted by Jackson (2016) and widely applied in critical terrorism studies, it becomes inevitable to incorporate the context-specific discourse for understanding violent extremism. Jackson and Hall (2016) make a more robust observation that “foreign concepts are likely to be consumed or be resisted in different settings based on how the meanings are processed” (Jackson & Hall, 2016, p. 293). The processing of concepts helps in identifying the critical gap between the prevailing and “broader understanding of how discourses are expressed among different communities and contexts” (ibid).

It would be important, therefore, to establish how such concepts (such as violent extremism) can be hegemonic in practice, and how they are likely to reflect on the “socio-cultural dispositions” within the “politics of legitimacy” (Jackson & Hall, 2016; Stanley, 2014). Consequently, Jackson and Hall (2016) argue that “a better understanding of vernacular discourses” would enrich the existing insight in the local context (Jackson, 2005, p. 37; Jackson & Hall, 2016, pp. 293-5). In this regard, vernacular discourses provide a deeper and more “dynamic description of the narratives, cultural repertoires, frames, and metaphors deployed in the vernacular discourse” (Jackson & Hall, 2016, pp. 293-5). This would manifest within the “cultural resources that are constructed inter-subjectively in social interaction” (Jackson, 2005, p. 37).

### **2.1.2 The Orthodox Perspective on Terrorism Research**

The second perspective for conceptualising violent extremism also touches on the policy viewpoint that has been linked to the traditional or conventional approach in terrorism studies. Horgan and Boyle (2008) tend to cast aspersions on this perspective, arguing that it is likely to lead researchers into a false generalisation about research field that would simply be referred to wholly constitute Orthodox Studies on Terrorism, which would then be “deeply problematic”. It is on this basis they caution against taking a narrow review of literature based on a simplistic suggestion to lump some studies together as being part of “Orthodox Terrorism Studies”, unless a clear basis of well-grounded critique is provided (Horgan & Boyle, 2008, p. 57). However, they are in agreement with Jackson (2007c, 2007a) among other CTS advocates, whose analysis challenges any form of “orthodoxy” (Horgan & Boyle, 2008).

The orthodox perspective has, first, significantly linked socio-economic, policing and military approaches for counter-terrorism (Holland, 2016), and secondly, is strongly linked to the interests of the state and their think tanks, whose agendas are bound to the costly stoking of fear and encouragement of overreaction, while making legitimacy for policy-relevant knowledge both a priority and the basis of academic output (Fitzgerald, 2016; Jackson et al., 2017; Mueller, 2018).



By placing emphasis on the pillars of governance, with aspects of the socio-economic and security structures that are predominantly held by the state (Holland, 2016), Orthodox perspectives have widely influenced the outcomes of studies focusing on the drivers of VE (Allan et al, 2015). Hence, the discussions on VE are widely made from the perspective of the state and policy actors. There is no doubt in this regard that the approach might have enabled the conceptualisation of many efforts that comprise interventions on counterterrorism (Holland, 2016), but remains biased by placing more blame on non-state actors. This perspective also forms the most widespread theory accommodated by many policy researchers, which points to the likelihood of a structural process of state approaches to interventions against violent extremism.

While the orthodox and critical perspectives are closely associated with evolving academic ideologies, the orthodox (conventional) perspective is specifically dominated by the “deliberate approaches made through state agencies like the intelligence community” (Sageman, 2014, p. 566) to influence the political ideology and messaging. At the international level, the policy transfer has been widely used to shape the alignment of nations through some international instruments and agencies, and more often, through the policy research led by political elites (Sageman, 2014).

The conceptualisation of peace and conflict in such processes are often used to identify foes and allies primarily as a means of transferring international policies of the powerful nations to the rest of the world. This perspective is therefore likely to develop varying positions as to what constitutes violent extremism as a tool of control (Jackson, 2011, p. 391). The meanings would thus remain valid as much as there exists a means of dominating the international public (most likely allies) through a political agency for the achievement of their specific interests. Such meanings significantly inform or have contributed to the dominant discourses used for (international) interventions to fix applicable solutions. This understanding therefore “produces the western narratives of fear behind the blame-it-all on Islam” (Sageman, 2014, p. 567) explanations. It is on this basis that some critical assumptions have been made to inform (many) strategies for countering violent extremism (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009), especially in Africa. This

perspective also manifests the notion that international policies, and specifically on countering violent extremism, “have been characterised by epistemological uncertainty and the interplay between the known and the unknown” (Jackson, 2015, p. 36).

Despite its global popularity and valuable progress in conceptualising violent extremism, the orthodox approach has been criticised for its shortcomings that tend to ignore the processes through which violent extremism emerge, take shape and flourish (Jackson, 2015). Gunaratna (2013, p. 54) observes that this conventional approach to understanding violent extremism has seen a battery of think-tanks “engaged in teaching, research, networking, and outreach activities for violent extremism”. However, the abilities of “think-tanks to develop excellence and influence both government and community responses” seem to vary significantly (Gunaratna, 2013, p. 56). This might be occasioned by the fact that some think-tanks are likely to compromise critical analysis of the concepts as they struggle to “work entirely with governments where they mostly conduct contract research and engage in policy advocacy on behalf of governments on security in general” (Gunaratna, 2013, pp. 53-7, 2017, p. 2). The clear understanding of violent extremism within this perspective therefore risks losing the required “theoretical and methodological rigour” and an “interdisciplinary approach” that needs to be context specific (Jackson et al., 2017; Toros, 2016).

### **2.1.3 Gender Perspectives in Terrorism Research**

While the dichotomies of critical and orthodox approaches determine the perspectives applied in terrorism research, scant attention has been paid to understanding the intersections that prevail in the literature. For instance, crosscutting issues like gender perspectives and how they inform the dynamics of terrorism and counterterrorism deserve more attention. Hence, it would be important to understand how violent extremism has been conceptualised through the gender lens, whether by CTS or orthodox research. This perspective, therefore, does not necessarily represent an independent ideological perspective but rather, or quite often, cuts across the first two schools of thought. Taking the domain of terrorism studies, Cockburn (2010, p. 34) argues that “patriarchal gender relations are more likely to be intersectional with power relations” which can perpetuate a

tendency of male dominance which are mostly embedded within conventional policy research. Since conflict and security issues are likely to be presented as predominantly male domains, academic narratives on violent extremism are often framed within the “binary of public and private spheres” (Cockburn, 2013, p. 22). Dougherty and Frier (2016), for instance, recall that many studies on violent extremism are dominated by the “presumption that women do not use violence as a means of exercising their political will, because most traditional notions of femininity emphasize motherhood, peacefulness, and stability” (Dougherty & Frier, 2016, p. 3).

Gentry and Sjoberg (2011, p. 7) systematically argue that conceptualising violent extremism with this gendered perspective tends to deceptively “focus on personal or emotional motivations”, placing emphasis on “manipulation and coercion”. The perspective must therefore question such narratives of the “violent woman juxtaposed to those of the peacemaker” (Dougherty & Frier, 2016, pp. 9-11). This exposes the common and long-standing tendency (of gender bias within the male voices) in research to “ascribe rational motivations to men, and emotional motivations to women” (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2007, p. 42). It is on this foundation that Ambassador Lana Zaki Nusseibeh underscores that “the meaning in relation to the role of women in promulgating violent extremism remains an understudied but critical contemporary security issue” (Fink et al., 2016, p. 3).

The key concern is that the gendered conceptualisation of violent extremism “not only denies women agency as it fails to acknowledge their perceived political grievances”, but this may also lead to serious gender inequalities in the security response (UN Security Council, 2019, p. 35). Whenever decision-makers fail to consider the motivations of women due to their belief in gender stereotypes, then it is obvious that policies designed for their involvement will face significant limitations (Patel & Westermann, 2018; UN Security Council, 2019). Dougherty and Frier (2016), for example, note further that most current policies in many contexts assume that women are “inherently peaceful”. This connects to the inaccurate hypotheses that women do not use violence as a means of exercising their political will.

This perspective therefore provides a parallel context, not only for conceptualising violent extremism, but also for understanding how women and men participate differently within such different contexts. Myers and Fellow (2018, p. 3) observe that many “violent extremist groups have capitalised on, profited from and weaponised the subjugation of women”. They therefore argue that such “use of women’s bodies to wage and justify war is apparent in all forms of violent conflict, not just in conflicts involving VE” (ibid), is important to understand the concepts of violent extremism. Ndungu and Shadung (2017, p. 11) opine further that “terrorism and violent extremism are highly gendered”. Hence, gendered perspectives must be fully acknowledged both in conceptualising VE and in preventing violent extremism (PVE) policy frameworks.

This acknowledgement of gender perhaps makes it more important to take note of the unique and specific manifestations of anti-genderism (anti-gender equality) conceptualisation, that may still be and quite often, are “deliberately designed to appeal to different local and/or national publics globally” (Ackerly, Friedman, Gopinath, & Zalewski, 2019, p. 165). Anti-genderism refers to the situation of the systematic display of dislike, contempt, or ingrained prejudice against women. In appealing for resistance to such ideology, Ackerly et al. (2019) argue that anti-genderism perspectives (or misogyny) are likely to be “combined with and secured by transnational discourses that have been consciously orchestrated and, in some cases, go back at least three decades” (Ackerly et al., 2019, p. 165). Such aspects of transnational discourse, therefore, make it necessary to understand the definitional dilemma that emanates from these three perspectives of conceptualising violent extremism.

## **2.2 Conceptual Intersections Between VE and Terrorism**

Violent extremism and terrorism, and in some cases radicalism, simultaneously receive converge at the centre-stage of most contemporary global policy discussions (Harper, 2018). Hence, understanding how they are operationalised becomes core to shaping the consequent mitigation and peacebuilding initiatives. The apprehension associated with them, “their connection to wider tensions between and within regions, and how they have exposed a lack of social cohesion

in seemingly resilient societies, have impacted communities in fundamental ways” (Harper, 2018, p. 13). It is thus critical to understand how the intersections between such different concepts which often are applied synonymously in the CVE literature, may be useful in designing a sustainable peacebuilding strategy. Striegher (2015, p. 76) provides an orthodox analysis suggesting some disputed points of intersection that explain radicalisation as a *process* towards the *ideology* of violent extremism and the *act* of terrorism.

Some scholars like Fitzgerald (2016), in analyses of different texts on critical terrorism studies, argue that linking the different concepts by using terms like process, ideology and actions raises more discord. Critical scholars (Fitzgerald, 2016; Gunning, 2007; Toros, 2016), for instance, argue, that such a process does not really exist and that it cannot be measured even if it really exists. Hence, such explanations have essentially remained problematic. For instance, no *ideology* or pure *act* of violence has ever been clearly articulated by scholars, a fact that can be linked to the common “error within traditional efforts to define terrorism based on the elusive belief in the possibility of objectivity” (Jackson et al., 2011, p. 109). This challenge fails to account for the subjective values, perceptions, and beliefs, all of which contribute fundamentally to the way the world’s appearance is experienced. For instance, it is not an ideology of violent extremism but rather, violent extremism can be expressed in support of any ideology, including socialism, anarchism, capitalism, democracy, Islamism, and communism, among others (Gunning, 2007; Jackson et al., 2011; Jackson, 2015). It is on this basis that, despite the implied points of intersections, violent extremism can be seen more as a means but not an ideological goal or philosophy.

In critical terms, key gaps within the points of intersection of the three terms is summed up by Sedgwick (2010) who contends (like many others) that there is absolutely no agreement on what constitutes radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism. Other studies (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2009; Vergani et al., 2018) equally underscore that these concepts remain ambiguous and contested to the point that some scholars (like Horgan, 2008) even deny their existence in a real sense. It is on this basis that several discourses are likely to see radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism as context-specific (Borum, 2011a; Reed & Ryall, 2007;

Selim, 2016), both in meaning and application. The meaning would therefore be relative to the “structural and circumstantial factors, such as the agenda of governments and the interest of security agencies” (Vergani et al., 2018, p. 2).

Such differences notwithstanding, Lindahl (2016) proclaims that these concepts (radicalism, terrorism, and violent extremism) remain “social facts”, and so the terms are open to different conceptualizations and wholly dependent on human agreement. It is on this basis that an understanding of the term violent extremism becomes necessary in relation to the other concepts, and how they are influenced by different circumstances (Sedgwick, 2010; Vergani et al., 2018) or institutional interpretations. Such a dilemma also expands the “points of agreement and difference in an effort to deepen our collective understanding of the phenomenon of violent extremism and the responses needed to enable effective transformation” (Austin & Giessmann, 2018, p. 13). This analysis therefore provides a reason to overcome the constraints within the terminologies and discourses. It also serves as a precursor that provides an overview on violent extremism “with particular attention to the centrality of gender, and the importance of women in particular in providing clear alternatives to such groups” (Austin & Giessmann, 2018, p. 23; Ensor, 2017). Central to the analysis is to explore how international actors presume to impose their view on African states and interventionists while there is no agreement on what constitutes the clarity on the concepts.

The conceptual relationship therefore becomes a key concern, as observed by Schomerus et al. (2017, p. 5), since “radicalism, terrorism and violent extremism” most often, and frequently, “cross paths in the literature as well as in policy and programme designs”. The challenge then emerges in the contradiction that while no agreement on meanings exists, a plethora of top-down interventions most of which are based on imported Western approaches, continue to prevail in Africa. This makes it crucial to pursue the possible contextual connections between the concepts that would comprise important social factors that would also deepen our understanding of the nuances or complexities of these social factors for countering VE. In fact, in more specific circumstances, “the terms terrorism and violent extremism in particular are often used interchangeably” (Frazer & Nünlist, 2015; Schomerus et al., 2017, pp. 5-7). Such applications notwithstanding, their

definitions vary greatly, and they highlight different degrees of belief, ideology, and violence, which also highlight the deep debates and controversies that exist in the literature (Schomerus et al., 2017). The scope of this analysis, however, remains more inclined to violent extremism, hence, does not constitute full focus on terrorism and radicalism, both of which are more expansive subject areas.

Similarities in the meanings and definitions behind the three concepts are predominantly presented within the realms of process, ideology, and actions, which are also key to illuminating their distinctions. Violent extremism is given as an ideology or “a set of belief systems” which justify the “use of violence” (Mirahmadi, 2016; Zeiger, 2018). In a way, most if not all modern political systems would “appear to normalise this by accepting and justifying the use of violence, in the pretext of providing security to their citizens. Radicalisation on the other hand, is commonly seen as the conveyor process” (Allan et al., 2015, p. 2; Denoeux and Carter, 2009, pp. 8-10) that leads to extremism and consequently, terrorism (see also in Borum, 2011, 2012).

Emerging conspicuously in the discussions are the terminologies of violence and ideology both of which seem to be the common denominators in “violent extremism, radicalism, and terrorism,”. The independent implications and the relativity in the use of violence and ideology also signal the joint difficulty associated with what Jackson et al. (2011) refer to as the “frequent and promiscuous use of the language of terrorism in academic, media, and political discourse” (Jackson et al., 2011, p. 103). Metre (2017) equally posits that the terminology and narratives around violence are themselves highly contextual. Such narratives are most likely to be rooted in the ideas, grievances, and issues that frame the specific justifications for violence.

In essence, while the understanding of violence is linked to the structural conditions that cause harm, political and systemic conditions come into play. Denoeux and Carter (2009, p. 13) caution, however, that when trying to “account for the decision by individuals” to resort to violence, then explanations around structural conditions would typically fail to explain the role played by human agency in general. They argue instead that “most of those affected by the underlying conditions to which

violent extremism often is ascribed do not necessarily resort to violence” (ibid).

Ideology then becomes another source of debate. Metre (2016, p. 7) presents it to mean the set of “patterned clusters of normatively imbued ideas and concepts, including particular representations of power relations which can be a good starting point”. In this case, ideology is understood as an “all-encompassing worldview that presupposes its own political and social truth, most often in relation to other ideological frameworks” (Metre, 2016, p. 7; Mirahmadi, 2016). Extremist ideology therefore implies that which has “become inflexible and dogmatic or that which is all-consuming and seldom accepts or coexists with other ideologies” (Metre, 2017; Metre, 2016, p. 7). The process of acquiring that level of ideology is what has been termed as the “socialisation to extremism, and which allegedly manifests itself in terrorism” (Schmid, 2013, p. 5). Allan et al (2015) however, caution that the “extent to which ideology drives people to violence” remains contentious, as much literature continues to demonstrate the importance of social rather than ideological factors.

Sedgwick (2010, p. 479) makes a rather veiled critique that the use of the term radicalisation “produces more confusion than clarity”. He attributes such confusion to the varying interests in the varying contexts of security, integration, and foreign policy. Each of these contexts has a different agenda and, in each case, the term radicalisation has been applied to mean different things. In concurrence with Sedgwick, Githens-Mazer (2012) discerns that studies that are specifically focused on the concept of radicalisation are likely to be “plagued by assumption and intuition, through conventional wisdom rather than systematic scientific and empirically based research” (Githens-Mazer, 2012, pp. 556-8). This makes it even more complex to understand how the ideas carried through radicalisation would definitely cause terrorism.

Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) posit that the concept of “radicalization is plagued by assumption and intuition, dominated simply by conventional wisdom rather than systematic scientific and empirically based research” (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010, p. 889). Consequently, Kundnani (2015, p. 22) summarises the conceptual dilemma, indicating that it is “the greatest myth alive today in terrorism



research”, as studies reveal additional proof that “people who engage in terrorism do not necessarily hold radical beliefs” (Horgan, 2008; Kundnani, 2015, p. 22). Faced with this reality, it becomes even more important for academic and policy research to duly recognise the inherently relative nature of the terms.

Similarly, violent extremism has been more often used interchangeably with terrorism, even though the latter appears to be more established as a field of study, which also continues to expand in the scope of its existing discourse (Schmid, 2014). Schmid (2014), for instance, declares that terrorism studies have made a significant development in academic research, notwithstanding the challenges. Just like violent extremism, “terrorism has since been classified according to the ideology or belief-system of its perpetrators” (Richards, 2015, p. 372). In a way, this has informed the categories of terrorist groups associated with “nationalist/separatist terrorism, left-wing terrorism, right-wing terrorism, religious terrorism, single-issue terrorism and so on” (Richards, 2015, p. 375). An aspect of terrorism, which has been used to distinguish it from violent extremism, is possibly the understanding that it constitutes both *tactic* and ideology, as often presented by politicians and the media (Schmid, 2011, 2014). The domain of tactic is what Chaliand and Blin (2016b) also uses to explain the complex implications of political terrorism.

While terms like tactic and ideology remain highly contested by many critical scholars, terrorism is generally labelled using them in two main viewpoints, especially in the policy-oriented research contexts. The first view takes the form of a “*doctrine* about the presumed effectiveness of a special nature or tactic of fear-generating and coercive political violence” (Kundnani, 2012, p. 5). In the second viewpoint, terrorism is described by Schmid (2015, p. 68), among others, merely as a “conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, and direct *violent* action targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants”. Such positions seem to place more emphasis on the roles of, and impact on, the non-state actors.

Atran and Axelrod (2008) observe, on the contrary, that such lines of argument are only, but often, taken by political leaders when appealing “to sacred values as a way of mobilizing their constituents to action and as a least-cost, but biased

methods of enforcing their policy goals” (Atran & Axelrod, 2008, p. 227). That implies the possibility of the state to use the narrative of tactic and ideology for the simple purposes of “discrediting their adversaries”. Goodin (2006) also argues that the term “tactic” in describing acts of terrorism simply may imply some deliberate initiatives by the state to frighten people, to achieve specific socio-political gain, while instilling fear to inhibit the citizens’ ability to reason and hence, undermine their capacity for free integration. In such contexts, Alusala and Gumedze (2006) posit in their book review that Goodin makes clear “his perturbations concerning terrorism, by questioning what makes the distinctive wrong of terrorism, and that which makes terrorists different from ordinary criminals like murderers” (Alusala & Gumedze, 2006, p. 141).

These arguments place tactic and ideology in the policy context to be more of a strategy adopted by state agencies only to justify their actions as opposed to providing meanings of the concept. Richards (2015) agrees, however, that most “ideologies themselves have some intrinsic doctrinal connection to terrorism”, but differs on the certainty, arguing that, “terrorism has been used in the cause of a wide range of ideologies, many of which are not inherently violent or terroristic” (Richards, 2015, p. 375).

The obscurity raised by the proponents of tactic and ideology, therefore, introduces the concept of violence in explaining what constitutes terrorism. Despite this, the contention between what constitutes violence and terrorism also remains unresolved (Schmid, 2013; Schmid, 2014). This characteristic of violence in terrorism is embedded within the theory of *action pathways* occasionally seen to represent the process of engagement (Borum, 2011b). It thus points to the manifestation of physical violence administered by official authorities or armed resistance, especially the non-state groups opposing the state (Khayati, 2016). Unlike in cases of violent extremism, it is argued that if terrorism is an *act* of terror, which is equated to violence, then it should not be possible to have an individual (or a group for that matter) being marked or described as terrorist(s) before they take any *action* (of violence).

Jackson (2011b) posits that “the normative power of the label, terrorism, is highly dependent upon its consistent application to all qualifying cases, including the numerous cases of Western state terrorism” (Jackson, 2011b, p. 13). He, therefore, argues that the aspect of labelling what constitutes terrorism largely reflects the selective and biased application by both political leaders and some scholars some of whom have seriously undermined the understanding of terrorism in the past. Such misconception has therefore made it to “appear like the term terrorism is only reserved for those perceived to be enemies of the West” (Jackson, 2011b; *see also* Raphael, 2009).

In line with such selective labelling, analysing the attribution of violence would be important to bring out another difference between “violent extremism” and “terrorism” that rarely features in literature. While terrorism has successfully been applied to both sides, the terms radicalisation and extremism has been widely restricted to individuals and non-state groups. Blakeley and Raphael (2016) show that state violence has been used in significant proportions to “coerce populations to remain compliant with the agenda of political and economic elites” (*see also* Jackson, 2016b; Jackson et al., 2011, p. 57). But in many cases, the violence meted out by the resisting groups are more likely to be branded as acts of terror.

Terrorism methods are therefore used selectively by the states to curtail political dissent on the pretence of counterterrorism or just maintaining law and order. In a way, the selective application can be attributed the existence of some forms of extreme violence by the state just as it is labelled for the non-state actors. Such attributions are quite rare in the literature however, making clear analysis of what constitutes state-violent extremism is crucial. Clear attribution of VE to the state can provide a sense of reason and a more “critical engagement rather than withdrawal and capitulation in the discursive struggle”, which “requires convergence around clearly defined concepts” (Jackson, 2011b, p. 13).

### **2.3 Dilemma in Programmes for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)**

The overlapping conceptualisations, as discussed above, indicate that as much as a lot of research has gone into understanding violent extremism in many complex contexts, it remains deeply contested (Schomerus, Taraboulsi-McCarthy, &

Sandhar, 2017). Directly linked to the different conceptualisations of such terms that are seen to be significantly context-dependent, Harris-Hogan et al. (2016, p. 9) assert that “there may never be any universally agreed definitions of such phenomena as violent extremism”. With some sense of conviction, they argue that “it is hardly surprising that such definitional ambiguity extends into the academic research, NGO programming and government policy response, all of which then lack precision and focus” (Harris-Hogan et al., 2016, p. 9). Understanding the different definitions as well as different dilemmas of the terms and concepts, therefore, becomes a crucial concern in this discussion (Schomerus et al., 2017).

Schomerus et al. (2017) however, provide some hope regarding the subjective nature of the many and varied definitions of violent extremism. They point out that those seeking to protect citizens and political systems may use it to categorise crimes based on their subjective understanding. This subjectivity brings into question the conventional Western perspectives dominating the policy approaches in Africa. On the other hand, it acknowledges the critical perspective fronted by researchers who question the objective descriptions of such concepts as terrorism or violent extremism, or explaining “the use of those expressions as being merely politically motivated” (Schomerus et al., 2017, p. 4).

Consequently, Kruglanski, et al, (2018) make a suggestion to simplify the meanings by, first, separately conceptualising extremism before linking it to violence. In their argument, based on theorising within the field of psychology, extremism refers to the departure from some arbitrary equilibrium state. Hence, extremism entails the state of “motivational imbalance in which one need rises in saliency and magnitude to the point of dominating and crowding out other needs” (Kruglanski, et al., 2018a, p. 132). It is on such grounds that another study by Kruglanski, et al (2018), defines the term extremism as “the wilful deviation from the norms of conduct” (Kruglanski, et al., 2018b, p. 218) in a given context or situation. Such norms, which are usually subjective, would be the indicator to the contextual differences – as what most people in each society would do in the same circumstances. Societal norms point to the need for recognising the varying gendered constructions in different settings that would then be equally important in the holistic conceptualisation of violent extremism.

Further to this kind of conceptualisation, and based on relative social constructions, extremism and by extension terrorism continue to be understood very differently in Western and non-Western contexts. For instance, a major gap in terminology can be traced through the Arab media, which “commonly uses the term terrorism (*irhab*) or militant terrorism (*irhab mosalah*) rather than extremism (*tataruf*), while there is no equivalent to violent extremism” (Schomerus et al., 2017, p. 5). Although there is no evidence of universality in those local terminologies, it shows at least that the locals have some way of interpreting the meaning.

Another study in Africa by Buchanan-Clarke, Humphrey and Villa-Vicencio (2016) also reports a challenge with local understanding of the concepts as they are applied by the practitioners. With data collected in Kenya and Somalia, they make contentious conclusions that raise more questions than answers by stating that “there is no intuitively equivalent term for violent extremism or terrorism either in Kiswahili or Somali languages”, the local languages spoken by the most affected communities, “and they tend to define the terms based on the most pressing causes of insecurity in their communities that vary in time and crimes” (Buchanan-Clarke, Humphrey, & Villa-Vicencio, 2016, p. 3).

Unlike the situation in the Middle East, therefore, which has assigned some Arabic words, the first question that comes into the programme design for Kenya is whether an equivalence in meaning exists, even by implication, for the local African communities. Secondly, and more significantly, is the dilemma regarding how the indigenous communities have then identified with, or internalised, the terminologies of violent extremism. There should be a way in which the interventions explain what they refer to as violent extremism, which they counter, on the one hand, and how the locals understand the issues based on their localised experience and knowledge - that which is considered by the study as varying with time – on the other.

One challenge that can be derived from such analyses “is that there are no clear or universally accepted definitions that can be applied to the central concepts of violent extremism” (Harper, 2018, p. 19). However, within the diversity and

obscurity of understanding and conceptualisations, the term continues to become ubiquitous. This may be a pointer to just how likely “it is for the term violent extremism to become a catch-all for a number of phenomena” (Harris-Hogan et al., 2016, p. 9; Schomerus et al., 2017), as indicated earlier in this section.

Contributing to this endless definitional dilemma with respect to the available strategies, Austin and Giessmann (2018, p. 57) assert that while violent extremism (VE) has seen some enhanced popularity and concerted attention “over the past few years, effective strategies for addressing the phenomenon are still being forged and would need to continue being reviewed and tested”. On the same note, as much as violent extremism gains popularity, its clarity overlaps into a more complex understanding of violence. Some political manipulations, for instance, are likely to link violent extremism to violent resistance or insurgency, or mostly as political justification of state violence. Some scholars (like Falode, 2016; Hassan, Dia, Hemen, & Audu, 2014; Mueller, 2018) therefore, caution that violent resistance is factually different from violent extremism. Iyekekpola (2018) argues further that unlike violent extremism, violent resistance should be understood as the reaction to “violence between political elites who initially enjoyed mutually beneficial relationship that later turns sour, after attempts to withdraw political benefits using state coercion” (Iyekekpola, 2018, p. 673). In this sense Austin and Giessmann (2018, p. 89) argue that dealing with violent extremism and its protagonists, remains to be a “major challenge for peacebuilders and practitioners in conflict transformation”.

It is thus necessary to note that, despite the huge interest, vast research, donor funding and international publicity in relation to violent extremism, the contextual abstraction of the concepts continue to be addressed. Harris-Hogan et al., (2016, p. 7) argue that due to the vast contextual abstraction, many CVE initiatives and approaches globally, are yet “to define the specifics of what they are preventing, let alone how or whether they have prevented anything”. Such initiatives range from projects which target behaviour change among communities to those challenging beliefs and ideas, to those programmes that seek to build peace and social cohesion. Consequently, it is not surprising that different policies and legal

instruments on violent extremism still make very minimal sense (Glazzard et al., 2018), and understanding in different contexts.

This kind of knowledge and interpretation dilemma points to the possibility that even the global experts leading and supporting the interventions for countering violent extremism in some African contexts are more likely to make fundamental assumptions on how the concepts are understood at the grass-roots level (Jackson & Hall, 2016). Such assumptions, some of which insinuate that what works in the West would naturally work in Africa, further complicates the understanding of violent extremism, not simply as a linguistic exercise, but also as a political, cultural and social process (Schomerus et al., 2017). This closely links to the view held by CTS researchers who are likely to present violent extremism as a political and social process. To this extent, a community-based (or sub-national) understanding would more likely reflect both individuals' and groups' localised and lived experiences (Villa-Vicencio et al., 2016) of insecurity and violence that might be missing in the Western (foreign) terminologies and policy orientation. This also implies that communities in many cases identify with a smaller social group than the dominant international domain, and their self-concept gets substantially shaped by how others portray their group (Dovidio et al., 2009).

Exploring further conceptual understanding and the definitional dilemma in different African contexts may, perhaps, respond to the key concern raised by Austin and Giessmann (2018) with regard to whether “the topic of violent extremism is slowly turning into one area on which everything has already been said, but not yet by everyone” (Austin & Giessmann, 2018, p. ii). It also makes it critical to overcome the contextual challenge of conceptualising violent extremism as a precursor for a gender appropriate and focused peacebuilding approach in tackling violent extremism. For further specificity, it becomes inevitable to discuss the link between violent extremism and other related concepts like radicalisation and terrorism.

The glaring sense of mixed understanding and application of terminologies points further to the geopolitical differences, assigned by CVE interventions in different contexts. The global “urgency of countering what has been termed as extremist

violence”, or conventionally, VE “can now be seen as reflected in the recent proliferation of frameworks by stakeholders engaged in efforts to better understand and respond to it” (Ensor, 2017, p. 9). Pointing at the significance of diversity in conceptualisation, as discussed above, Ensor (2017) argues that a “focus on definitions facilitates a more comprehensive identification of the commonalities and discrepancies existing in prevalent constructions of these terms” (Ensor, 2017, p. 9).

It is also important to note that for the purposes of understanding how the prevailing mitigation has been structured, the focus must go beyond the usual academic considerations. The way a phenomenon is defined (by practitioners and policy structures) is more likely to reflect how it is perceived, and more specifically, influences the response (Ensor, 2017). Exploring some dominant instruments at the international level consequently reveals the extent of such disparities in the understanding of conceptual overlap or ambiguousness faced by practitioners. For instance, the UN Resolution 2178 (2014) underscores that, “countering *violent extremism*, which can be conducive to *terrorism*, including preventing *radicalisation*... is an essential element of addressing the threat to international peace and security... and calls upon Member States to enhance efforts to counter this kind of violent extremism” (UN Security Council, 2014, p. 6, *emphasis added*).

In a departure from the mixed description, the European Commission becomes more cautious by acknowledging the relativity and definitional dilemma before stating that,

Extremism is generally understood as activities [beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies] of a character far removed from the ordinary. It becomes a concern when those views threaten the democratic rule of law and promote the use of violence to achieve their objects or coerce their followers. This form of extremism is described as violent extremism. (EU, 2015, p. 8).

The US “policy on the Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency” makes a simpler definition. It states that “violent extremism refers to advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically



motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives” (USAID, 2011, p. 2). This definition intentionally excludes the violence meted out by US military action during their pursuits to overthrow what they term as “rogue regimes” while creating a new but “friendly democratic state”, like in the cases of what happened in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In contrast, the definitions by the African Union think-tank, through their highly guarded publication, *the African Journal*, remain relatively unclear. This publication of “the African Union Commission for Peace and Security” only makes a general reference to terrorism as “any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life or cause serious injury or death or may cause damage to public or private property” (ACSRT, 2017, p. 13). While violent extremism is not defined in the *African Journal* for terrorism research, other AU policy instruments on human rights generally refer to it as: “material and/or immaterial support for or engagement in violent acts justified by an inflexible and uncompromising ideology” (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2015, p. 4). The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, (2017) argues that in the absence of such clear definitions, African states are compelled to “incorporate into their national legislation in line with the international conventions and protocols of the UN Member States in defining what constitutes a terrorist act and intended to provide the appropriate punishment” (ACSRT, 2017, p. 10). This absence of contextual clarity poses “the risk of non-standardised, insufficient or incorrect application and implementation of the very national legal instruments” (ACSRT, 2017, p. 11).

The decision of the African Union states to adopt the international instruments based on the subjective Western definitions demonstrate a clear departure in the need to construct contextual understanding. These definitions strongly demonstrate the major issues that influence the relative understanding with respect to designing peace and conflict mitigation structures by different states. More specifically, while Africa has been part of the expansive global campaign against violent extremism, there is no doubt that contextual understanding is necessary in conceptualising the phenomena of terrorism, radicalism, and violence extremism. This lack of consensus in the conceptual understanding and definitions of violent extremism

extends to the efforts in the programmes for preventing and countering violent extremism (Zeiger, 2016). The discrepancy suggests how mechanisms for CVE and PVE have assumed evident discord raised by the academic literature.

### **2.3.1 Conceptual Distinction Between CVE and PVE**

With prominence given to the “social harmony”, initiatives for P/CVE “present a distinct set of characteristics” by making special emphasis on “societal interests, community morals, and family values in an effort to rehabilitate and reintegrate militants” (Kronfeld, 2012, p. 3). These characteristics also define what has been generally referred to as soft approaches in tackling violent extremism. However, despite this acknowledgment of a softer approach in countering violent extremism, a lot of controversy continues to linger concerning the appropriate or “safer” terminology for the process. A couple of studies (Myers & Fellow, 2018; Myers, Fellow, & Hume, 2018) contend that just as the conceptual dilemma prevails on what constitutes violent extremism (see also Harris-Hogan et al., 2016), there exists tension over the terminology (of prevention or countering) in relation to some prevailing policy responses to violent extremism (Myers et al., 2018).

The divergent discourses are further manifested between the US and EU conceptual preferences. For instance, the United States policy structures have preferred using CVE specifically during the Obama regime (Gunaratna, 2017), while the United Nations (United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 2012) and European Union tend to use PVE terminology. The UN and EU for instance, have raised concerns that “the CVE framework is too close to the militarised counter-terrorism schema” (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016b, p. 2). Sara Zeiger (2018) also posits that “countering violent extremism is part of the broader and comprehensive framework for counter-terrorism, except that both the terminology and programs related to CVE are always adapted to the local context and culture” (Zeiger, 2018, p. 9). This implies that CVE is more likely to constitute the efforts for countering activities of those populations categorized as being vulnerable to join violent extremist groups (Myers et al., 2018). This line of argument tends to emphasise that CVE approaches comprise those strategies designed to target VE groups while aiming at disrupting or discontinuing “their tactics” and to stop them from making new recruitments (Saghal, 2018).

In contrast, PVE is considered, especially and more proactively within the context of EU and UN agencies, to encompass preventive actions aimed at addressing the factors underpinning vulnerability to violent extremism (Zeiger, 2018). Zeuthen (2018, p. 39) argues in this regard that “prevention work and research on this phenomenon [of PVE] focuses largely on factors that may contribute to change from accepting the use of violence”. He argues that such attempts aimed at preventing violent extremism endeavour to also consider contextual factors, with more specific reference to both community dynamics and the influencing factors towards any groups perceived as being at risk in specific environments. Saghal (2018) however, provides a disclaimer by indicating that “the long-standing debates on the appropriateness of terminologies of ‘prevention’ and ‘countering’, should not necessarily assume any specific positionality in research, since both strategies overlap in their quest to disengage and reintegrate former combatants through enhanced resilience mechanisms for communities” (Saghal, 2018, p. 72). Both strategies hypothetically aim at reducing the risk of populations to resort to violence.

Given this contested terminology between CVE and PVE, Davies (2018), Malmstrom (2012) and Mercer (2014) have adopted the phrase, “tackling violent extremism” which becomes a neutral terminology, possibly to integrate the two sets of terminologies of countering and prevention approaches. These arguments are a significant manifestation of the fact that a comprehensive understanding of violent extremism in a contextual sense remains vital in order to develop a successful peacebuilding approach in addressing violent extremism (Myers et al., 2018; Zeiger, 2018). As the prevailing definitions attempt to grapple with the complexities and diversity of the phenomena, it is important to note that they have offered a guiding pathway for conceptual understanding that may be useful for policy and practice.

### **2.3.2 Limitations with both Conceptualisations and Interventions in P/CVE**

Zeiger (2016) identifies two main strands which dominate the literature in countering violent extremism, and that have also influenced the design of such intervention programmes and policy (see also Khalil and Zeuthen, 2016a; Zeiger,

2016, 2018). These strands have been summarised as the “push” and “pull” factors (also observed by Mirahmadi, 2016; USAID, 2011). These widely represent the structural motivators and individual incentives for violent extremism (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016b, 2016a; Zeiger, 2016). Although some scholars have acknowledged that this approach has deepened the understanding of violent extremism research over the last decade (Myers et al., 2018), critics have argued that the two strands tend to limit the P/CVE and peacebuilding focus to the drivers of violent extremism.

Another complication prevailing in countering violent extremism lies within the scope of designing practical responses to address violent extremism in different contexts. This explains the possible gap regarding how violent extremism might be nuanced in other types of violence (Myers et al., 2018). The grey area of interconnectivity in the two phenomena spark more debate over what constitutes specific programming on P/CVE versus violence reduction and conflict prevention programming with relevance to tackling violent extremism. This shows how critical contextual issues are overlooked in the P/CVE programming. Innes, Roberts, and Lowe (2017) contend that interventions designed in the UK based on both the *Prevent* and the *Contest* strategies and frameworks have significantly influenced international programming on P/CVE.

This notwithstanding, the approach is blamed for its reliance on “poorly defined terms applied in its theory of change and pathways” (Innes et al., 2017, p. 264). Worse still, Hardy (2018) argues that even the CVE policies in many countries, especially those leaning on the Prevent and Contest frameworks are “often shaped less by evidence-based research, and more so by political, cultural and historical factors that are specific to each national government” (Hardy, 2018, p. 78). This reinforces the concerns raised by Aziz (2017), who argues that P/CVE programmes “are often contextually and fundamentally flawed, counterproductive, unnecessary, and a waste of resources” (Aziz, 2017, p. 257).

Recognising such contextual deficiency, UNESCO (2017) suggests that countries need to take into account the local manifestations of extremism. This also comes with its own difficulty, especially in cases where local terminologies are ignored.

Many countries therefore, tend to take refuge in the prescriptive policy and legislative interventions with regard to what ought to be done, and based on the design by donors (Davies, 2016, 2018). Prescriptive interventions are what Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2011) discuss as the “uniform and bureaucratically imposed structures that fails to pay attention to the understanding of local conditions and contextual readiness to accommodate a variety of voices” (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 226). In many circumstances, such prescriptive policy frameworks have been designed for different contexts based on limited problem-solving indicators. The predetermined indicators based on specific parameters are then presented through the “theory of change” framework. Theory of change quite often, relates to assumptions about causality on how one is likely to become an extremist (Davies, 2016, 2018). Consequently, some of the legislative instruments, especially those formulated by African states, cause more challenges than they can enhance the intended outcome for P/CVE (Harper, 2018; Myers et al., 2018).

Due to such glaring limitations with policy instruments, Buchanan-Clarke, Humphrey and Villa-Vicencio (2016) decry prevailing perspectives showing that policy discussions and a lot of academic literature tend to emphasise the political, religious or ideological nature of violent extremism. In showing how this challenge is manifested, Hardy (2018) for instance, argues that the complexity of these political, religious and ideological reasons always make it difficult for governments and international agencies to design appropriate policy responses to violent extremism. In such cases, many strategies to counter violent extremism end up becoming fundamental components of the national policies for countering terrorism instead (Hardy, 2018). Such national policies are also likely to shape other CVE programmes implemented by civil society organisations on the ground, which then becomes an extension of state policing through community based structures, (Hardy, 2018; Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Weinberg et al., 2004).

The state interference explains the limitation of many P/CVE interventions by the government that are seen to be “politically contentious, and tend to institutionalize state-sanctioned domestic spying, besides creating an aspect of suspect communities” (Innes et al., 2017, p. 257; Kundnani, 2009). In contrast, community contexts, which “are more likely to reflect individuals’ localised and lived

experiences, have been ignored” (Glazzard et al., 2018, p. 37). This challenge in having a common understanding “between affected communities and international stakeholders, including donor and states agencies, and security analysts, holds many significant implications that transcend semantics” (Allan et al., 2015, p. 9). The critique of over-relying on policy measures alone implies that even the legal process cannot be a remedy everywhere every time.

Another gap associated with interventions has been identified in the approaches focusing on a specific group of individuals being perceived to be “at risk” of or “vulnerable” to VE. The classification of community sub-groups as being at risk is likely to perpetuate a flawed approach based on subjective analysis due to possible stigma or prejudice (Sommers, 2019). This faults the general assumptions linked to the bulging youth population, while existing evidence shows that in many countries most youth are peaceful (Sommers, 2019) despite their different challenges. Even if P/CVE programmes never existed, many youths are still unlikely join extremist groups (Sommers, 2019).

In other cases, individuals have been marked as being at risk or even risky by virtue of travelling to the wrong countries (Kessels et al., 2016; Sommers, 2019). Empirical evidence indicate otherwise, that an individual does not even need to have any prior contact with a terrorist group (seen as being at risk), or to have ever travelled to those countries where the groups are active, to become directly involved with terrorism (Hearne & Laiq, 2010; Sommers, 2019). Instead, self-recruitment through the Internet might be increasingly playing a major role in exchange of ideas, whether extreme, violent or radical (Hearne & Laiq, 2010). Hence, the need to focus on the local language and context of engagement before embarking on disengagement programmes (Sommers, 2019; United Nations, 2018).

Further critique of some current interventions indicate that it has never been practical that anyone making interventions would reach at-risk populations with precision, unless the such contact is limited to personal confessions or past criminal record (David & Idan, 2018, 2019; Davies, 2016). Such difficulties would imply untenable assumptions made by players in the P/CVE interventions through stand-

alone projects without tackling the systemic dynamics (Davies, 2018). Such an approaches may worsen the situation by providing surface-based conclusions, which are more likely to maintain the status quo (Davies, 2018; Silke, 2018).

A weakness has also been identified in the approaches used to counter the extremist narratives that may not hold in reality (Ferguson, 2016; United Nations, 2018). Ferguson (2016) identifies three dominant assumptions implicitly made in recent P/CVE studies that promote counter-narrative strategies (Ferguson, 2016; United Nations, 2018, p. 199; Williams, 2018). Ferguson (2016) highlights the assumption that “consuming violent words finally leads to committing violent deeds”. Another assumption is the misconception that propaganda is crucial to a P/CVE strategy; therefore, prompting some conviction that counter propaganda must also be adopted (Ferguson, 2016; Weisburd, Feucht, Hakimi, Mock, and Perry, 2011).

It is on the basis of such flaws and gaps with different measures for P/CVE that Romaniuk (2015) and other scholars have raised substantial reservations about whether prevention mechanisms work. In Somalia, for instance, there is resentment towards the P/CVE efforts by the international community (led by the UN) in countering violent extremism, which is criticised by the local community members who suggest that “insecurity under al-Shabaab is far better than security under the federal government” (Ingiriis, 2018a, p. 513). This not only shows the mistrust of the P/CVE interventions but suggest the displaced disappointment by the community in choosing to remain submissive to the extremist group.

In demonstrating how many interventions might have failed to meet the expectation of local communities, Ingiriis (2018a) argues that community indifference to the CVE mechanisms has since enabled the Al-Shabaab group to make a return to Mogadishu and other major cities after they had been reportedly suppressed by international interventions like the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). This raises a major concern that unless the approach used is not made different from the perpetual military interventions, then even the P/CVE programmes remain in vain. It is in this regard that peacebuilding mechanisms have been proposed for integration into the prevention measures.

## **2.4 Applying Peacebuilding Models in P/CVE**

To conceptualise the intersection between P/CVE initiatives and peacebuilding approaches, it becomes essential to first understand what constitutes peace, which is the common goal for both initiatives. While the literature and theoretical analysis of both peacebuilding and P/CVE initiatives are very divergent, both fields share so much in practice. The most common goal in both initiatives is to attain peace from an environment which is either at the brink or already, affected by violent conflict. Understanding what constitutes peace, before looking into peacebuilding starts from the very acknowledgement that the concept “peace” itself is elusive and seemingly unattainable, and that the more we seek “to understand it, to know it, to experience it, and to spread it for centuries, the more we reach uncertainty” (Gitau, 2018, p. 31). As a common goal, the main focus in P/CVE that overlaps with peacebuilding initiatives at the very earliest stage of programming is to avert violence and achieve a just or at least a sustainable outcome (Carnegie Commission, 1997; Lederach, 2005).

As a process, therefore, both initiatives converge at the point of the need to prevent violent conflicts “based on long-range foresight, anticipation, and actions, all of which requires the best available knowledge to discern the major risk factors that increase the likelihood of violence” (Carnegie Commission, 1997, p. xi). Hence, the points of connection emerges in the nuances within “the aspired optimum” (Gitau, 2018, p. 32). The aspired optimum in this case is the ultimate goal to be achieved by the measures taken either in P/CVE or in peacebuilding (Richmond, 2010a). Conceivably, this conceptualisation explains the ontological variability of the term peace that transcends the concept of peacebuilding and matches the perpetual deficiency of the experience of peace (Gitau, 2018; Paris, 2018a; Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015).

Consequently, CVE borrows a range of strategies from peacebuilding, starting from the targeted approaches to reducing the risk of escalating into violent conflict, which aims at strengthening the existing capacities for conflict transformation (Karbo & Virk, 2018). A key aspect of peacebuilding in this sense aims at preventing possible recurrence of violent conflicts, which constitutes a process that commences from the widely contested situation of negative peace (the absence of



violent conflict), and proceeds to include elements of positive peace, including reconciliation, value transformation and concerns for justice (Diehl, 2009). Orakzai (2019), for example, suggests that addressing local community support systems would be necessary as a major consideration to overcome some of the huge dilemmas associated with P/CVE.

To navigate the uncertainty in tackling extremism, Orakzai (2019) proposes the use of “*Cragin’s model of resisting violent extremism*” (see Cragin, 2014) as the best shift in modelling towards building a new strategy to reframe policy frameworks in CVE (Orakzai, 2019, p. 763). Cragin’s model underscores the “merit of understanding resistance and desistance as separate processes”, by suggesting that policymakers and peace practitioners need to “re-consider their emphasis on pre-empting radicalization” – which is equivalent to pre-empting violence – and instead effectively encourage non-radicalization, a situation of non-violence (Cragin, 2014).

Peacebuilding mechanisms, therefore, can be of great value in bridging the deficiencies in P/CVE. The peacebuilding approach also comes with most of the problems identified in P/CVE, since peacebuilders are more likely to be “accustomed to working in fragile grey environments in which roles, identities and relationships can change rapidly and significantly”, just like that of preventing violent extremism (Holmer, 2013, 2014). It is on this basis that peacebuilding mechanisms are proposed to enhance local (context) mechanisms and view conflict through anthropological and gendered lenses (Georgia Holmer, 2013; Schomerus et al., 2017).

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

Violent extremism as a global phenomenon continues to undermine communities, human rights, and national and international security. The contextual understanding of policy definitions is therefore fundamental in shaping the mechanisms for PVE at the global, national, and subnational levels. A major gap emerges in terms of conceptualisation, pointing to the structural barrier in developing inclusive measures for P/CVE, which facilitate hegemonic constructions between Africa and the West. Consequently, Western knowledge is more likely to be embraced and

applied into African legal and policy frameworks without scrutiny, further promoting exclusion. In addition to the conceptualisation there is a huge gap in the missing gendered perspectives, with male voices dominating both academic and policy narratives. Hence, a couple of approaches for tackling VE continually generate gendered stereotypes, stigma, and prescriptive strategies. These challenges connect to the structural barriers in CVE that perpetuate some aspects of exclusion. Without delving more into feminist works on security studies, the next chapter explores, some peacebuilding frameworks adopted in the P/CVE mechanisms to incorporate gender equality.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **FRAMEWORKS FOR PEACE AND TACKLING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter examined the conceptions about VE, including the perspectives on P/CVE. This chapter builds on the opportunities that exist within peacebuilding frameworks by contemplating how these mechanisms can be applied holistically in the mitigation of violent extremism. A couple of changing aspects developed in peacebuilding over time are analysed which focus on how they can help in addressing the issues around gender inequality that exists in CVE programmes. This helps to analyse the existing gaps that manifest the exclusion of women and further elucidate on the need for enhancing the voices of African women in the CVE frameworks. In this regard, the chapter highlights the intersection between contextual considerations that would enable conflict transformation to realign the multiple identity issues like language, culture, and gender equality in the mitigation of violent extremism.

#### **3.1 Peacebuilding and the Connections with P/CVE**

While peacebuilding remains conceptually complex, it can be understood in this study as a process of helping societies to make their transition from situations of violence to a durable peace (Paris, 2018b). The pursuit of durable or sustainable peace becomes a connecting point in the analysis of initiatives for tackling violent extremism. An intersection between theory and practice also provides insights into the fact that many P/CVE interventions are seldom exclusive of peacebuilding. Given such overlapping scope, it becomes inherently important to understand how distinct strategies of peacebuilding and P/CVE keep evolving in different contexts, some of which have not experienced any large-scale violent conflicts. Paris (2018a), for instance, opines that peacebuilding has evolved over time, from the “traditional version of peacekeeping, which typically involved deploying military forces to monitor ceasefires”. This kind of evolution, though viciously contested by critical scholars (Paris, 2018b; Ryan, 2013) is presented to have morphed into launching more ambitious missions, some of which “aim to help reconstruct the political, economic, and social foundations of countries emerging from civil wars”

with a much more insensitive intervention (Boutros-Ghali, 1992; Paffenholz, 2015; Paris, 2018a). The development in peacebuilding seeks to solidify peace by “strengthening capacities” at different levels for purposes of achieving “sustainable peace”.

On the contrary, peacebuilding has been criticised for becoming vulnerable to the spaces of power inequalities. Subsequently, some dominant conceptualizations of peacebuilding point to the challenges of liberal peace, which are blamed for the dilemma facing international interventions. Bargués-Pedreny and Mathieu (2018), for instance, argue that the “current miasma of despair regarding international peacebuilding has resulted in three successive errors in the process of seeking to build a peace sensitive to the other” (Bargués-Pedreny & Mathieu, 2018, p.284). Some of the errors contemplated include “silencing, problematizing and stigmatizing differences” (Bargués-Pedreny & Mathieu, 2018, p. 284). Denskus (2007) equally derides the positive view of international peacebuilding. He argues that of late, peacebuilding has been incorrectly “incorporated into the new aid discourse of results-based management and has since become the subject of innumerable manuals and frameworks, hence, peacebuilding has lost the sense of context” (Denskus, 2007, p.657).

According to Denskus (2007, p. 656), the evolving concept of peacebuilding reduces the whole idea to become a popular phrase in “development policy and of the mainstream practice that do not necessarily build peace”. The challenge of manipulative peacebuilding frameworks have been attributed to the colonality in the structural systems that are often adopted by many international agencies for peace. Pearce and Dietrich (2019) reveal some lost context in peacebuilding, arguing that changing conceptualisations in peacebuilding generates a poor understanding of peace as imagined and proclaimed by different actors, which then leads to numerous concepts of peace and peacebuilding respectively. They observe, for instance, that “when peace comes across as merely a plastic word in the speeches of politicians, then the roots and equivalences can be found in as many academic writings” (Pearce & Dietrich, 2019, p.279). The concerns about “plastic peace” can be reinforced by the understanding that there is an enormous industry

of international and local organisations that devotes much effort to “peace” but achieves minimum success.

In this sense, in understanding the “problem of extremist violence using the broader lens of conflict prevention”, peacebuilding seeks to “extract a deeper understanding” of the dynamics for CVE (Holmer, 2013). From this perspective, it can be argued that as much as the orthodox wisdom dissuades regimes from bargaining with extremist or terrorist groups (Sederberg, 1995, p. 295), peacebuilding frameworks might still be the most effective approach available to the state and communities through constructive negotiation with perceived enemies (Atran, 2011). Fear of negotiating not only manifests the overwhelming preference (by regimes) “for coercive and repressive responses that rests largely on rhetorical rather than analytical characterization” of the problem of violent extremism (Atran & Axelrod, 2008; Sederberg, 1995), but also exhibits the lacunae in prevailing approaches. A good tiding, however, has since emerged following the US-Taliban talks in Doha, demonstrating an increasing willingness to engage with terror groups. In such cases, even “extremist groups like al-Shabaab could be contained with a set of alternative options, most notably *through* negotiated settlement with its leadership” (Ingiriis, 2018a, p. 514). The debates around negotiation in countering violent extremism has attracted much dissent by the international community in preference to liberal approaches.

### **3.2 Liberal Approaches and the Intervention Frameworks**

Both peacebuilding and CVE programmes are dominated by international agencies, occasionally working through nongovernmental agencies (Ahmed, Byrne, Karari, & Skarlato, 2012). This explains why and how programmes mostly occur within international discourses, as much as peacebuilding is ubiquitous at all levels, including within grassroots groups within distinct national contexts (Rey & McKay, 2006a). It is on this basis that the liberal approach becomes the dominant approach as an instrument (Ahmed et al., 2012; Chandler, 2013, 2017; Rey & McKay, 2006a) applied in addressing many international conflicts, including in Africa. Liberalism has specifically dominated interventions supported by the UN agencies (Paris, 2018b). Despite being popular, numerous studies have “challenged the prevailing orthodoxy of liberal peacebuilding” on the basis that it over-

emphasizes and “prioritizes security concerns, political reforms and economic development” (Cardozo & Maber, 2019). Jackson (2017b, p. 6) points out, for instance, that as a “consequence of the many failures of liberal theory and practice, scholars have started to articulate alternative forms of peace which could potentially replace the dominant liberal peace paradigm”.

Tom (2017) charges that liberal peacebuilding has resulted in mixed outcomes dominated by failures to secure peace. This argument holds that Western-oriented peacebuilding projects tend to promote the “standardization of peace interventions especially in civil war situations that often fails to deliver a widely enjoyed peace” (Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 140). Such failures of liberal peacebuilding are attributed to the dynamics in local contexts that are not always homogeneous, but rather heterogeneous, leading to the mixed scenario of peace outcomes (Tom, 2017). Such contextual issues consist of a “wide range of actors and institutions, including customary authorities and institutions, community organizations, various ethnic groups, kinship networks and non-governmental organizations with different affiliations, as well as liberal and illiberal peace actors” (Tom, 2017, p. 45).

Based on such differences between the Western blueprint and the heterogeneity of communities, “international peacebuilding and conflict transformation interventions have been criticised” for propagating a contextual gap in peacebuilding. Such gaps include the failure to consider the “specific cultural, religious, political and historical context of the hosting communities” to which consequently, “international actors have not been able to create a concrete peace dividend at the level of civilian population’s everyday life” – the target populations by the interventions (Mac Ginty, 2013; Paris, 2018b; Tom, 2017). For instance, in her assessment of the viability of liberal peacebuilding in Somaliland, Njeri (2019) castigates the effectiveness of this (liberal) approach beyond state building, state formation and hybridity (also implied by Creary & Byrne, 2014).

The argument tends to demonstrate that the manner in which external actors, mostly international donor organizations, engage and consolidate their role displays critical gaps in the African context, as many local communities remain sceptical about the future and sustainability of such peace processes (Ahmed et al., 2012;

Njeri, 2019; Skarlato et al., 2012). Njeri (2019) specifically points to the gaps regarding poor coordination of the interventions by the key actors, most of which have different allegiance, priorities, and political ideologies. Based on such discrepancies, international interventions “to a large extent have not only failed in building local ownership, but have also failed to establish sustainability” which has proved to be a major challenge with liberal initiatives in achieving its desired objectives (Ingiriis, 2018, p. 512; Njeri, 2019). The liberal peace is therefore a manifestation of peace with strings attached that is hardly trusted or sustainable (Creary & Byrne, 2014).

While local initiatives, on the contrary, are seen as a “potential saviour for contemporary peacebuilding” which may provide “legitimacy and access”, and that lowers the costs of intervention in some perspectives, a “rather traditional view of the local seem to also persist among some international organizations” (Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 841). In such situations the implementers often assume that “that the local is static, rural, traditional, incapable or simply waiting to be civilized, developed, financed and shown how things should be properly done” (Ibid). In this regard, “the question of the local does not lie in geography but is instead embedded in the state of thinking” assuming that the donors “know best” what should be done and how (Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 842). It is in this kind of contradiction, “mostly posed by the vested interest of international organizations, that many peacebuilding interventions have failed to demonstrate how local actors can develop real ownership under the external actors’ paternalistic advocacy” (Lee, 2019, pp. 28-30).

Both frameworks for tackling violent extremism and peacebuilding, therefore, need to consider the limitations posed by vested interest to ensure the call for local ownership does not remain lip service (Lee, 2019). The context-based approaches in tackling violent extremism also need to go beyond the restrictive attempts that have been more about advocacy for locals’ ownership based on externals’ ideas (Lee, 2019, p. 2). The participation of local communities must thus transcend the institutional ownership to the decision-making power, which has always belonged to, or remain controlled by, the international community in every context. This suggests that international interventions are more likely to employ a limited results

framework which includes the identification of an extremism driver, theory of change, an entry point, output, outcome and the impact (Davies, 2016, 2018).

In P/CVE interventions, for that matter, it is necessary to explore peacebuilding approaches “beyond the notions of the liberal peace” and constructions of the “liberal state” (Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009, p. 599). Jackson (2017) equally makes a case for the possibility to think radically about what he terms “a post-liberal peace plus approach that would move beyond merely criticizing the failings of the liberal peace to scoping the extent to which alternatives can be made” (Jackson, 2017b, p. 9). This implies that instead of just “thinking in terms of fragile states, it might be theoretically and practically more fruitful to think in terms of hybrid political orders, drawing on the resilience embedded in the communal life of societies within the so-called fragile regions of the global South” (Boege, Brown, Clements, et al., 2009, p. 600; Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009, p. 14).

The issues that shape the peacebuilding further points to the fact that peace processes are mostly effective when actors rely on processes that are meaningful within the contexts of their unique gender concerns (Rey & McKay, 2006). It is on this line of argument that Rey and McKay emphasise the need to address the prevailing gap about the inadequate evidence to explain “the intersection between the contextual implications of language, culture and gender within distinct national contexts” (Rey & McKay, 2006, p. 143). This dilemma has continued despite the concerted efforts made by “peace experts to explore the significance of non-Western cultural peacebuilding traditions and practices,” (Rey & McKay, 2006a, p. 144).

In order to achieve quality peace, one which takes into consideration the aspects of culture, language and gender nuances in any given context, the involvement of women in all interventions is non-negotiable (Carter, 2013; Juyal & Duncan, 2017; McDonald, 2017). McDonald (2017), for instance, argues that “gender equality should be pursued in the interventions by local communities, and aimed at transforming the enemy images by building friendships within and beyond the national borders” (McDonald, 2017, p. 49). As a requirement for tackling violent extremism, such transformation calls for a “more systematic investigation, taking



gender much more seriously, in terms of the gendered nature of violence, masculinized forms of knowledge it produces and the silences it contains about women” (Carter, 2013, p. 3; Jackson et al., 2011, pp. 95-96).

To some extent, even though feminists emphasise that women have been historically marginalised in peace and conflict studies (Noma, Aker, & Freeman, 2012), there is a reminder that thinking about gender and language in different contexts is yet to be interpreted within the mainstream thinking of such disciplines (Brounéus, 2014; Carter, 2013; Rey & McKay, 2006a). The centrality of different gender perspectives forms the basis on which to explore how women participate in both scenarios of conflict (violent extremism) and in peacebuilding, as part of analysing the prevailing gendered inequalities and critical perspectives in peace and conflict. In this case, the inquiry explores how women have participated in violent extremism before embarking on their engagement in the peace process.

### **3.3 Space for Women in Processes for Peace and Tackling Violent Extremism**

Some studies have shown how an “increasing number of women are joining extremist groups” (Anderlini et al., 2017, p. 2; *see also* Choi, 2019; Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017; Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017). The increment provide a basis for the argument that extremist organisations “offer men and women a sense of belonging and a cause to which they can devote their energies” (Anderlini et al., 2017, p. 3; Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017). Besides, the extremist organisations “promise retribution for those who may have experienced violence at the hands of the state or foreign powers” , p.1). But all such presentation of women’s involvement remains insufficient given that:

Women have long participated in terrorist organisations, whether as fighters or as suicide attackers and hostage takers in Chechnya. Female terrorists have *also* been active in Palestinian organisations, with many others involved in bombing, recruiting, and vigorously supporting the cause. Despite this, research on *violent extremism* still tends to neglect the participation of women in violent groups. (Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017, p. 3).

Most likely this neglect in research can be attributed to the missing context and local “understanding of women’s involvement in violent extremism” (Risman,

2004, p. 430). It also implies the gendered conceptualisation of violent extremism (discussed earlier) that predominantly portrays male voices in the meanings of extreme violence. In this regard, gender is conceptualised as a social structure that encompasses the “ways in which gender is embedded in the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of our society” (Risman, 2004). A gender analysis in this perspective offers “equal consideration to the divergent experiences of women and men”, and possibly builds understanding of those varied experiences in the context of violent extremism (Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017). Such an analysis could as well provide deeper insight into “how women and men are likely to be impacted by responses” by the state and citizens based on their daily lives (Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017, p. 1; Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017). It is thus necessary to explore more of the interpersonal gendered experiences within different contexts associated with violent extremism to understand more specific relationships even within the same gender (Khelghat-Doost, 2017; Patel & Westermann, 2018).

### **3.3.1 Feminist Constructions of Women in Violent Extremism**

Since the gender “perspectives are rarely holistically integrated” into the conceptualisation and “processes of radicalisation and violent extremism”, a huge gap is widely manifested in the inadequate understanding of women-centred “pathways into and out of violent extremism” (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 53). Such lack of understanding could contribute to a lack of information regarding the “ways in which women develop resilience to resist radicalisation” into violent extremism in varied contexts (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 54). For instance, “despite the appearance of women’s increasing power in the military” (Grieman, 2009, p. 490), or both in government and counterrevolutionary groups, Gentry and Sjoberg (2007) argue that “the mass media continue to callously describe women’s politically motivated violence according to centuries-old stereotypes that subordinate women and deny them agency” (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2007, pp. 4-6). The presentation of women in the feminist critique offers the necessary patterns by which gendered “stereotypes and determinism” influences the discourses about women in political violence (Grieman, 2009).

Cockburn (2010a) further points out that feminism generated in anti-war activism may “only understand gender in patriarchy as a relation of power underpinned by

coercion and violence” (Cockburn, 2007a, p. 69). Cockburn argues that the very “cultural features of militarization and war readily perceived by women positioned in or close to armed conflict, and their sense of war as systemic and as a continuum, just make its gendered nature more visible” (Cockburn, 2010, p. 142). It is in this regard that she proposes that since gender relations form part of the root causes of violent conflicts, it becomes inevitable that a “feminist analysis of gender transformation as a necessary component” be made as we locate the roles of women in violent extremism (Cockburn, 2010, p. 143). Ultimately, it has been widely acknowledged that while conflict inflicts suffering on everyone, women are particularly affected by its short- and long-term effects (USAID, 2007). The physical assault, including sexual abuse and “exploitation, frequently employed as tools of war, leads to isolation, alienation, prolonged emotional trauma, and unwanted pregnancies that often result in abandoned children” (Khelghat-Doost, 2017, p. 2; USAID, 2007).

On the contrary, while focusing on gender explanations, the feminists have cautioned about the overwhelming presentation of women as victims (Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017, p. 7). Some scholars (Fink, 2014; Fink et al., 2016; Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017) have also argued against the “popular misconception that women are passive victims of violent extremism” (Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017, p. 9), indicating that such notions might be misleading, or simply [mis]present women as “mothers and wives” helping male jihadists to “consolidate the caliphate, or as physical and spiritual defenders of the caliphate” (Anderlini et al., 2017, p. 22). Idris and Abdelaziz (2017, p. 9) even “question the widespread idea that in many cultures women may not be very visible in the public sphere but wield significant power and influence in the private sphere and hence can counter violent extremism” early on (*see also* Anderlini, Oudraat, & Milani, 2017). This means that in reality women should be identified within the mainstream as mobilisers and recruiters for extremist groups, besides perpetrating acts of violent extremism and even playing major support roles (Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017; Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017). To this extent, “there is growing global recognition” that, just like men, “women play multiple roles both within violent extremist organisations and in preventing and countering violent extremism” (Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017, pp. 9-10; Ndung'u, Salifu, & Sigsworth, 2017).

Feminist framing of violent conflicts “calls for a generously holistic conception of power” which also needs to account for the experience of women (Cockburn, 2010a, p. 142; Fink et al., 2016). This conceptualization must therefore examine beyond the predominant discourses of labour, subsistence, and mothering, and also analyse the aspects of physical violence (Cockburn, 2007b, 2010). By redrawing the limits within which participation of women can be understood in conflict and political violence, consideration has to be made about all “actions and interactions as being part of a gendered process” (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 54). On the same note, “feminist critical theory seeks to remove the binaries of public and private so that the personal is redefined as political, and the political as personal” (Brown & Saeed, 2015, p. 1952; Patel & Westermann, 2018).

These binaries bring into perspective the relationship between structure and agency, with emphasis on the significance of understanding structured inequality, including the concepts of sexuality and their relationship to race, class, and gender stratification (Andersen, 2005). In response to the inequalities, women faced with violent conflicts in many countries seem to have organized themselves in “women-only groups and networks to oppose militarism and militarization”, in order to achieve justice (Cockburn, 2010, p. 144). For example, many advocates for the realization of women’s rights especially with regard to representation in decision making to protect women affected by violence, have rallied behind the Beijing Platform for Action which puts women at the centre of gender equality in issues of governance (Jolly et al., 2012; Wamoto, 2016).

By taking the path of women led initiatives, the “focus remains on the fact that women have been historically and still remain, marginalised from the highest echelons of political power” (Jolly et al., 2012, p. 212). However, the situation of marginalisation differs significantly in different contexts and countries. As a result, the “untapped experiences of women, their perspectives, leadership, and potential in governance is still worth exploring” especially in the Global South (Chang, Alam, Warren, Bhatia, & Turkington, 2015, p. 11). The diversity in perspectives can also explain “how women have been shut out of roles in security matters, and how they decry this exclusion” in different contexts (Khelghat-Doost, 2017, p. 2).

Despite the ongoing debate on the roles of women, “the implicit dichotomy of public/male, private/female” (Khelghat-Doost, 2017, p. 3) remain a reality in many African countries, where power belongs to the public political domain with a male monopoly. Hence, many women are still confined to the domestic sphere as they remain marginalised (Gathogo, 2018; Khelghat-Doost, 2017; Singerman, 1994).

In one way or another, “such negligence in recognizing the active role of women in violent extremism has its repercussions on the gendered impact” of violent conflicts (Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017, p. 2). While democracies aim at promoting and protecting the equal rights of both women and men, security challenges such as violent extremism and terrorism have been proven to limit the full enjoyment of such rights (Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017). Based on this existing disparity in the security gender gap, and specifically how violent extremism affects women and men, a deeper analysis becomes of essence to examine the role of women in violent extremism (Ndung'u, Salifu, & Sigsworth, 2017; Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017; Salifu & Ndung'u, 2017). Ndung'u and Shadung (2017) argue further that “exploring how women are affected differently, based on the contextual understanding explains how they navigate the continued challenge within their gendered roles” (Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017, p. 2).

### **3.3.2 Geopolitical Differences in Women's Engagement in P/CVE**

Much literature continues to reveal how women increasingly enable, support, counteract and take part in preventing violent extremism (Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017). However, the experiences and roles of women are conveyed in literature more as being homogeneous rather than as subjective realities which are shaped by context, community norms and history. The experiences of both men and women also vary according to geographical divides (Arostegui, 2016; Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017). This kind of diversity complicates initiatives for P/CVE that over rely on the liberal blueprints. In this sense, as women engage in “geographically and ideologically diverse manifestations of violent extremism throughout modern history” due to perceived opportunities, they also need more dynamic intervention frameworks that capture such contextual diversity (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 56). Lack of adequate attention to geographical diversity by many scholars and policy makers “has resulted in incomplete understanding of female pathways into

and out of violent extremism, as well as the ways in which women develop resilience to resist radicalisation” (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 56)

Patel and Westermann (2018), for instance, observe further that “the ideological distinctions between ethno-separatist and extremist organisations have extensively dictated the different roles, responsibilities and opportunities afforded to women” (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 53). For instance, while citing evidence from Pearson (2018), Patel and Westermann (2018) explain how more women tend to dominate “the online space as a comparative site of liberation, that is free of the gender boundaries and restrictions frequently found offline” (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 56). It would not be surprising therefore that there are women who see joining the conflicts in Syria and Iraq as empowering (Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017). In such broad engagements, women seem to be inspired to play multiple roles within extremist organisations that would range from being facilitators and recruiters to the extent of being “suicide bombers and frontline fighters” (Patel & Westermann, 2018, p. 53). Extremist groups such as *Daesh*, on the other hand, have since been reported as making their case by co-opting women through false promise to have them assigned some roles in “creating a new society” (Anderlini et al., 2017; Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017). Such organizations, therefore, “allude to women’s empowerment in their ideology, casting them both as contributors to their cause and as a means through which women can express their female identity” (Anderlini et al., 2017, p. 9).

Based on empirical research conducted in the Middle East, Khelghat-Doost (2017) reports findings from different sources indicating that “the different extremist groups like IS, *Jaish al-Fatah*, and *Jabhat Fateh al-Sham* have systematically provided a favourable environment for a limited number of women to exercise a relatively higher degree of agency within the roles assigned to them” (Khelghat-Doost, 2017, p. 2). This shows that even within the spaces provided by the extremist groups, there is a degree of discrimination as only a few women enjoy limited privileges.

### 3.3.3 Agency and Participation of Women the Search for Peace

Some empirical evidence suggests that “even though it is quite possible to make formal peace without including women and looking at gender relations, the transformation of violent conflict is impossible without using the gendered lenses” (Harders, 2011, p. 2; Porter, 2007a, p. 68). Specifically, Porter (2007) argues for gender inclusion, noting that enhanced contribution of women to the negotiating table for peace provides higher chances of securing an all-encompassing resolution of violence. The inclusion in this regard must comprise critical discussions on peace that also “lays groundwork for (*re*)building a peaceful, just and equitable society” (Porter, 2007a, p. 68). This view explains the importance of broadening the theoretical understanding situations of violent conflicts and the nuances in the peace process to adequately address the specific mechanisms for gender inclusion or exclusion. The gender lenses become important because violent extremism and peace also involve both men and women in specific ways (Harders, 2011; Porter, 2007a).

More recently, women have been presented to be increasingly taking active roles on the frontline of “violent extremism, as recruiters, propagators, suicide bombers, and targets, as well as leaders working on de-radicalisation, counter-messaging” (d’Estaing, 2017a, p. 105; O’Gorman, 2014; Romaniuk & Durner, 2018). Despite this acknowledgement of women’s roles in conflict situations, “women are still largely invisible in peace processes except as victims” (Swaine et al., 2016, p. 18), “due to the fact that women’s contributions usually are informal, ad hoc and rarely part of formal peace processes, so their stories often drift, unacknowledged” (Metre, 2016, p. 21). It is, therefore, even more crucial that academic and policy research engages more actively than before with women in preventing violent extremism (Noma et al., 2012), and increasingly “focuses on the gender-related issues such as why women become involved as protagonists and supporters of violent extremism” (d’Estaing, 2017, p. 105) and also how they can be agents of change for peace (Porter, 2007).

Based on the multifaceted gender issues, it is important to note that “having an extra woman at the formal negotiation (or peacebuilding) table does not necessarily guarantee that she will raise issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment”

(Chang et al., 2015, p. 12). The lack of such a guarantee implies that an appropriate peace process must make the “voice of women to count instead of being just a process of counting the number of women” (Paffenholz, Ross, Dixon, Schluchter, & True, 2016a, p. 37). At the same time, depending on which and how many women are at the table, it is possible that issues affecting women and their families are taken seriously (Chang et al., 2015; Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017; Salifu & Ndung'u, 2017).

Another scenario arises in cases where occasionally women find themselves “better off colluding with gendered structures that ensure their continued subordination, rather than seeking approaches that will allow them to break the cycle of exclusion” (Sharp et al., 2003, p. 3). This probably explains the allegation that women are not necessarily advocates for gender equality irrespective of whether their situation is real or imagined. Sharp and their team argue that “such apparent collusion represents patriarchal bargains, which offer women greater advantages than they perceive can be achieved by challenging the prevailing order” (Sharp et al., 2003, p. 281). It is in such circumstances, Kandiyoti (1998, p. 20) argues, that women often find themselves in a fix. Hence, they tend to (or are seen to) become “reluctant to engage in empowering activities that may challenge their gendered bargain” within their current status in varying contexts. Such circumstances of patriarchal fix on women introduces a complex perspective on the interventions that aim at “empowering women” namely, whether the very women have self-desire or initiative to either challenge the status quo in patriarchy or to conspire with such very structures that appear to oppress them in a way.

Demonstrating the benefits of gender equality, therefore, Paffenholz et al., (2016) confirm, from their empirical study *‘Making Women Count-Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women’s Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations’*, that while the direct inclusion of women “does not per se increase the likelihood that more peace agreements are signed and implemented, what makes the difference is the influence women actually have on a process” (Paffenholz et al., 2016a, p. 5). This evidence can as much be attributed to women in the West as in Africa. But still, it shows how making the participation of women count would be “more important than merely counting (relying on) the number of women included in the



peace processes” (Paffenholz et al., 2016a, p. 5). Bringing such an argument into the context of Africa, it is noted on a popular blog post (Freedom House, 2014) that despite some acclaimed progress on the inclusion of women on the negotiation table at the global level, the situation in Africa remains to be a mirage. For instance, the peace negotiations in South Sudan provided some ray of hope for the inclusion of women in the peacebuilding process, but it is still regrettable how “very few women are involved even in resolving cases of active conflict” (Freedom House, 2014).

Hence, whenever women are involved previously, it has been largely “due to normative pressure applied by women’s groups and their supporters” (Paffenholz et al., 2016a, p. 5). In this sense, while consensus builds “around the need to involve women in peace processes more proactively, their experiences in both peace and conflict remain largely unnoticed by many international actors and policymakers” (Hedstrom & Senarathna, 2015, p. 4). It is on this basis that Paffenholz et al (2016) argue further that inclusion of women should not be limited to direct “participation at the negotiation table”, which is equated to the “add and stir approach”. Instead, “the inclusion needs to occur through multiple modalities, along several tracks, and throughout the different phases that include pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-agreement implementation” (Paffenholz et al., 2016, pp. 26-32).

Similarly, to ensure effectiveness in tackling violent extremism, gender equality is considered a major factor. A set of “context factors work hand in hand to either enable or constrain the ability of women to participate and exercise influence” (Paffenholz, 2015; Paffenholz et al., 2016a). Despite these important acknowledgements, and “notwithstanding the rallying call to include women in all levels of official peacebuilding and reconstruction processes, women remain marginalised from these processes” (d’Estaing, 2017:105). Such marginalization implies that women’s “expertise is not always noted or understood, and the vicious cycle of marginalization takes place in a context of shrinking space for civil society debate and activism, and in particular a shrinking space for women’s rights work” (d’Estaing, 2017, p. 103). In some situations though, women are often presented as “subjects, not agents, and their ways of knowing and being are ignored” (Brown & Saeed, 2015:1954; *and also* d’Estaing, 2017, pp. 103-5).

Consequently, “women’s agency and their contributions to peace processes have been severely restricted” (Hedstrom & Senarathna, 2015, p. 57). There is no doubt therefore that limiting women’s participation, especially in Africa (given the low gender parity in governance), “excludes the opinions of women from poor and marginalized communities”, which denies women “the opportunity to define and address their own concerns and needs and erasing their experience and knowledge of the conflict in question from the public agenda” (Chang et al., 2015, p. 35; Hedstrom & Senarathna, 2015). It is such forms of exclusion that calls for attention to the strategies “that have been put in place to counter violent extremism” (Mercy Corps, 2010, p. 8). This remains a major concern, given the huge evidence on the glaring absence of women, who in terms of demographic reports, “account for most of the millions of people displaced by the conflicts” (Ibid).

In essence, this crucial challenge in women’s contributions to peacebuilding as a CVE strategy has seen continuous calls for a more gender-aware approach, cognisant of different and complex local contexts (Adams et al., 2019; Schomerus et al., 2017). Meanwhile, “the assumption that women can play a major role in peacebuilding through their ability for crafting counter-narratives in their family and community, remains unconfirmed” (Ahmadi & Lakhani, 2016, pp. 9-10). The essentialist argument therefore posits that “women’s participation efforts would lead to a more self-sustainable peace that means eliminating the structural causes of violence and the emergence of a just society” (Jabri, 2010, p. 43). This points to the fact that,

Only by allowing women to tell their own stories within their contexts can we begin to understand the challenges as well as the opportunities for women’s active participation in the peace process. This is particularly true since much of the academic and policy literature produced by international scholars and institutions tends to view peacebuilding as a top-down rather than a bottom-up process. (Noma et al., 2012:7).

It is therefore crucial to engender the space for peace in tackling violent extremism in Africa, as the peace process needs to involve deeply personal and creative acts by ordinary individuals, who are themselves caught in the difficult conflict contexts

(Lederach, 2005, 2014; Noma et al., 2012; E. Porter, 2007b). In many cases, their voices are rarely heard beyond their own communities, since building peace is too often top-down and elite-focused, hence further exacerbating the absence of women (Noma et al., 2012; E. Porter, 2007b). It is on this basis that communities might be able prevent the emergence of violent conflict, or rebound more quickly after it, and have everyday capacities to successfully harness their indigenous knowledge against extremist violence (Metre, 2016, 2017). It is at this point the review explores specific opportunities for African women in countering violent extremism.

### **3.4 Enhancing the Voice of African Women in the Peace Process**

According to Chang et al (2015), the differences in women's experiences resulting from unique conditions reinforces the understanding that women are not a uniform demographic group. This explains how "religion, cultural backgrounds, race, ethnicity, economic status, and other social characteristics shape the identities of women in varied contexts alongside their viewpoints and lived experiences" (Chang et al., 2015, p. 17). In this regard, DiLanzo (2018) attributes "the continuous marginalization of girls and women from the political sphere to the obstructive laws and institutional barriers" (DiLanzo, 2018, p. 2). The situation of women in Africa is worsened by "normalised" discriminatory "cultural practices and disproportionately low access to quality education and disproportionate access to economic resources" (Women Deliver, 2018, p. 4). In essence, the varied situations between women in Africa compared to other regions of the world make it reasonable to explore their unique contextual implications toward inclusivity (Dilanzo, 2018).

Understanding how the space for African women has been constricted touches on the perspective of their equal participation discussed in the realm of basic human rights and not as a favour granted at the whims of tokenism by the political patriarchal structures (Karim & Beardsley, 2013; True & Riveros-Morales, 2019). Moreover, and besides being a right, women's involvement in peacebuilding must not only be understood as a contributing factor in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, but the lack of which undermines peace (True & Riveros-Morales, 2019). While this argument builds on the feminist perspective about women's involvement

in efforts to prevent and resolve violent conflicts, it provides the basis for transformation of the system and structures for peace to be more gender inclusive.

The envisaged transformation also needs to demonstrate the practice beyond much of the evidence generally based on the experience of women in the West. Limited information about the experiences of women in Africa, in relation to international peace interventions, and as part of interaction with local communities, becomes important to explore the African “local as having agency in its own right” (Paffenholz, 2015, p. 858). Paffenholz points out that “the motivation behind analysing peace in context, should help in understanding the local as an entity, to enhance the chances for achieving sustainable interventions for peace within societies” (Paffenholz, 2015, p. 60). This viewpoint indicates the need to transform the established infrastructure and processes for tackling violent extremism.

The transformation herein enables African women, as local or indigenous peace builders who need the necessary skills to demonstrate and play their roles as agents of peace, in order to inform the international practitioners that in that case, need a better understanding (Hoch et al., 2017; Paffenholz, 2015). Conflict transformation, therefore, offers the bridge to the gap in a contextualised and dynamic understanding of existing structures, grievances, and belief systems. Structural transformation, in turns, makes it possible to navigate the risk of prioritising the most important factors and reflecting on the consequences of peace interventions (Schmelzle & Fischer, 2009).

In demonstrating the complexity of possible outcomes in the interventions, Shepherd (2015, p. 59) provides some insight from Liberia, examining how women participate in peace process through informal activities, and cautions about a looming “danger of complacency” associated with casual engagement. The perceived complacency is often “counterproductive to the long-term interests of women” (Shepherd, 2015, p. 59). Consequently, African women may lose an opportunity to voice their perspectives within the formal processes where permanent and lasting decisions are made by being restricted to informal processes (Shepherd, 2015). It becomes inevitable, therefore, that conflict transformation provides an open question of how best to develop adequate strategies for

identifying entry points to enhance the space for African women in contemporary interventions, given the growing consensus that protracted and complex conflicts require equally long-range and multi-dimensional change (Körppen et al., 2008). Hence, integrated, and holistic approaches including women's voices in peacebuilding underline the need for transforming the prevailing structural systems, and the political, socio-economic, and cultural factors to open up the space for women's inclusion in countering violence in Africa.

It becomes even more challenging, therefore, that unless clear actions for gender inclusivity are taken in tackling violent extremism in Africa, existing threats remain significant, even for the most resilient of communities (Botha, 2014; Lind, Mutahi, & Oosterom, 2015). This makes the case for a robust, coherent strategy for gender equality in tackling violent extremism (Azmiya & Goldsmith, 2018), which then makes conflict transformation more appropriate for the protracted conflicts in Africa (Iyekekpola, 2019). As a peacebuilding approach, conflict transformation takes into account the high level of complexity of violent extremism, due to the widespread recognition of its holistic and integrated perspectives in different contexts (Wils et al., 2006). Moreover, the effectiveness and significance of inclusive and holistic initiatives cannot be underestimated with respect to their impact on peace outcomes and the consequent durability of such peace (True & Riveros-Morales, 2019: 26). Further to the needs for sustainability, "the presence of women in peace processes (as witnesses, signatories, mediators or negotiators) ostensibly makes such a process to be 20 per cent more likely that the peace agreement would last at least two years, and 35 per cent more likely that it will endure" (True & Riveros-Morales, 2019:25).

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has shown that dominant interventions in Africa comprise of Western-oriented strategies, which often follow donor blueprints that also constrain P/CVE programmes in the local contexts by drifting towards counterterrorism. While international support is crucial for both peacebuilding and CVE, the prevailing hegemony in the process is likely to ignore some differences and unique situations in the local contexts for peace interventions. Hence, the dominant liberal systems not only perpetuate exclusion, but also enhance colonial continuities, which

perpetuate inequalities, especially those based on race and gender. In addressing violent extremism, critiques raised in multiple studies demonstrate that liberal mechanisms have failed to address the very conditions in the emerging conflicts. Understanding gender relations through systemic transformation, therefore, becomes imperative. Feminist critical theory, in this case, argues for the removal of such binaries as public and private in the strategies and analysis of CVE so that the personal is redefined as political, and the political as personal. In a nutshell, this chapter demonstrates that while peacebuilding and CVE are conceptually divergent, the search for sustainable peace remains common to both strategies. Hence, the transformational approaches are contemplated to inform the theoretical framework, as discussed at length in the next chapter, to explore a gender inclusive strategy that is contextually relevant, in the processes for tackling violent extremism.

## **PART II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND AFROCENTRISM**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

Based on the conceptual gaps and connections between CVE, peacebuilding, and the common search for peace, as raised in chapters two and three, this chapter focuses on the theoretical viewpoints that could explain the chances of tackling violent extremism through social justice and inclusion. It provides analysis of the different viewpoints of diverse theoretical approaches and explains how they can be employed in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism, and to propose a gender-inclusion element. This chapter, therefore, narrows down to the application of conflict transformation as a strategy for enriching the interventions for CVE within the paradigm of Afrocentrism. The two archetypes of Afrocentricity and Afro-feminism are also introduced to highlight the philosophical world view of the study.

#### **4.1 Theoretical Viewpoints about Conflict Transformation**

As noted in Chapter two, violent conflicts associated with extremism signify contextual problems that require multifaceted approaches (Reychler, 2001), as discussed in chapter three. Hence, the need to consider both preventing and countering measures to violence (Omenma & Hendricks, 2018) can borrow a leaf from Conflict Transformation – which is a major theory used in peacebuilding. Based on proactive mechanisms of violence prevention, the choice of Conflict Transformation contemplates how CVE can tackle incidents of conflicts by identifying active root causes before addressing the issues (Hassan et al., 2014).

Approaches for tackling violent extremism, therefore, demand a broad theory that incorporates the aspects of social justice and inclusion. Subsequently, the reactive mechanisms for conflict prevention seek to avert further escalation to control the intensity of violence (Schilling, 2012), and by reducing the duration and containing the possible geographical spill-over of the conflict (Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001). The connection between proactive and reactive actions informs the rationale for considering peacebuilding in addition to mechanisms for preventing and countering violent extremism in theory and practice. The connection also conforms to the



argument by Reyhler (2001) that peacebuilding, in scope, encompasses more than P/CVE by seeking to transform conflicts constructively and to create a “sustainable peace” environment (Reyhler, 2001, p. 4).

Because terrorism and violent extremism are both security and political issues (Donohue, 2009), both the contextual and transformation of attitudes to conflict and human security must be addressed conclusively with remedial action. Proactive engagements are also necessary to account for the assumptions, structures and practices that equally express and inform everyday policy and practice (Francis, 2002a; Lemay-Hebert & Visoka, 2017). The theory of Conflict Transformation, therefore, comes into perspective as an attempt to bring the desired “new thinking” into the practice of peacebuilding (Francis, 2002a).

Consequently, transforming conflict in the context of violent extremism would seek to move beyond the simplistic problem solving approaches for managing or resolving conflicts (Shailor, 2015). Subsequently, the theory pursues measures for fixing the underlying issues which threatens the core interest of the parties involved in the conflict by changing the strategic thinking therein (Loadenthal, 2019; Reyhler & Paffenholz, 2001). The process of transforming conflicts also aims at changing the opportunity structures and the ways of interaction between the conflict parties. Hence, by employing strategies of peacebuilding in CVE, it is worth noting that the ultimate goal of finding a solution transcends the hope to merely resolve the present conflicts, to shifting the whole situation around which conflict occurs (Reyhler & Paffenholz, 2001).

It is notable that Conflict Transformation gains prominence in this study as the first step in this pursuit of a mechanism for achieving sustainable peace in the precincts of countering violent extremism. Unlike the former theories such as Conflict Resolution Theory, Conflict Transformation incorporates crucial strands for addressing the complexity in different contexts of conflict (Lederach, 2014), such as social justice and human rights arising through systemic structures and relationships (Basu et al., 2020; Loadenthal, 2019). It also seeks to challenge exclusion within the communities and beyond (Aroussi, 2020). The components of this theory, thus, fit within the suggestion made by Weinberg and Richardson

(2004) to apply conflict theory in terrorism studies. These scholars, specifically, propose a three-level framework for understanding the general trajectory of social and political conflicts at the inter-group, community, and international levels. In this context, Weinberg and Richardson (2004) argue that many conflicts share certain traits that can best be understood as components, phases, or as stages of a spiral/ cycle of a longer process.

Accordingly, analysing violent conflicts demands that suitable consideration be given to the “social, regional and international contexts”, due to the increasing globalisation of both conflict and interventions peace (Miall, 2004, p. 69). This analysis also considers that conflicts emerge from cyclic realms where different parties are more likely to generate grievance by developing multiple identities (Weinberg & Richardson, 2004). However, conflict processes do not necessarily follow a linear path of description in the cyclic process, even though an aspect of change and transformation remains conspicuous. Taking control of the desired changes by discontinuing the conflict cycle, for the purposes of sustainable peace, would therefore fit within the scope of Conflict Transformation Theory.

#### **4.2 Tenets of Conflict Transformation Theory (CTT)**

Miall (2004) argues that “a distinctive theory of conflict transformation” has indeed emerged, which is characteristically distinct from either conflict resolution or conflict management. However, conflict transformation still draws on much familiarity of concepts with both conflict resolution and conflict management by sharing similarity in traditions of theorising about conflict, just like any of the forerunner theories (Miall, 2004; Ngalung, 2008). In this regard, while conflict transformation is squarely a new theory in its own right, “it is best viewed not as a wholly new approach, but rather as a re-conceptualisation of the field in order to make it more relevant to contemporary conflicts” (Miall, 2004, p. 70). Consequently, conflict transformation is adopted, especially in this study, as a theoretical framework aimed at achieving sustainable peace in situations of contemporary violent conflicts that are relatively asymmetric, and marked by intense inequalities of identities, status, and power (Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

Achieving sustainable peace, sadly, has remained elusive due to the shrinking “space for inclusive and constructive peacebuilding” both in national and international contexts (Berghof Foundation, 2019). Ernstorfer (2018, p. 50), therefore, advocates for a practical framework for transforming violent conflicts, “based on the premise that political extremism and rapidly changing forms of violence have been a concern in the peacebuilding field”. The new challenges must incorporate a clear understanding of “the phenomenon of ‘violent extremism’ alongside other forms of violence” (Ernstorfer, 2018, p. 50). Unfortunately, many countries faced with the problem of violent extremism have always resorted to manipulative polarisation, the politics of oppression, and the unchecked use of force, despite existing evidence that such measures are not only costly, but also are hardly effective (Berghof Foundation, 2019).

Many theorists (Abbas et al., 2019; Azar, 1990; Azar & Burton, 1986; Lederach, 2005; Miall, 2004) of Conflict Transformation, therefore, tend to lay much emphasis on the nature of contemporary conflicts, like in situations of violent extremism, which necessitates identification and reframing of positions beyond the conventional win-win outcomes. The aspect of reframing accounts for the structures of, and relationships between, conflict parties that is embedded in diverse patterns of conflictual interactions that also extends beyond particular conflict sites (Miall, 2004). Consequently, CTT becomes crucial toward accounting for a constructivist modification of both the conflict environment and empowerment of the actors (Graf & Kramer, 2006).

Acknowledging the strength of CTT in envisioning and responding to social conflicts as an opportunity to create “constructive change processes” (Lederach, 2014, p. 16), it becomes relevant for consideration as a first step towards achieving inclusion, empowerment and for capturing the perspectives of actors in diverse contexts. The constructivist aspect of CTT embodies the vital agency for change, where not only people within the conflicting parties, or those within the societies affected, but also outsiders in the regions affected significantly play complementary roles in the protracted process of building peace (Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

Applying CTT with such complementarity provides for “a comprehensive and wide-ranging approach” that places more emphasis on the support “for groups within the society in conflict rather than for the mediation of outsiders” (Miall, 2004, p. 72). The theoretical framework further recognises the gradual transformation of conflicts following a sequence of minor or bigger modifications, and through specific steps in a process where diverse actors play critical roles (Lederach, 2014; Miall, 2004; Ngalung, 2008). The anticipated change process, therefore, becomes pivotal in the need to resolve different scopes of violent conflicts (Romaniuk & Durner, 2018), and to enhance the chances for pursuing justice in the daily interactions and in the prevailing community relationships (Badurdeen, 2018).

This theory of Conflict Transformation thus provides insight into the interplay between external stress factors and internal dynamics, most of which manifest in the structural issues of violent extremism (Midgley et al., 2014). According to Shailor (2015), Conflict Transformation provides a comprehensive approach for addressing the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict, using the potential for such conflicts as a catalyst for positive change in all areas. Nonetheless, many peace actors remain uneasy applying CTT in P/CVE due to the blurred knowledge of “what constitutes effective ‘P/CVE’ engagement within and across policy fields” (Ernstorfer, 2018, pp. 50–51). It is thus challenging to identify what aspects of transformation are relevant for P/CVE initiatives, unless there exists clarity in the conceptualisation of violent extremism, as an established field, and alongside various forms of violence tackled in peacebuilding.

By concurrently exploring P/CVE and peacebuilding interventions, this study explores how to positively influence the debates and practice in both fields by first enhancing the application of key principles of peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity to the P/CVE debate (Ernstorfer, 2018; Pathak, 2016). Secondly, the study draws on lessons learned in the more established field of peacebuilding to effectively inform mechanisms for conflict prevention that are critical for the modalities of P/CVE initiatives. This explores how interventions are designed and implemented with an aim of becoming “transformative in the contexts and communities within which they are applied” (Ernstorfer, 2018, p. 50). Hence, CTT presents a suitable

approach in the efforts for preventing and countering violent conflicts, because “it begins before violence, and so, it has the potential for saving many lives that are otherwise placed at risk due to violent conflicts” (Reychler, 2001, p. 4).

Lederach (2014) argues further that conflict transformation provides an appropriate framework that facilitates the chances of building conducive relationships within communities by laying emphasis on the importance of understanding processes that help in transforming conflicts from their destructive and violent forms into a more productive form. This aspect of transformation is often recognised as part of everyday life, that can be resolved through dialogue and by creative and peaceful means (Psaltis, Carretero, et al., 2017; Psaltis, Franc, et al., 2017). According to Psaltis, et al. (2017), the conflict transformation framework also incorporates the idea of reconciliation, both as a process and as an outcome, that diminishes the possibility for violent conflict in cases of structural inequalities and political instability, and helps in facilitating peace settlements by supporting their viability afterwards. A conceptual analysis of the framework is essential for isolating key aspects of transformation that are applicable in both the peacebuilding and countering violent extremism fields, as discussed below.

#### **4.2.1 Conceptual Analysis of Conflict Transformation Theory**

Based on the analysis of the CT framework, CVE requires constructivist understanding (as discussed later in this chapter) of conflict transformation (Graf & Kramer, 2006). The constructivist conceptualisation brings the contextual perspectives of communities in establishing homegrown solutions for peace and the subsequent aspects of transformation shared between P/CVE and peacebuilding (Graf & Kramer, 2006, p. 73). The anticipated transformation, then, seeks to augment the intersection of three main concepts which include: Issues (of conflict – related to violent extremism); Actors (participants – individuals and groups); and Process (interventions – P/CVE and peacebuilding). of conceptual analysis of the framework can be made as follows.

##### ***a) Issues Transformation***

The Conflict Transformation Framework, provides for a comprehensive approach, addressing dimensions, which constitutes social grievances. Issues transformation,

then, covers micro-to macro-issues, ranging from the local to global levels, and structures right from the grassroots to elite actors, whether in the short term to long term timescales (Miall, 2004; Roberts, 2011). For example, many aspects of violent conflicts associated with extremist groups are “rooted in group-based grievances arising from inequality, exclusion, lack of opportunities to satisfy basic needs, poor governance and feelings of injustice” (Abbas et al., 2019, p. 13). While the causes of violent conflict remain complex and keep evolving in space, place and time, many groups who feel aggrieved often get mobilised to blame other parties (of outgroup members) based on religious, ethnic, and other group identities such as state or political affiliations (Abbas et al., 2019; Barzegar et al., 2016).

The concept of issues transformation, therefore, provides the framework for developing capacity and supporting structural change, rather than simply facilitating outcomes or delivering settlements (Austin & Giessmann, 2018). In this sense, issue transformation helps in reflecting on how to engage with conflicts both at the pre-violence and at the post-violence phase (Wani et al., 2013). As opposed to the principles of liberal peacebuilding, this concept enhances the reflection about post-liberal peace, which advances greater emancipation from structural violence, indigenous autonomy in determining peacebuilding priorities and the idea of the everyday as a focal point (Roberts, 2011).

#### ***b) Actor Transformation***

Crucially, the conflict transformation framework lays much emphasis on the actors who are embroiled in violent conflict or those responsible for its escalation (Berghof Foundation, 2019). This dimension focuses on identifying and understanding the parties to violent conflict – those controlling the key drivers and determining its duration. An understanding of different parties must consider the emergent challenges or uncertainties “which require new approaches and realistic risk assessment” (Berghof Foundation, 2019, p. 8). Actor transformation, therefore, reflects on the interests, identities, and needs of all actors, state and non-state, through the creation of a discursive framework of mutual accommodation and social justice which recognises difference (Cavalcante, 2019). The “everyday” refers here to the informal social routines of daily existence that people use to get

what they need when faced with extreme contingencies (Cavalcante, 2019; Francis, 2018).

According to Wani *et al* (2013), the conflict transformation framework involves a broad range of actors who make use of a wide repertoire of practices. It also reflects those who often suffer from the violent conflict. Hence, actor transformation must account for both parties involved in building peace and those affected by the “systematic inequality, exclusion, lack of opportunity to satisfy basic needs, and other disadvantaged groups” (Abbas et al., 2019). Quite often literature and media reporting display the face of terrorists and violent extremist groups as dominantly constituted by male actors through emphasis on religious leadership, combatants, and the military interventions as the predominant actors. In contrast, women are portrayed in the background, either as supporter to men or as passive victims. Porter’s feminist ethics, therefore, becomes useful in analysing actor transformation by narrowing down to women’s lives that reflects more on how they participate differently, in the spaces for countering violent extremism (Porter, 2007a).

The space for participation encompasses actions taken in creating peace as individuals, as actors in NGOs, actors within government agencies, participants in academia, as well as in the spaces available in the informal sectors of community engagements. Conflict Transformation, therefore, links well with Afro-feminist theories to provide a framework for making gender analysis of how inequalities constitute violent extremism alongside the conditions required for sustainable peace. Ultimately, actor transformation helps in analysis the possible “alternatives that emphasize personal experience, relationships, context and nurture” (Porter, 2007, p. 56). This conceptualisation thus embraces a framework of social ontology, which helps in the analysis of agency and empowerment of both men and women towards making informed decisions about issues affecting them.

### ***c) Process Transformation***

A final dimension to consider regarding CTT is process transformation, which describes the transition from violent conflict towards positive peace. As Mbugua (2014, p. 63) explains, process transformation acknowledges that conflicts are part

of social constructions of societies and that they are nonlinear, cyclical, and dialectical. Consequently, the concept of process transformation constitutes the pathway in addressing challenges faced in transforming conflicts. For instance, to transform violent conflicts driven or shaped by humiliation, as experienced or perceived after terrorist attacks, ways must be found to overcome the deep-rooted mistrust, suspicions, and anger engendered by the mutual humiliation.

Protracted conflicts between competing sovereign states, for example, are often ingrained in emotions that generate long-term deep distrust that occasionally evolves into negative perceptions about any gestures of conciliation by the recipients, who are likely to see the process as a ploy to undermine their position (Demmer & Ropers, 2019). Hence, initiating a processes of conflict transformation that is seen as genuine becomes crucial when developing strategies for building trust and confidence between the aggrieved parties (Abbas et al., 2019; Demmer & Ropers, 2019). The Conflict Transformation framework, thus, provides a mechanism for establishing sustainable peace in a way that is “just, dignified, and based on trustworthy relationships” (Abbas et al., 2019, p. 24).

Based on these three concepts, CTT becomes instrumental in explaining unequal conflict structures by considering the specific roles of both non-state armed groups and state actors in scenarios of state failure, as well as taking into account the needs and interests of, and the relationships between, male and female perpetrators or victims of violence (Körppen et al., 2008; Parlevliet, 2010; Wils et al., 2006). A systemic approach to conflict transformation therefore is likely to take specific account of the high level of complexity and the multidimensionality of conflict systems, both in conflict analysis and when planning intervention (Wils et al., 2006). Despite the replicability of CTT, it remains limited to effectively capture the contextual diversity in the violent conflicts between the Global North and South or between the West and Africa. Hence, engendering Afrocentric and feminist theoretical perspectives is crucial.

#### **4.2.2 Limitations of Conflict Transformation Theory**

While CTT is believed to be effective in understanding more complex conflict scenarios (Schilling, 2012), it is also important to dispel the myth that conflict



transformation is a process with a clear-cut beginning and end (Appiah-Thompson, 2020; Mitchell, 2009). Realistic application of the theory, therefore, calls for more critical analyses of both its epistemological underpinnings (Appiah-Thompson, 2020), as well as its underlying ethical frameworks to inculcate more sustainable peacebuilding processes in the resulting interventions (Mitchell, 2009). Alluding to contextual application, Appiah-Thompson argues that conflict transformation fails to embrace the “pervasiveness of positive traditional political values” in different contexts, which also needs to take into account the multiplicity of cultures and religious practices beyond “the Western political and philosophical paradigms” (Appiah-Thompson, 2020, pp. 161–162). The application of CTT in non-Western spaces has thus faced limitations of missing imperative understanding in making contributions to peaceful resolution of conflicts, especially in some violent conflicts connected to disastrous democratic practices in the African contexts (Appiah-Thompson, 2020; Maddison, 2016).

The limitations in the theories about management, resolution, or transformations of conflicts, as witnessed in the contexts of violent extremism, can be associated with constricted analysis of diverse complexities either in spatial or geopolitical contexts (Hoch et al., 2017). Adequate considerations must also include a realistic understanding of the diversity in political processes, in order to understand pragmatically what the opportunities are for political change, through which conflict transformation can help in securing a more just and peaceful society (Dixon, 2012). Incidentally, CTT falls into a similar trap as its predecessor theories by remaining stuck in the Western paradigms, philosophy, and perspectives on violent conflict.

Lederach, for instance, argues that “conflict transformation is more than a set of specific techniques, but a way of looking as well as seeing” (Lederach, 2014, p. 12). Nevertheless, the positionality of whoever is looking or seeing becomes equally important if conflict transformation is to achieve the necessary change in attitudes within the diverse parts of society, which most likely supports the continuation of the violent conflict (Hoch et al., 2017). In other words, if conflict transformation provides the lenses for looking and seeing, then whose lens is being

used in each violent conflict significantly matters in different contexts (Smith, 2008).

Appallingly, the proponents of conflict transformation have often fallen into the subtle trap of broader Western paradigms for liberalising peace, that channels conflicts “into productive, ‘formative’ processes such as democracy or civil society, and then immediately turning these processes back on themselves” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 668). Mitchell thus cautions that as much as transformation is nuanced and achieved in diverse practices and institutions, it does not necessarily need to be conflated with any institutions or practices. Instead, transformation can best be “understood as standards of behaviour, such as respect or rule-conformity, which condition these institutions and practices” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 669).

The emphasis on Western paradigms makes CTT to be relatively deficient in capturing the “values and interests” around violent conflicts in non-Western contexts (Appiah-Thompson, 2020, p. 165), hence the theory is rendered “incompatible with the agenda of achieving sustainable peace” beyond Western circles, especially in its current form (Hoch et al., 2017, p. 330). So, if conflict transformation theory proposes a set of lenses through which social conflicts can be viewed (Lederach, 2014), then proper attention must be paid to how conflicts can be transformed gradually, through the variety of expected changes, and based on the key roles played by community representatives in such changes (Hoch et al., 2017). Consideration must, therefore, be made to account for the environment within which the actors live (Hendrick, 2009), as well as the contexts in which they learn or share values and interests that are crucial for achieving sustainable peace through conflict transformation (Reimann, 2004). Specifically, an attempt must be made to understand how conflict is enacted in a polity composed of ongoing transformations in governance, democracy and development (Mitchell, 2009; Smith, 2008).

Another challenge associated with conflict transformation concerns the ethics of contemporary peacebuilding. Mitchell argues, for instance, for the need to change “the ethical medium and form in which conflict takes place” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 667). Based on its Western underpinnings, CTT may thus “replace ‘traditional’

forms of conflict” in non-Western contexts “with forms of structural conflict embedded in transformative processes and the ethics that drive them” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 667). Based on this uncertainty, the process of building sustainable peace requires a clear understanding of the ethics that underpin transformative processes, and the ways in which they reshape conflict (Dixon, 2012; Smith, 2008).

The underlying issue of ethics in transformative processes thence links to the concept of agency which suggests that communities do make their own history but they do so within specific constraints (Mitchell, 2009; Paffenholz et al., 2016b). Hence, Mitchell suggests the need to first examine “the phenomenon of ‘conflict-in-transformation’” as a necessary step towards understanding transformative ethics based on “an ethico-phenomenological approach” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 670).

An ethico-phenomenological approach helps to explore how the contextual constraints, for instance, arise from the structural barriers and systems for knowledge production. Overcoming such structural challenges, Schmelzle & Fischer propose the need for “courage to resist and challenge power structures, whether these are based on economic, cultural or gender differences – which then call for building on individuals’ conflict transformation skills” (Schmelzle & Fischer, 2009, p. 75). For this matter, understanding the space, role, and agency of African women in tackling violent extremism seeks to engender an Afrocentric analysis in conflict transformation to illustrate the ultimate contextual identity and uniqueness of the phenomena.

#### **4.3 Engendering Conflict Transformation within Afrocentrism**

Engendering conflict transformation in the African context is envisioned on the premise of transformative approach also pegged on indigeneity to espouse multiple parameters of knowledge production through subaltern voices (Tuck & Yang, 2011). Considering perceptions about patriarchy in the African systems, therefore, indigenous knowledge is considered as a corrective measure to the exaggerations from colonialism for conceptualising African gendered identities and differences by shifting focus to both historical and existing relationships while analysing the systemic space for both men and women. A strategy of conflict transformation, in this respect, is connected more to the issue of the ‘transformation concept’ by

“invoking indigeneity as a shared tradition” in multiple African contexts (Tuck & Yang, 2011, p. 28). That does not portray contestation of “indigenous sovereignty” but helps in building knowledge system that considers the interest of indigenous communities (Datta, 2018, p. 2).

This aspect of transformation can be explained by examining the emphasis made by many CVE programmes about the “complementarity of diverse levels of intervention (multi-track), the timing of interventions (multi-step), and the interdependence of issues (multi-issue)” (Ropers, 2008, p. 11). A negligible number of programmes focus holistically on the historical, social, and racial diversities (multi-ethnicity). Fewer interventions are grounded on the geopolitical disparities in knowledge production (Mwambari, 2019a), in theory and practice, especially between “local” communities and intervention groups. Instead, the evolving interface of multiple interventions for peace, including in countering violent extremism, have often been restricted to issues of development support, relief services, and constitutional reforms for state building (Körppen et al., 2008). This explains a glaring gap in both process and actor conceptualisations of conflict transformation. Hence, much discussion is still desirable to effectively revitalise CVE, with increasing interests in discourses around social change, and how the discussions can better be informed by (or enrich) the theory of conflict transformation (Austin et al., 2004; Miall, 2004).

Afrocentrism, therefore, brings about basic concerns to the quest of “social change”, which is a major factor in strengthening the theory of Conflict Transformation. It engages with the primary interests that form the basis for “discovering ways for transforming human relations” (McLeish, 2001, p. 1). Afrocentricity is a response to the “de-centering of African people from a subject position within their own narrative” (Asante, 2017, p. 231). Against this background, Mafeje (2011) introduces the idea of “Africanness” alongside “Afrocentrism” as a combative ontology that explains some sort of social signifiers around which circumstances of “*Africanness*” have been determined historically. The signifiers explore how Africans hope to freely choose the roles in which to cast themselves “as active agents of history”, by putting their significant social issues on the global agenda (Mafeje, 2011, p. 31).

Asante, however, decries that nothing is indeed combative in the ontology behind Afrocentrism, Afrocentricity, or Africanity, and hence the terms can be understood in the same way as other cultural realities, including Asiocentric, Eurocentric or Oriental ideological standpoints (Asante, 1983). In this respect, Afrocentricity creates “the subject and object” relationship in which the conflicts between the personal and the global, and a gap between the universal and the specific knowledge systems, are analysed based on African culture, experience and subjective realities of the world (Asante, 1983, 2017). Hence, the personal space and agency of actors in the paradigm of Afrocentrism designates a global subject of understanding African issues (Akinola & Uzodike, 2018).

Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) acknowledge the suitability of “Afrocentric paradigms in African research” by noting the significant position of Afrocentrism in both participatory and emancipatory studies, which embraces the contextual values, interests, identities and agency of indigenous people and knowledge. Arguing that diverse forms of knowledge possess at least some aspects of cultural relevance (Akinola & Uzodike, 2018), it becomes necessary to examine the issues, processes, and actors in tackling violent extremism using a similar lens, but which enhances African positionality.

Applying an Afrocentric paradigm to CTT is intended to establish the agency in the voices of Africans (Blake, 1997), especially those of women, which have been either stifled or side-lined within the “predominantly Western-centric academic circles and investigations because [African] indigenous knowledge and methods are often ignored or not taken seriously” (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013, p. 4) in mainstream CVE research. Appiah-Thompson offers a justification for adopting multiple theories to account for specific contextual traditions as a means of finding sustainable strategies for resolving contemporary violent conflicts (Appiah-Thompson, 2020). He makes a case using an African proverb from the Akan community which states that “truth is like a baobab tree, [and] one person’s arms cannot embrace it” (Appiah-Thompson, 2020, p. 163), to imply that no single theory can explain all contexts of knowledge. The proverb implies that even the most venerated “concepts and methods within Western thought are inadequate to

explain all of the ways of knowing”, since “universality” is a mere dream where a people “sleep” on the “truth based on specific cultural experiences” (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013, p. 1).

Consequently, it is notable that engendering the Afrocentric paradigm into CTT expands the scope of an otherwise Eurocentric framework to incorporate the contextual uniqueness of the African society. This also captures an elusive aspect of existing social constructions in the Africa context as they apply to multiple individuals, cultures and local power dynamics (Blake, 1997; Maloka, 2000). Using these two frameworks simultaneously explains the duality of knowledge in understanding diverse perceptions about violent conflicts, which also reveals the value of co-created knowledge between the universal and the indigenous (Afolayan & Falola, 2017).

Afrocentric viewpoints in conflict transformation, therefore, would pay more attention to the “desired” versus the “existing” relations between processes in violent conflicts and the anticipated “change processes” to resolving violent conflicts (Glasl, 2008, p. 45). Complementary viewpoints then improve the scope of the Conflict Transformation framework by effectively depicting the actors entangled in conflict, as well as the intervention process for peace, alongside issue transformation.

The focus of the CTT framework then shifts towards a mechanism for consolidating “inclusivity and participation at different stages in peace processes” (Lundström & Denkovski, 2019, p. 101) to address the existential challenges often faced in conflict transformation. Glasl (2008) suggests further that it is equally significant paying attention to both the relationships between strategies for peacebuilding and strategies of social change. Such relations help to ensure success in the peace process, given that even the most protracted violent conflicts emerge from struggles to create or impede changes either in society or in the systems of politics (Glasl, 2008; Oloruntoba & Falola, 2018).

In portraying the scope of process and actor transformation concepts, “inclusivity in peace processes refers to the degree of access to important decision-making areas

for all levels and sectors of state and society” (Lundström & Denkovski, 2019, p. 101). Inclusivity and participation links to indigeneity and positionality in knowledge production that are crucial for contextual analysis (Mwambari, 2021). Fundamentally, taking the indigenous viewpoint recognises that inclusive decision-making systems are seldom feasible unless they integrate the knowledge produced and consumed by the local community (Lundström & Denkovski, 2019). Likewise, positionality of knowledge involves incorporating norms, values and interests in the participation process, and requires ultimate recognition of the knowledge systems without which the inclusion remains null and void (Afolayan & Falola, 2017; Lundström & Denkovski, 2019). Based on these prevailing dynamics, Glasl, 2008 (p. 49) suggests a suitable framework “[that] lies precisely in structuring a nonviolent transformation of formal and informal structures and intercultural relations in such a way that the [actors can] start working constructively to reorganise their society”.

#### **4.4 Afro-Feminism and Conflict Transformation**

People’s understanding of violent extremism most likely determines how they choose to act in preventing and countering it (Pearson et al., 2020). In their empirical analysis, Pearson, Winterbotham and Brown argue that the involvement of women in countering violent extremism is often connected to the underlying gender norms. The norms are often held by groups of extremist organisations or determined by the wider contexts of the society in which they live and where interventions are required (Pearson et al., 2020).

Theoretical perspectives on “*African feminism*” traces its emergence to the 1980s and is attributed to a group of women identifying their decent to Africa, whose work exhibited “feminist consciousness” (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016, p. 264). A unique feature in the field of African feminism lies in the unique “experiences of women of African descent [both] on the continent, [and of those] women of the African diaspora worldwide” whose works dominate the literature (Penn, 1995, p. 3). Afro-Feminism, therefore, represents critical feminist perspectives of “multi-generational processes” involving those women who identify as “Africans and their descendants” (Penn, 1995, pp. 3–4).

This African identity has been emphasised through active attempts of women scholars, some of who are inspired towards recreating, displaying and observing their cultural practices, value structures, and belief systems within the global continuum (Amaefula, 2021; Penn, 1995). Gatwiri and McLaren suggest, therefore, that “Afro-Feminism” is tantamount to the works of African Feminists which describes the efforts for negotiating with “ideologies of Africanness” (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016, p. 264).

It is the Africanness that informs how Afro-Feminism fits into the Afrocentric focus of conflict transformation. The multiple theoretical frameworks, therefore, incorporate the desired theoretical interpretations of African women, who might be trapped in the dynamics of violent extremism and of those who are engaged in P/CVE and peacebuilding interventions (Pearson et al., 2020), based on realities about their lived experiences (Amaefula, 2021; Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). Afro-Feminism then encapsulates the divergent “equalist theories and efforts” to enhance some conditions affecting African women. This includes steps taken to reverse the remnants of historical injustice against women committed over time (Amaefula, 2021, p. 290). Subsequently, Afro-feminism constitutes a decisive move to intentionally “shake off the colonial filters through which the world is viewed” (Tamale, 2020, p. ix).

Applying Afrocentrism alongside Conflict Transformation as a framework of analysis then allows for a critical examination of the “traditional paradigms and [the] concomitant ideas of gender equality, flagging instead, the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* as a serious alternative for reinvigorating African notions of social justice” (Akinola & Uzodike, 2018). Enriching CTT in this respect, incorporates the multiple conversations, stories, dialogues, and debates that are not only complex, but are also closely interrelated (McCann & Kim, 2013, p. 12). A framework of conflict transformation connects to the feminist paradigms (Henry, 2021), which constitutes prospects for analysing the gender contestations. It illuminates the different aspects of the United Nations-centred Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, and how the activists and grassroots organisations challenge the gendered and sexed binaries and colonial hangovers. This also helps to examine how the UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions remain problematic in



the eyes of many feminists (Henry, 2021, p. 1). There is no doubt the WPS agenda, just like many other UN functions, faces the risk to perpetuate the neoliberal agenda.

The multiple conversations of women through time and space connects feminism to the concept of empowerment (UN Women, 2017), which emphasises both collective and individual identities in the context of challenging social and gender inequalities (Turner & Maschi, 2015), and potential intolerance in the interventions for P/CVE and peacebuilding. It is the context of empowerment which reveals that “despite the extensive body of scholarship focusing on women’s experiences of violent conflict, there have been fewer scholarly inquiries into women’s visions of peace” (Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019, p. 195). The gap in the space for women is even more conspicuous in the efforts for tackling violent extremism, given the diversity in the roles and experiences of African women. This diversity is reflected in the numerous points of intersection between gender discrimination, racial domination, and systemic oppression as manifested in the contemporary interventions for CVE (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016).

#### **4.5 Philosophical Worldviews for the Study: Epistemology and Ontology**

Connecting to the perspectives presented in the previous sections, this study takes the line of reasoning that “the rules that legitimise some bodies of knowledge and delegitimise others should always be questioned” (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 57). The process of questioning then brings into perspective a worldview that constitutes different implications regarding the basic sets of beliefs and experience which guide my reasoning, actions and the choice of techniques for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based entirely on qualitative research, therefore, this study provides for a philosophical point of view that captures theoretical traditions that also lend themselves to the use of specific research methods (Creswell, 2014; Leavy, 2017), as opposed to producing a generic set of knowledge systems. It also enables the analysis of the changing shapes and unfolding realities of the contextual concerns in tackling violent extremism, in order to “make sense of contextual circumstances” (Bassil, 2019, p. 82).

The basis for the choice of epistemology and ontology derives from the gaps in literature indicating that despite the high level of risk of violent extremism and based on the struggles to come up with P/CVE intervention frameworks, the situation in Africa still deserves a more robust conflict transformation approach to sustainably confront the challenge. Therefore, looking at the prevailing initiatives for peacebuilding or programmes for countering violent extremism, critical contestations continue to emerge touching heavily on their being characterised by both state and international bias. Consequently, the prevailing interventions, whether for CVE or peacebuilding, are significantly connected with state building (Njeri, 2019). In addition, many interventions that are designed by the global North, and tied to the inherent support of the international community, are seen to perpetuate coloniality and extend the imperial control by the Western powers of the Global North in the varied contexts of the global South (Njeri, 2019).

Addressing the power relations at the global stage of knowledge production, therefore, calls for an understanding of the alternative contextual underpinnings of the peacebuilding initiative for tackling violent extremism in Africa. Consequently, it is possible that social constructions in local contexts are lost in the mainstream universal knowledge system (Vanner, 2015). Enhancing the voice of African women in tackling violent extremism can thus be analysed to understand discourse evolution and adaptation in diverse contexts (Bassil, 2019).

While violent extremism has been extensively researched globally, the Afrocentric ontology remains to be deeply explored (Bassil, 2019). This necessitates the application of constructivism to look at the principles about “Afrocentric constructions of reality” (Cavalcante, 2019, p. 8). Using an Afrocentric perspective thus, helps to deconstruct the universality of some ideas by introducing the perspectives of both communities and individuals, as they share experiences and views from their natural settings in Africa.

Accordingly, both constructivism and interpretivism help in specifying the philosophical foundation for this research. In this regard, Jackson (2015, p. 34), a pioneer CTS scholar, decries the predominant situation of “epistemological crisis in counterterrorism” strategies and suggests critical engagement with global

realities as opposed to the perpetual guesses that exist (Jackson, 2015, p. 34). This assertion highlights the need to challenge the dominant paradigms shared through the Western narratives to describe, evaluate, and approve of the P/CVE interventions. Hence, narratives of Western knowledge can be deconstructed to overcome the “epistemological crisis” (Jackson, 2015, pp. 34-36).

The constructivist ontology adopted in this study helps to clarify the claims about the realities in theory and practice, beside demonstrating, in the epistemology, how communities engage with knowledge about the those realities (Mbugua, 2014). Moreover, this study draws on debates about “normalised knowledge hierarchies”, as argued by Zeleza (2016), while addressing the prevailing epistemological imbalance in academia. In this regard, Dawson asserts that, “ways of seeing, understanding and explaining social reality have been silenced by the epistemological traditions of the West, [...] and makes it more difficult to conceive of and embrace alternatives that lie beyond the canon of Western epistemologies” (Dawson, 2019, p. 75).

It is the focus on countering epistemic hegemonies in peacebuilding and P/CVE that a contextual understanding is emphasised in this methodology. The analyses seek to question and deconstruct some conventional narratives that emerge from foreign policy and have been entrenched in the African context through the state and donor-dependent mechanisms. Noting that the presentations of peacebuilding in Africa have been influenced significantly from what Mac Ginty (2015) refers to as the “saviour attitude” in contemporary peacebuilding, it was important to tap into the contributions by the local communities, which are likely to have been ignored. Essentially, “local” knowledge risks being overlooked or simply dismissed as traditional by the international organisations, assuming that the “local” is either static or undeveloped, rural or traditional, incapable or simply uncivilised (Mac Ginty, 2015). The constructivist ontology in this respect illustrates the impasse in attaining subaltern voices as indicated by constant conjunctions of empirical events (Sovacool, Axsen & Sorrell, 2018). The pre-emptive relationships then provide the basis to question some untenable assumptions that peace actors in diverse community contexts are often waiting for support and to be made better by being shown how peacebuilding is done (Mac Ginty, 2015).

According to Mbugua (2014), the ontological and epistemological positions are often implicit rather than explicit in most academic writings. Hence, for most contemporary studies on peace and conflict, it is the “ontological and epistemological analysis that helps in re-constructing the research questions to thoughtfully engage with concepts and enable appropriate selection of suitable research methods” (Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 13). But whether these positions are acknowledged or not, they shape the connection between theory and methods. This argument provides the nexus between distinct ontological standpoints and theoretical perspectives used in analysing violence in terms of structures that produce it or the agencies involved (Mbugua, 2014). Mwangi (2018) argues further, in this regard, that a constructivist ontology provides the basis for better contextual analysis of violent extremism and terrorism by virtue of being social constructs.

For the purposes of linking the theoretical framework here to constructivism and interpretivism, this study adopts a variety of perspectives about constructivist grounded theory to integrate the Conflict Transformation (CT) framework into Afrocentric and gender-inclusive strategies for tackling violent extremism. Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), is therefore adopted as the most appropriate approach for understanding the social processes that guide people’s actions and interactions in violent extremism (Anderson, Keating & Wilson (2017). Applying CGT recognises the existing theories based on researchers’ prior knowledge as informing the analysis of concepts (Anderson et al., 2017, p. 480). The analysis using CGT thus recognises Conflict Transformation, which is applied in this study as a precursor theory, which then becomes the starting point for rigorous scrutiny during analysis of the data, to develop explanations based on participants’ accounts of the phenomenon (Anderson et al., 2017). Constructivist Grounded Theory, therefore, informs the study approach, in order to explore the prevailing “aspects of the so-called peacebuilding architecture” (Cavalcante, 2019, p. 12) in the African context. Before discussing its application, it is important to discuss the critical aspects of CGT in relation to the prospects of this study.

#### **4.5.1 Constructivist Grounded Theory**

While rooting for Constructivist Grounded Theory (CTG), it is notably more applicable in this study to modify an existing theory as opposed constructing a distinct theory (Anderson et al., 2017). CTG can be described as an inductive research method developed by Charmaz (2006) for qualitative studies which aims at “generating theories from emerging data to gain understanding and provide explanations for complex social phenomena with no pre-existing theories” (Connor et al., 2018, p. 6). Charmaz (2017) argues, for example, that constructivist grounded theory is better placed to analyse how and the extent to which different standpoints can adjust during the research process. This framework and approach, therefore, conforms to the argument by Raadschelders (2011) that scholars should desist from putting the cart before the horse, hence, epistemological and ontological positions are discussed to inform the design and methods for the study. In this regard, ontological and epistemological positions inform the empirical evidence to critically develop the implications for results obtained from the study (Raadschelders, 2011).

Therefore, this approach provides for constructivist analysis that incorporates steps taken from broad theoretical frameworks to the specifics of detailed design and methodology (Grove, 2015, p. 1). Constructivism, for this matter, enriched both my understanding of violent extremism and facilitated the designing of a gender-based research method. The constructivist approach, is cognitive learning method where people are recognised as “active participants, in the learning process by drawing upon their personal experiences and their interaction with others to construct new understandings and knowledge” (Jia, 2010, p. 197). The constructivist approach thus informed the development of appropriate instruments for data collection and to make an appropriate choice of techniques for processing the data, as well as in making a sound interpretation that ends with a resolution of the research gap (Grove, 2015; Plowman & Smith, 2011). In order to address the contextual issues, the constructivist approach became appropriate for exploring social perspectives as independent phenomena based on the individual research participant’s views that create their social world (Curtis & Curtis, 2011b).

Constructivism, therefore, helped in assigning value to such knowledge while also becoming attentive to those who are telling the story (Francis, 2018, p. 68). Accordingly, constructivism was theoretically nuanced in experience while cognisant of the fact that meanings are not fixed (Cavalcante, 2019). It is in that regard that the approach enables an analysis of issues within the realm of context, space and time wherein different meanings can be produced (Plowman & Smith, 2011).

#### **4.5.2 Constructivist Assumptions**

The constructivist approach brings into the study underlying assumptions that individuals develop subjective meanings about their experiences, which are basically varied and multiple, exposing the researcher to the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into new categories or ideas (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Jackson “constructivism is a social theory rather than a substantive theory” (Jackson, 2009, p. 172). This makes constructivism ideal to provide the broader structure for developing a substantive model that incorporates the agency and structural pillars as constitutive of each other. This brings into the picture diverse actors and how they express their interests and identities in the realm of social constructions. The analysis brings out the key aspects that make constructivism the most relevant approach for understanding the research questions in this study. These aspects include the issue of agency that encompasses multiple actors in tackling violent extremism.

The constructivist approach thus helps in understanding the different aspects of “the complex reality” and provides the necessary insight for connecting the deeper relational patterns that exist in many interventions for P/CVE like the shared need for sustainable peace. Purposely therefore, constructivism occupies a kind of subtle connection “between rationalist and interpretive approaches” that is important for the study (Jackson, 2009, p. 172). The application of constructivism to explain obstacles in countering violent extremism thus stems from the view that terrorism and violent extremism are never objective categories that exist in the world (Heath-Kelly, 2016). The approach consequently presents some prospects of an all-inclusive and contextual analysis of the processes as constituted in the programmes for countering violent extremism. In so doing, constructivist analysis helps to

understand how identities and interests can change over time, given the shifting structures and available knowledge. In this sense, constructivism becomes essential for understanding the ever-changing state response to VE as it takes consideration of the roles played by factors such as culture, identity, religion and ideas (Gatuiku, 2016). As Jackson argues, “constructivism offers insights for conflict transformation” by drawing “attention to the mutually constitutive nature of the structures and agents” within the mainstream interventions for countering violent extremism (Jackson, 2009, p. 172).

Nonetheless, this versatile application of constructivism comes with reservations, as Dixon (2012) critiques some approaches adopted by civil society organisations working on peacebuilding and P/CVE. Dixon suggests that constructivism has misinformed the organisations’ “crude understanding of politics and prospects for political change” (Dixon, 2012, p. 98) that may perpetuate unsubstantiated outcomes. In such cases, advocacy for change through constructivism lean more to “the instrumentalist *perspective* of identity with extreme optimism that a radical transformation can be achieved by mobilising the people against ‘hard-line’ political representatives” (Dixon, 2012, p. 98). Such assumptions raise attention to the fact that in constructivism, identities can always evolve and thus become difficult to transform based on varied contextual factors (Dixon, 2012; Heath-Kelly, 2016).

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter makes analysis of conflict transformation as the theoretical framework as a starting point for deconstructing the Eurocentric epistemology and further pre-empt reconstruction of “new thinking” in CVE. The key factor is that transforming conflict in the context of violent extremism moves beyond the basic problem-solving approaches for managing or resolving conflicts. Conflict Transformation Theory, therefore, takes care of the mechanisms required to fix some of the underlying issues in situations of violent conflict. Owing to the limitations of Conflict Transformation to holistically address the geopolitical historical, social, and racial diversities in knowledge production, however, Afrocentrism is introduced as a complementary framework. Afrocentric considerations offer a

desired connection to the quest for social change, which bridges the gap between the universal and the specific knowledge systems. Afrocentrism enhances critical analysis by bringing to the centre unique dimensions of African culture, experience and subjective realities of the world which relates to the need for strengthening the theory of Conflict Transformation in explaining contextual circumstances in preventing and countering violent extremism. Nonetheless, both frameworks of Conflict transformation and Afrocentrism are incomplete for raising the issues of African women unless a gender specific framework is added to the analysis. This creates room for Afro-Feminism, which represents the critical feminist perspectives of women who identify as Africans. Consequently, the multiple theoretical frameworks are used to incorporate the desired theoretic interpretations of African women, who might be trapped in the dynamics of violent extremism and of those who are engaged in P/CVE and peacebuilding interventions.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

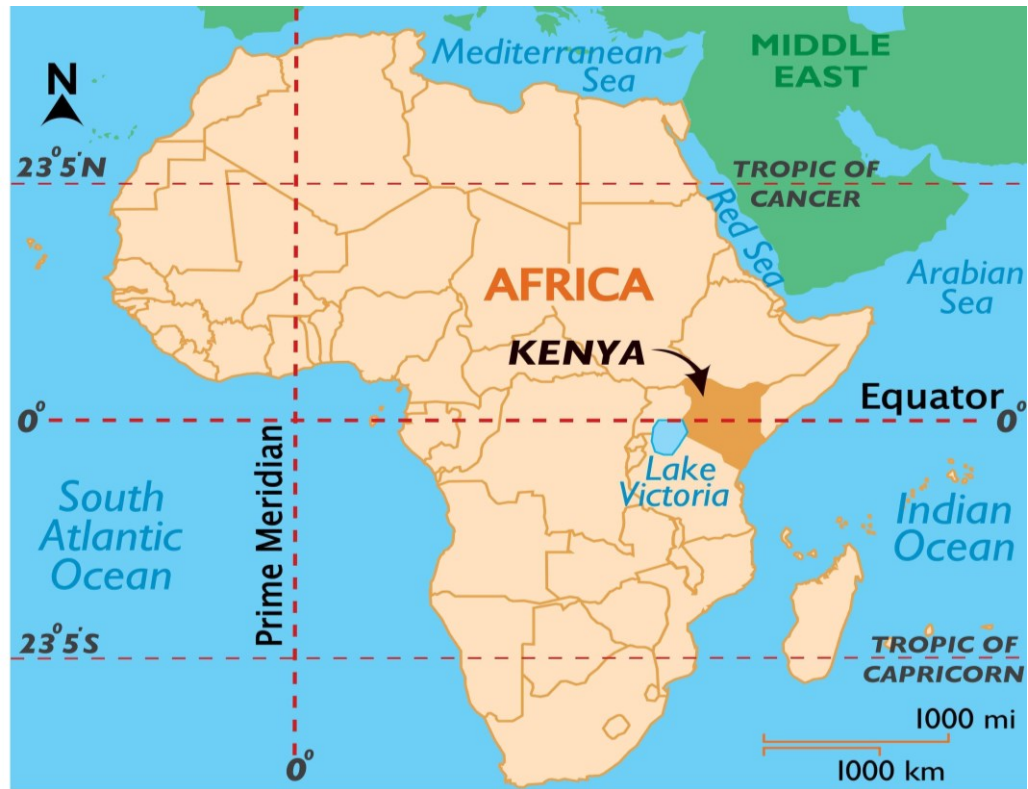
#### **5.0 Introduction**

The multi-dimensional theoretical framework demonstrates the need for addressing the empirical and conceptual gaps in conflict transformation for describing the inclusive processes and actor participation towards effectively tackling violent extremism. The nexus of multiple theoretical frameworks, including Conflict Transformation, Afrocentrism and Afro-Feminism, call for proactive approaches and methods that enhances the consequent phenomenological pursuit of social justice in challenging different aspects of “normalised” violence, that mars local intervention strategies and that also perpetuates gender exclusion. This chapter thus presents the methodology that helps in exploring both subjective and contextual nuances based on participants’ knowledge and experience. Starting with an overview about the study area and reflections about researcher’s positionality, the chapter then presents the design, approach, and different methods and techniques for sampling, collecting data, and for analysing data.

#### **5.1 Study Area**

The ultimate focus of the study is to develop a contextually sensitive and Afrocentric knowledge to find its nexus within Conflict Transformation. The study therefore focuses on Kenya as a case study for understanding the African situation. Participants for the study were, therefore, drawn from different categories of the population in Kenya. Commencing from the hope of having a dualistic approach that combines both Western and African knowledge frameworks, the study tackles the problem of violent extremism based on multiplicity in conceptualisation and diversity of experiences in the different settings at both national, subnational, and urban or rural contexts of Kenya. The diversity helps to understand how universal meanings relate to, or obscure the local understanding, especially on what constitutes such similarities or differences. The conceptualisation is then connected to the roles played by women, and their lived experiences, in respect to the space for tackling violent extremism. Consequently, the space and experiences take consideration of the historical implications of African values and culture, national security systems and the place of “criminal groups”, as well as the scope of

community interests/knowledge in the prevalence of violent extremism. An understanding of local languages is also helpful in contemplating the nuances and challenges between the Western and indigenous paradigms – towards constituting an Afrocentric knowledge system.



**Figure 1: Location of Kenya in the Map of Africa**

*Source: Kenya Maps and Facts – World Atlas*

Locating Kenya in the wider context of Africa not only provides the scope of shared perspectives at a continental level, but also stipulates the nexus of inter-subjectivity that explains how Kenya connects to other countries like Nigeria and Somalia among others, which face the similar predicaments of violent extremism. Parts of Sub-Saharan Africa are faced by the common problem of extremist organizations such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab based in Somalia (Adelaja & George, 2019; Cannon & Pkalya, 2017). The Horn of Africa, for instance, is beset by chronic insecurity and political tension, which continues to undermine efforts to consolidate regional economic development and democratic governance (Cannon & Pkalya, 2017). It is also important acknowledging the commonality about the *ubuntu* paradigm (Akinola & Uzodike, 2018) and oral history of knowledge

(Gathogo, 2014) among different African communities that are spread across multiple countries. This informs the consideration of shared viewpoints, traditions, and ideas, on the daily and lived experiences of diverse African communities (Ndhlovu, 2008; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013). These shared dynamics in Africa are thus nuanced with ethnic differences, cultural beliefs, and gender issues (Ndhlovu, 2008) that are important to reflect upon before narrowing the focus to Kenya. Kenya was purposefully selected for the study based on convenience as my home country and because it provides the required scope of shared or familiar African identities, values, and knowledge systems.



**Figure 2: Terror incidents by Al-Shabaab in Kenya (2010 - 2016)**

*Source: Njoku et al., 2018, p. 1000.*

Taking Kenya as a case study, the study aimed at beginning the data collection by engaging with the grassroots actors, and traditional leaders to represent the voice of

indigenous practitioners. The views of community groups represent the perspectives of actors at the micro-level whose actions are usually limited to homogeneous locations, but also reveal additional or richer perspectives. This category also forms the basis (unit of analysis) for local voices in CVE. Due to safety concerns following the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic, this first category was excluded from the sample. The other two groups of participants, which were finally interviewed, comprised peacebuilding actors in institutional settings at the national level. These constitute the direct implementers whose programmes are limited by jurisdiction, such as government officials representing the views of state agencies, and programmes staff of non-state agencies, who generate the ideas held by the civil society.

Another category interviewed included specialists and experts in P/CVE, most of whom had been engaged earlier (before the data collection process) as external programme evaluators and researchers. This third category included participants from academic institutions or from other local research centres. In many cases, programme evaluators comprise independent researchers whose work has no limitation of jurisdiction. Whilst the latter categories of respondents might be construed to comprise of relatively elitist groups of national actors, they provided the desired voices of local actors at national and sub-national levels that also depicted clear diversity of the nuances in theory and practice about P/CVE. Contextual experience of these groups generated crucial underlying subjectivities grounded on local knowledge. Therefore, the local voices explicate “the understanding of knowledge based on multiple roles within which that knowledge was produced, practiced and reproduced in society” (Harding, 2017, p. 35).

Inclusion of participants for the study took note of the national geographical coverage by reaching diverse ethnicities, religions, and programme implementors drawn from four regions of Kenya, all of whom had proximity to previous incidents of attacks. The regions included Western Kenya region (including Kisumu), Central Kenya region (including Nairobi), Kenyan Coast region (with hub in Mombasa) and Northern Kenya region (with hub in Garissa). Since counties constitute the devolved administrative units in Kenya, each region sampled covered at least three neighbouring counties. The clustering of counties in each region also

allowed for the necessary diversity in indigenous knowledge, language, culture, religion, and different programme approaches. Essentially, all forty-seven (47) counties of Kenya have established CVE strategies and specific County Action Plans (CAPs).

## **5.2 Researcher Positionality**

The methodology for this study has been significantly informed by reflections on the researcher's positionality, based on previous work experience. Having worked in the peacebuilding sector in Kenya, the researcher's personal preconceptions about the dilemma shrouding the peacebuilding sector informed not only the research questions based on practical dilemmas surrounding the interventions, but also the philosophy behind the subject of study based on previous engagements with the local actors in the peacebuilding sector. My positioning as a researcher relates to the view that "the identity or background of the interviewer often influence how the interviewee responds in qualitative research, which in turn influence the information collected and, more so, the quality of data" (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011, p. 122). Having worked directly on some peacebuilding interventions at PeaceNet<sup>1</sup>, as well as being a member of the UWIANO<sup>2</sup> Platform for Peace in Kenya, my point of entry to the study was informed by prior contacts with both state agencies and NGOs. This prior engagement included being actively involved in peacebuilding interventions, and more specifically, personal experience working in programmes for countering violent extremism in Kenya.

Moreover, I had been immersed in a couple of research projects on CVE, including undertaking comprehensive literature searches prior to commencing this study. Some of those prior assignments also enhanced my understanding of different manifestations of violence and discrimination against women. My earlier engagements were quite varied in scope and topical focus, but they were closely related to my understanding of the contextual issues that inform this research. In addition to my personal familiarities, the previous experience undoubtedly

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<sup>1</sup> Peace and Development Network: a national NGO in Kenya.

<sup>2</sup> UWIANO - Kiswahili word for cohesion, is a national forum that coordinates peacebuilding/P/CVE activities in Kenya most of which are jointly implemented by state and non-state agencies.

influenced the choice of design, selection of participants, interviews and consequently the type of data generated, including how the data was interpreted (Aham-Chiabuotu, 2019). The subjectivity that comes with such experiences closely links “to the power relations”, which might be necessary for “adequate consideration of self-positionality in order to gain trust and open discussion as well as for maintaining the rapport with all participants” (Hennink et al., 2011, pp. 120-2). In this regard, my reflexivity informed the decision to specifically focus on analysing the space of African women through the indicator of knowledge production as opposed to narrowing the scope towards understanding racial identities. Similarly, the methodology and theorising of the study are subjectively informed by own experience based on gaps identified while participating in the local interventions in Kenya, which surrounds the invisibility and missing voices of women, instead of engaging in the traditional binaries of femininity versus masculinities in tackling violent extremism.

Consequently, the reflections on my positionality, as a researcher, facilitates my exploring the situatedness and positionality of knowledge. In so doing, this study engages with the subject of violent extremism and the “object of knowledge” based on subaltern voices (de Santos, 2018). For instance, some participants shared similar opinions as I do, which enriched my analysis and interpretations of the information captured directly from the voices of participants. This was more applicable given my prior contacts with the state agencies and non-state organisations. The contacts eased my entry point before recruiting and engaging with a cross-section of participants who had overseen peacebuilding and CVE interventions.

In other circumstances, my previous relationship with the context of the interviews provided some aspects of “dual positions both as an insider and outsider” (Aham-Chiabuotu, 2019, p. 87). The insider perceptions arose from my familiarity with the local cultures, languages, and experiences, which led some participants to make presumptions about my understanding of the new facts they were raising. Hence, some would end their discussions by a casual question like, “*si hata wewe unajua hivyo?*” (don’t you also know what I mean?). The rhetorical question implies that I should either share or support their opinion. Such expression of assumptions

necessitated further probing for in-depth explanations by the participants, just to be sure of the clarity and to remain as objective as it would be practically possible.

Incidentally, being a man undertaking research on the interests of women placed me as an outsider in relation to some views by key participants holding stereotypical viewpoints on gender. Addressing the gender concerns by explaining that one does not need to be a woman to understand gender issues, just in the same way you do not have to be a terrorist to understand terrorism, helped in cutting a niche beyond the bounds of perceptions on patriarchy. This explanation links to what Cockburn refers to as focusing on the bigger picture. The outsider prism was heightened further by the “diaspora factor”, given that the interviews were conducted virtually (while I was based overseas). This was occasioned by the fact that I could not travel to meet the participants for a face-to-face dialogue due to Covid 19 related restrictions. The physical distance generated some reluctance among a few participants, which forced me quite often to reiterate how I relate to the issues affecting everyone in my country, and in the world at large, before gaining full confidence of the sceptical participants.

Finally, my experience, having engaged in several interventions for countering violent extremism in the past, provided some insight into how contextual programming in Africa remains “obscured in multiple complexities both in theory and research regarding intersectionality and transformational perspectives” (Olesen, 2011, p. 129), as applied in practice both in peacebuilding and for P/CVE. Such experience thus informed my choice of analytical tools, and for interpreting the contextual practices. Coupled with insights from the literature review, this methodology then undertakes to examine the differences that exist between the Western epistemology and the African context. The articulation of such differences follows the earlier observations by Harding and Norberg (2005), as expressed by Olesen (2011), who argues that “ideological positions of dominant voices in the northern hemisphere should no longer be the standards for measuring the space for women due to the general concerns of replicating the ‘whiteness’ when it comes to practice” (Olesen, 2011, p. 130).

In a nutshell, the researcher's positionality was instrumental in overcoming the methodological limitations associated with the dominant presentations by researchers from the global North, which therefore, brings this study to the understanding that, "Western epistemological and methodological approaches often represent not only a colonial past but also a neo-colonial present and hence it is widely acknowledged that research processes are infused with power, occasionally conceptualised" (Vanner, 2015, p. 2). It is on this line of understanding that the reflections on researcher positionality connects to the philosophical worldview for this study. As argued by Rehman and Alharthi, knowledge produced through a critical perspectives "is epistemologically subjective since no object or idea can be researched without being affected by the researcher" (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 57).

### **5.3 Study Approach: Qualitative Methods**

The study uses a bottom-up approach that helps to extract rich and in-depth information consistent with qualitative research methods. This corresponds with Windsong's (2018) argument that qualitative methods are particularly well-suited for contextual analysis. In addition, Maher and Dertadian (2017) suggest that qualitative research comes with an advantage of being able to capture more detailed information than is possible with quantitative techniques, even from hidden populations. The method provided a significant modality for understanding how and why things happen, and hence enables the production of anecdotal information with much scientific relevance.

The qualitative analysis is relevant for understanding even the potential "subjugated knowledge" about the diversity of women's realities "that often lie hidden and unarticulated" in Africa (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 115). The views of Hesse-Biber are reinforced by Creswell and Creswell, who argue that qualitative approaches provide room for flexibility and innovation when designing frameworks for a scientific study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Hence, qualitative methods in this study serve as an inductive approach to knowledge building, enabling the understanding of how meanings are generated by participants, and remains pivotal in the description of social phenomena (Leavy, 2017).



Consequently, the study follows the suggestion of Lincoln et al. (2011) that a qualitative approach enables the generation of questions about new methods and paradigms that reflect more on contextual ontologies and epistemologies, which provide alternatives to the undergirding conventional theories. This qualitative method then is critical for enhancing,

[a] deconstructive thought, which substantially expands the groundedness in constructivist symbolic interaction, by introducing transformative themes and developments for addressing complexities in social justice necessary for the nuances in conflict and peace studies. (Olesen, 2011, p. 129).

#### **5.4 Research Design: Phenomenology**

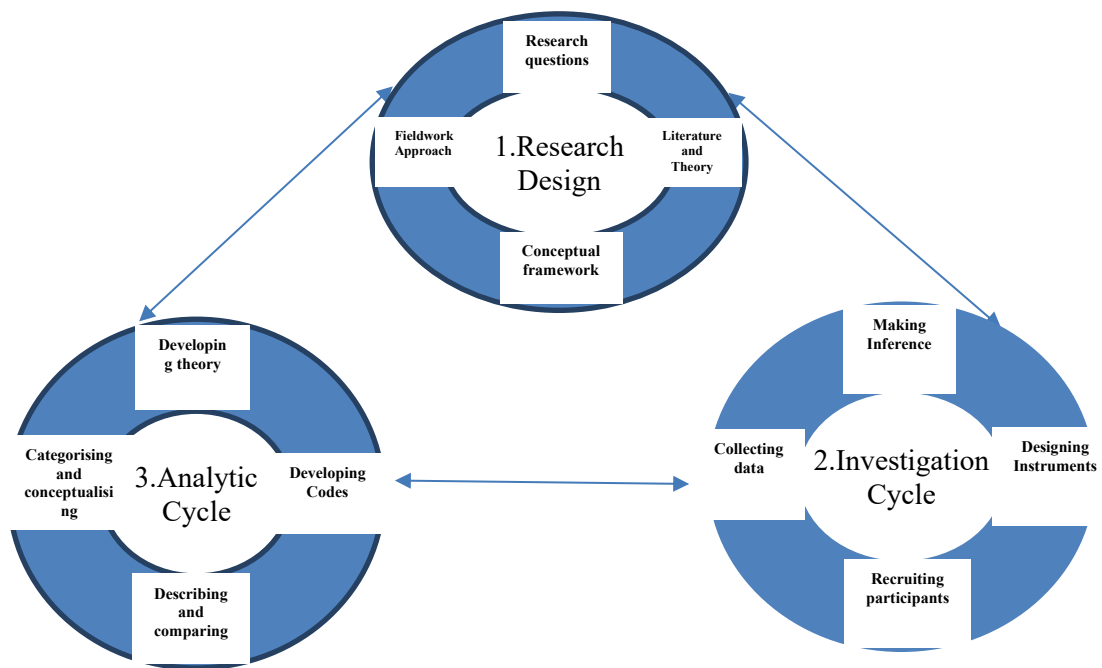
Based on the qualitative analysis and the constructivist approach, phenomenology becomes the most applicable design to capture the lived experiences of participants. According to Wilson and Washington (2007, p. 63), “phenomenology is the study of human experiences from the perspectives of those being studied”, purposely as a description of human experiences as they are lived. Phenomenology therefore can be applied in multiple forms as a research design, method, approach or as a philosophy (Wilson & Washington, 2007). It is for this versatility that phenomenology is applied to inform the methods that also resonate with the theoretical framework. According to Matua and Van Der Wal (2015, p. 22), “phenomenology helps to investigate people’s experiences to reveal what lies hidden in them”. Phenomenology also encapsulates the requisite transition from description, “which emphasises the ‘pure’ depiction of people’s experiences, to the ‘interpretation’ of such experiences, as in hermeneutic phenomenology” (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015, p. 22).

It follows from the scope and diverse application of constructivism that this study adopts phenomenology to signal the ways in which interventions in an African context can challenge the reproduction of Western “stereotypes and power relations in terms of hierarchical binary divides” (Managhan, 2017, p. 28). Consequently, this study design follows the work of Ahmed (2007) challenging the “phenomenology of whiteness” and which contests the dominant Eurocentric and hegemonic presentations of peace and conflict research, and instead, focuses more

on the space for the Afrocentric voices. This dichotomy is reinforced by Managhan (2017, p. 29), terming the design as the phenomenology of “discursive formations” about violent extremism.

Consequently this design enabled the use of “subtext of lived meanings as they get interwoven with cognition and discursive exchanges” (Managhan, 2017, p. 29). Managhan, for example, used phenomenology to draw “upon postcolonial and feminist theory to better identify the power relations that structure both the conscious and unconscious experiences in the daily forms of knowing and unknowing that give meaning to and invigorate articulations” (Managhan, 2017, p. 23). Phenomenology, for that matter, becomes vital in examining both the issues and specific strategies used by people in different contexts to negotiate meaning through their interactions with others and, thus, how they make sense of their lives (Leavy, 2017). The design also helped in capturing the perspectives of participants in their natural settings, and allows for the “building of robust understanding of the participants’ voices and their circumstances” (Leavy, 2017, p. 4).

Consistent with other studies, Dolnik (2013) argues for the need to “enhance empirical research on terrorism across different contexts, based on the need for more first-hand studies” (Dolnik, 2013, p. 1). Gunning observes that in the past, terrorism research has quite often relied heavily on recycled data, “predominantly based on secondary sources with limited primary data” (Gunning, 2007, p. 362). The inadequate use of primary data for drawing conclusions in counterterrorism studies, thus, enhances further the dire need for phenomenological design to produce phenomenological evidence. Dolnik, for example, argues that field research on terrorism should “overcome some traditional myths that portray such a process as being crucially dangerous, technically unethical and perhaps practically impossible” (Dolnik, 2013, p. 2). To achieve this goal, the research process was designed in a cyclic system as shown in Figure 3 below, to capture the experience gained from the interventions and still retain the required rigour.



**Figure 3: Research process based on the Hutter-Hennink Research Cycle**

*Source: Hennink et al., 2011, p. 4*

Figure 3 demonstrates not only how the different stages of the study overlap, but also how the different tasks inform the entire research process in a cyclic manner. The inter-connection between different tasks in this design shows a continuous process that captures “transcendental phenomenology” (Packer, 2018, pp. 177-179). This accounts for a rather enlightenment Eurocentric assumption which claims that “the validity and universality of mental representations by participants are guaranteed by an innate capacity for universal reason” (Packer, 2018, p. 178). According to Packer (2018, p. 178), therefore, this phenomenological design satisfies the need for participants’ views about the central question that looks into how existing programmes for tackling violent extremism in Kenya can be adjusted to be more gender inclusive or to be more reflective of the experiences of African women.

### **5.5 Sampling Method: Procedure and Sample Size**

The study sought to effectively recruit the participants engaging in peacebuilding and P/CVE initiatives following previous proximity or personal exposure to incidents of violent extremism. Hence, purposive sampling was preferred, whereby participants were recruited based on practical experience in P/CVE. Hence, the

process was not motivated by desires for any statistical generalisation of findings (Hennink et al., 2011). A relatively small number of participants was thus explored to generate sufficient information for making inferences. Purposive sampling, therefore, facilitated the recruitment of participants based on their knowledge about P/CVE in line with the study questions. Knowledge shared by participants was pegged to their history of practice in programme implementation or evaluation. Windsong, for example, describes purposive sampling as the strategy in which particular settings, persons and activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that may not be obtained as well from other choices (Windsong, 2018, p.139).

Given the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size was not determined in advance. However, an initial target of approximately 52 participants was projected. Unfortunately, due to the travel restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19, the research had to be conducted online, rather than in-person, which had implications for the final sample size. In the end, 22 people took part in the study. An initial cluster of potential participants was drawn from a list of organisations based on the Kenya Peace Conference held in September 2017. More participants from additional organisations and government agencies were later contacted directly on the recommendation of initial participants. The categories and numbers of participants interviewed were as follows:

**Table 1: Sample size and distribution**

Areas of Programme Intervention	Participant groups		
	State Agencies	Non-state Agencies	Other Experts
Northern Kenya Region (Counties bordering/with proximity to S. Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia)	1	2	1
Central Kenya Region (Counties bordering/with proximity to and including Nairobi City)	0	4	4
Western Kenya Region (Counties bordering/with proximity to Uganda)	0	2	1
Coastal Kenya Region (Counties bordering/with proximity to the Indian Ocean or Tanzania)	1	4	2
<b>National Coverage</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Total participants</b>			<b>22</b>

The criteria for recruiting participants involved initial analysis of intervention programmes in different parts of Kenya where CVE or peacebuilding activities were implemented over the past three years. Using snowballing, additional participants were identified, considering the framework for maximum variation and data saturation. In terms of gender composition, the sample size captured the voices of more women than of men. This purposive predisposition was meant to fulfil the need for maximising the voices of those participants perceived as being marginalised. For instance, Musundi et al. (2013, p. 6) suggest that “gender based research should provide the avenue through which inequalities based on gender are addressed”. Capturing the voices of more women than men in this study, therefore, resonates with the subjective requirement of the central question which seeks to demonstrate how the conflict transformation model can be applied to enhance the space for African women in tackling violent extremism.

## **5.6 Data Collection Methods: Interviews and Document Analysis**

The data collection process aimed to enable the study participants to engage in detailed discussions of themes based on their experiences. Furthermore, the research participants were informed about topical areas of discussion before commencing the conversations. Participants were adequately briefed through the information sheet, shared as part of ethical requirements. Using the constructivist perspective, the data collection methods were enhanced by open discussions with

the key informants, in a manner and language that was as plain as necessary to a layperson.

The selection of data collection techniques was thus informed by the need to capture quality data in the absence of being able to engage with participants on a direct face-to-face interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, necessitated some adjustments in the choice of these techniques in which case interviews were preferred over focus group discussion. Unlike the other techniques for data collection, interviews could be easily administered virtually and using online systems, to ensure participants had no interaction with each other. The decision on how much interview data was sufficient was however, determined by the consideration that moderation in the “frequency of data collection sessions should consider a variety of factors, depending on the scope of the study while also gauging the level of detail required” (Bruce, 2007, p. 54). Additional evidence from secondary sources was also captured to corroborate the interview data. Consequently, only two techniques of data collection were used as follows:

#### **5.6.1 In-depth Interview**

The use of guiding questions provided the desired flexibility and adaptability during in-depth interviews (*interview guide in the appendix 1*). The open/informal questioning also made the guiding tools crucially useful “in exploring the issues or to get a detailed picture of what people think and say” (Winterbotham & Pearson, 2016, p. 57). This was crucial in establishing the contextual meanings of violent extremism, understanding the mechanisms for P/CVE, and capturing the possibilities for enhancing the desired transformation process. The open-ended questions also helped to minimise the possible interventions of the researcher by enabling more of the participant-led approach while highlighting issues of significance to them. This kind of participant-led conversations, therefore, provided the imperative “framework from which to understand the social world” (Windsong, 2018, p. 135). Finally, the interview technique helped in refining models through an inductive process based on discussions with people who had direct experience with interventions in both P/CVE and peacebuilding interventions. All interviews were coded and tabulated by designation and sex of participants, and by date of interviews.

In-depth interviews were, specifically, preferred for the purposes of “being case-centric” and based on its suitability in determining and obtaining “the issues and meanings assigned by the participants” (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, p. 24). Semi-structured in-depth interviews become very appropriate in phenomenological design for allowing the interviewer to “prepare just a list of topics or guiding questions and then broaching the topics in whatever way that seems most appropriate at the time” (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, p. 32). A detailed description of participants is listed in the following tables 2-4:

**Table 2: Programme staff of non-State agencies (NGOs and other private sector entities)**

<b>Participant Code</b>	<b>Description of participant</b>	<b>Sex of participant</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
<b>MNPW 002</b>	Programmes Manager with NGO working in Western Kenya	Male	30/05/2020
<b>MFPW 003</b>	Peacebuilding actor working with a Faith Based Organisation (FBO) and serves in a government supported Peace Committee in Western Kenya	Male	31/05/2020
<b>MNPC 008</b>	Paralegal project officer in an NGO working on CVE in the Coast Region of Kenya	Male	11/06/2020
<b>FNDN 009</b>	Executive Director of a national NGO working on peacebuilding based in Nairobi	Female	15/06/2020
<b>MCTC 010</b>	Team Leader of a CBO working on peacebuilding in the Coast Region of Kenya	Male	20/06/2020
<b>FNLC 012</b>	Legal Officer with an NGO working on P/CVE in the Coast Region of Kenya	Female	23/06/2020
<b>MNPN 015</b>	Programmes manager with a national NGO based in Nairobi, working in Coast and North Eastern parts of Kenya	Male	2/07/2020
<b>FCDN 017</b>	Executive Director of an NGO based and working in Nairobi	Female	6/07/2020
<b>FNEW 018</b>	Executive Director of a national NGO working in Western Kenya and Nairobi	Female	10/07/2020
<b>FNEN 019</b>	Executive Director of a national NGO based in Northern Kenya	Female	13/07/2020
<b>MNPDN 020</b>	Programmes manager with international NGO based in Northern Kenya	Male	17/07/2020

<b>FNPN 021</b>	Project Officer with an NGO based in Nairobi	Female	22/07/2020
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**Table 3: Experts – academics and programme evaluation consultants**

<b>Participant Code</b>	<b>Description of participant</b>	<b>Sex of participant</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
<b>FMEN 001</b>	Editor with Media house based in Nairobi with national outreach	Female	27/05/2020
<b>FUAN 004</b>	An academic with background in legislative systems in Kenya, and PhD student studying counterterrorism	Female	2/06/2020
<b>FCCC 005</b>	Independent consultant, Community Peace Actor, and founder of several community-based organisations (CBOs) led by women in Northern Kenya	Female	5/06/2020
<b>FUAPC 006</b>	Kenyan of Sri Lankan descent. An academic at a public University in Kenya, after long experience of working in the NGO sector in the Coast Region. Undertakes regular consultancy work on P/CVE	Female	7/06/2020
<b>FUAN 007</b>	An academic teaching gender and women studies a public University in Nairobi	Female	9/06/2020
<b>MUAC 011</b>	An academic in public university, with vast background in CVE programming in Kenya and internationally	Male	21/06/2020
<b>FNARN 013</b>	Technical Advisor and Researcher on CVE working with NGOs in Nairobi and Northern Kenya	Female	26/06/2020
<b>MMJN 014</b>	A Journalist working with a national Media house based in Nairobi	Male	29/06/2020

**Table 4: Participants from state agencies for peacebuilding**

<b>Participant Code</b>	<b>Description of participants</b>	<b>Sex of participant</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
<b>FGAN 016</b>	Government Administrator at sub-county level in Northern Kenya. Coordinates Peace Committees at location/village levels	Female	4/07/2020
<b>MGCC 022</b>	Government Administrator based in the Coast Region of Kenya	Male	27/07/2020



### 5.6.2 Document Review

It was inevitable that secondary data was used to complement the primary sources. Such information was gathered from selected project documents for P/CVE and related peacebuilding interventions like project proposals, intervention progress reports and project brochures. Selection of secondary sources aimed at providing concrete evidence on how the programme design by the donors, especially from the global North, and the local implementation in Kenya, were undertaken by different agencies. Progress reports presented an additional glimpse of how success is measured in P/CVE interventions, as well as how the interventions accounted for gender inclusion. Specifically, secondary sources that were reviewed include legislative and policy documents, newspaper reports, blog posts and previous intervention photos, all of which provided more insight on the prevailing contextual constructions. The table 5 below provides the full list of documents reviewed for the study, most which are unpublished or publicly available online.

**Table 5: Document analysis checklist**

<b>Document Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date of publication</b>	<b>Date of access</b>
<b>001</b>	T05-EUTF-HOA-KE-69: Action document for the implementation of the horn of Africa window	2012	20. 04. 2020
<b>002</b>	T05-EUTF-HOA-KE-58: Action Fiche for the implementation of the Horn of Africa Window	2011	20. 04. 2020
<b>003</b>	USAID Policy /The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency	2011	11. 05. 2020
<b>004</b>	Department of State & USAID Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism	2016	
<b>005</b>	UNDP Support to the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Kenya	2010	
006	<b>Karma Colonialism: Why don't aid agencies like to hire local talent?</b>		<b>02.10.2020</b>
007	<b>LinkedIn post by Saferworld on equality and social justice</b>		
008	<b>Social Media post by Geneva Centre for Security Sector</b>		

Generally, document review prioritised published reports of projects implemented at the national level and financed by the UN, the US and the EU. According to

Bowen, “document review material for research purposes can include scrapbooks and photo albums” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). To capture adequate and relevant data from those secondary sources, a document review guide became handy for planning and reviewing the documents.

### **5.7 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis and Triangulation**

The data analysis process involved simultaneous techniques comprising synchronising data sets “into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships” (Angom, 2018, p. 95). Specific actions for analysis involved stepwise processing of data which commenced by organising participants’ response verbatim and based on sub-questions of the study, while exploring the specific patterns that emerge from the data. Following a systematic process enabled determining what was considered as “important voices” in the text. The raw data was captured in text format, including both the notes taken during interviews and responses from the online tool. Analysis then followed through a methodical examination of ideas and concepts that emerged from text data sets and establishing relationships among different parts of data in line with the central research question.

Thematic analysis and triangulation were, therefore, undertaken through a chain of synchronised activities that can generally be described as “data reduction”, a process that encompasses “selecting, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the new data” (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p. 29). In this sense, all the data were initially transcribed verbatim using the Microsoft’s Office 365 voice transcription system. Some were typed manually in a MS Word document. The transcripts were then transferred into a Microsoft Excel matrix (template) developed to organise the data according to the set themes. Themes were derived from the research questions capturing the specific sub-questions of the study. For purposes of triangulation data sets were arranged to elicit participant voices and institutional affiliation by date of interview. Yin (2011), for instance, suggests the use of such an analysis matrix to provide “a common way of arraying data in the simplest table form of rows and columns” (Yin, 2011, p. 132). Using a predesigned Excel template made it easy to present all the data systematically in patterns such that the rows represented specific dimensions of data, such as response categories and individual voices, while the

columns represented the different themes based on the interview questions, outlining specific views of each participant on the same subject.

Undertaking some phases of data analysis alongside the data collection process also enhanced the needed flexibility in the research process while remaining open to new ideas or patterns as they emerged. For purposes of maintaining the richness of data, it became even more important to have “intimate knowledge of the data to facilitate theory development” (Pulla, 2016, p. 93). Pulla, for example, suggests that “there is no specific pattern prescribed for data analysis but exhaustive knowledge of the data [is crucial]” (Pulla, 2016, p. 90). The intimate knowledge of the data sets fulfils the need for immersing oneself in the data sets for qualitative data, a process by which participants’ experiences are identified and interpreted (Hennink et al., 2011). Immersion was achieved by reading the data several times, translating words from the local languages into English, and eliminating diverging discussions. Such tasks made it possible to have a clear understanding of the data, and easy to identify evidence-based interpretations therefrom. Nevertheless, there was no single formula followed other than discretion, as suggested by Musundi et al (2013).

### **5.7.1 Data Analysis and Theory Development**

Using the processed themes (research questions) as the unit of analysis, constructing theory began with selected data sets, based on the assumption as close as possible to the ideal situation where there was no theory under consideration at first. Data analysis for developing theory can be described as the “process of bringing order, structure and clear interpretation to the mass of collected data” (Musundi, Onsongo, & Coly, 2013:19). Hence, there was no need for testing hypotheses against any predetermined theoretical perspective. This assumption helped in avoiding any possible biases that might have limited the emerging findings. For the purposes of this study, a hermeneutical technique enabled the presentation of the deliberate voices, while using “words as a communicative sign, which are in themselves objects of interpretation” against the theoretical sub-question “while concurrently analysing the contextual use of language” (Shpet, 2019, p. 2).

Hermeneutical analysis, therefore, facilitated the interpretations of data in the context of what the participants said, how the response was presented, and why the respondents could have said so, or “with what effect” in the response (Druckman, 2005, p. 259). The process of determining the relationships within the text in this process, then formed part of conceptualisation where theory building emerged from ideas in the data set. Further, conceptualisation was derived from the consequent transfer and interpretations about the participants’ responses as built in the original (local) language in the text. It was inherent, therefore, to determine the relationships between concepts, ideas and perspectives which emerged from data sets before they were integrated into CTT. Inherent connections were built between the data sets and the paradigms of the Afrocentric and Afro-Feminist approaches.

### **5.7.2 Coding for Theory Construction**

In line with the proponents of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), this study relies on analysis methods as developed by Charmaz, Chun Tie and Urquhart whose arguments converge on the fact that “data do not have to be filed under one category only” (Urquhart, 2017a, p. 79), and so the data analysis process had to take a number of “key components” (Howitt & Cramer, 2011, p. 348). In this respect, the data analysis process involved an initial reading of the data to code for as many categories as possible, after which reduction of data content was done systematically by identifying codes related to empowerment, conflict transformation and indigeneity while extracting consequential interpretations about the dataset. According to Angom, clear decisions have to be made concerning the manner in which codes are used during data analysis. In this process, coding units were used to underscore the underlying meanings around the emerging relationships and patterns and not necessarily as units of analysis.

The data analysis process was therefore conducted based on the tasks developed from verbatim transcription, starting with anonymising the participants and the secondary data sources, developing codes, and defining codes in a code book. Different categories were then used to conceptualise data and to finally link the concepts with each other to develop new aspects of the existing theory. Analysis software, NVivo, was quite helpful, in addition to manual comparison of data themes and categories, and to hasten transcription and analysis of data sets from

audio files. Finally, the resulting relationships were used to explain a new model, of *hamasisha* as discussed later in chapter eight, to indicate the valuable link between the empirical and theoretical evidence. As a result, the data analysis process adopted an analytic cycle that commenced from developing codes, then proceeds to describe and compare, categorise, and conceptualise, before developing the theory.

## **5.8 Research Ethics and Considerations**

This study was significantly guided by the “do no harm” principle while engaging with community groups or people “who might have been already affected by conflict” or are involved in an environment affected by violence (Angom, 2018, p. 99; *see also* Salihu, 2018). By focusing on issues of violent conflict such as violent extremism and imperilled by the exceptional period of study when a dreaded pandemic of COVID-19 faced humanity, robust and reflexive ethical considerations were made. A broad set of considerations, including Māori Consultation, Human Ethics Clearance by the University, and a series of methodological considerations were made beforehand. Preparations made prior to the data collection process, and the continual consultations with my supervisors, enabled me to debunk difficult situations that often arise from “the strings of ethical uncertainty” (Cribb, 2020, p. 22). In situations of ethical uncertainty, it became necessary to think beyond the traditional frameworks in research practice. For instance, unlike in the ordinary interactions that involve mutual conversations with participants, this study had to adopt the use of technology like Zoom and Google survey forms, which became the new normal during the peak of COVID 19 to enable social distance from and between the participants.

### **5.8.1 Ethical Clearance by the University**

Many of the ethical commitments were considered through the Human Ethics Committee guidelines for University approval. The application process was made particularly open and flexible to possible adjustments where applicable. Hence, apart from strictly adhering to the general measures put in place by the University Human Ethics Committee, much discretion was still crucial, acknowledging that changing scenarios still presented new moments of ethical uncertainty. Essentially, this reinforced the precaution that the institutional ethics criterion only provides the

guidelines for taking responsibility for human participants, as a minimum standard for all researchers. For instance, Cribb argues that adherence to existing research practices cannot necessarily resolve “the dynamic relationships between multiple parties or the constant uncertainty faced by researchers as they navigate new ethical terrain and emerging issues in the field” (Cribb, 2020, p. 20).

### **5.8.2 Researcher Reflexivity - Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were made to remedy any bias arising from the researcher’s positionality. This consideration accounted for the researcher’s roles as an insider or outsider to the participants to gain the trust by participants, to assess issues that participants feared discussing openly or which were difficult to disclose, and to “establish supportive, respectful relationships without stereotyping” (Cribb, 2020, p. 25), by avoiding any use of “labels that participants do not embrace” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24). Moreover, the ethical considerations ensured that the study remained sensitive to vulnerable populations and imbalanced power relations, and avoided situations that could expose participants or the researcher to any form of risk (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Oando, 2015). Such concerns also helped in identifying possible “norms and principles governing the research process and drawing from the documented knowledge on how similar or related situations had been resolved in the past” (Cordner et al., 2012, p. 163). Broad actions taken for purposes of ethical compliance are discussed in the next section.

### **5.8.3 General Actions Taken About Ethical Considerations**

This study took effective and adequate procedural safeguards, which included “procedures for making informed consent, to observe confidentiality, and to ensure safety of both the researcher and the research participants” (Akinyi, Olande & Oando, 2018: 8; *see also* Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017). Meeting such requirements while remaining flexible to any eventuality was intended to give clear information about the study to all study participants. This included presenting to research participants the evidence for ethical clearance and the approved information sheet to gain their confidence, and to inform them of their rights and obligations during the study. Making informed consent also involved seeking explicit acknowledgment and consent from individual participants before they made any response to the questions. Hence, all participants were expected to sign the consent

forms before proceeding with participation, but signing was not possible in many cases, so the participants granted permission to allow recording of their conversations instead.

Secondly, crucial actions were taken to enhance the safety of all participants. It is for this purpose that interviews were administered online, and through telephone or Zoom calls. During the interviews, keen attention was paid to avoiding any potential distress or discomfort to the participants. In such cases, participants were asked to “individually volunteer their participation without external influence or interference” (Heslop et al., 2015; Oando, 2015). Similarly, participants who disclosed any form of vulnerability like a history of being survivors of violence or having been affected directly by violent extremism (like being returnees, convicts, suspects, and death related impacts), were excluded right at the beginning of the interviews.

The third action taken aimed at gaining the confidence, trust, and openness of participants. Arrangements were then put in place to ensure utmost confidentiality for participants during and after the data collection process. Statements of assurance about confidentiality were included in the information sheet, consent form and interview guide. Further steps were taken to “anonymise identities and personal information” about all participants by “using data codes during reporting” (Parkes, Heslop, Januario, Oando & Sabaa, 2016). All the primary data were assigned identification codes to conceal individual affiliation at all costs, so that all participants remained anonymous throughout the study. For example, since the research process could reveal negative criticisms of government policy or interventions by different organisations, study sites were expanded to avoid any direct alignment to specific administrative project jurisdiction. Likewise, respondent identities, interviewee locations and institutional affiliations were not published in any final report to eliminate possible links to transcripts of their conversations.

Finally, actions were taken to address the need for benefits of the research to the participants, which brings into perspective “the ethic of immediate and general reciprocity both of which require the researcher’s own moral judgements” (Gillan

& Pickerill, 2012, p. 133). To address the challenge of reciprocity, choices were made on what and how the results could be reported, besides a careful “determination of what could be expunged, based on the level of risk to which the research participants and the researcher may be exposed” (Gillan & Pickerill, 2012, p. 140). Further to the need for reciprocity, access to responses was granted to the participants where necessary, to check for accuracy and validity of their intended responses. Those who needed recordings of their voices were given access to the Zoom recording by email. Participants were also asked to share their contact details for sharing the soft copy of summary research findings at the completion of the full thesis. The links for any report(s) would be emailed to them when the publication was made available.

### **5.9 Challenges During the Research Process**

In the entire course of this study, I have captured some remarkable strengths and weaknesses, both in literature and in the study process, regarding gaps, technicalities and in knowledge frameworks, part of which cut across the methodological issues. Such limitations often impacted on myself as the researcher on the one hand, and the study communities on the other, including the key participants, prevailing discourses and some previous academic research (R. Francis, 2018). In addition to the ethical challenges, I was cognisant of the need to overcome contextual challenges that often arise when undertaking research with “communities affected by conflict, violence and insecurity” (Angom, 2018, p. 99). This consideration at the outset helped in understanding the coping mechanisms, avoiding risks, and making appropriate ethical considerations. The following experience therefore demonstrates encounters during the research process.

*Planning and logistics issues:* The planning process took longer than expected, but this did not resolve all the issues anticipated. Drawing from the positivist research background of the researcher, the study design kept evolving from an initial prospect of mixed methods transforming after the literature review to the use of grounded theory. This change was later complicated by the very fact that grounded theory requires a more robust interaction with the participants right from the inception stage, worsened still by the inability to travel to the field due to Covid-19. Finally, the study uses phenomenology, relying significantly on interviews as



the main source of data. The change of design came with additional logistical challenges. Neither the researcher nor the participants were conversant with the online platforms for conversation like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Talk, most of which became the norm during Covid-19. This meant most of the interviews were done by phone call, which was not only very expensive, but was also affected by the time differences. Rescheduling appointments was therefore the order of the day, occasionally requiring that the researcher stay awake longer than usual.

There was also the challenge of participants' presumptions regarding my own beliefs about the problem. In such circumstances, the participants expected me to condemn Al-Shabaab beforehand as a terrorist group because I'm Kenyan, and Kenya has been a victim. It was thus a tough game of balance between the need for objectivity and the participants' expectations. As well, I had to recruit participants with whom I had no prior contacts or familiarity to avoid the situation of having familiar responses but get the knowledge of what they meant and believed as true. Lockdown (travel restrictions) during the study also came with its own challenges of posing circumstantial depression on the researcher, while the participants were often disrupted during the conversations as they were mostly in the family settings. Some participants withdrew midway through the interviews never to get back at all.

*Interview-specific challenges:* Part of the challenge was experienced during the interview process, arising from complex aspects of gender relations. At some moments, the female participants wondered how a male researcher would be interested in issues that affect women, treating me as an outsider to the women's issues. In contrast, some male participants turned down the interviews after going through the information sheet, claiming their interests were not part of the focus. One respondent, for instance, quipped that "this thing (*study*) is all about women, what is in it about us (*men*)?" After some explanations and a lengthy discussion, the participant still declined to participate. This points to the evidence that "interviews cannot be conceived as taking place in a gender vacuum" (Herod, 1993, p. 306).

Another hitch was that some respondents declined to be interviewed on the phone. Instead, they chose to respond to an online Google form. While this worked well and more quickly for them, the responses missed the necessary probing by the researcher, leading to some information being redundant due to fluidity in the meanings expressed. The resulting situation provided some data that was either incomplete or the participant skipped questions that they did not understand. Clearer and complete information could have been secured in such circumstances if the researcher had an opportunity for a direct conversation with that group of participants.

*Design related encounters:* Based on the design for the study, the findings were informed by the verbatim responses of the research participants based on their previous experiences in practice. It implies that the responses relied strongly on the participants' retrospective self-reporting based on aspects recalled from the past. Chances are that, despite the very rich data collected, some aspects "may not be as accurate as expected" (Popoola & Adeola, 2018, p. 12). This links to the problem of "recall bias by asking participants about their past experiences because some may be unwilling to disclose some facts due to the sensitive nature of the subject or because of the legal status of the practice" (Reisel & Creighton, 2015, p. 49). Such biases could partly be attributed to the respondent's affiliation and responsibility in their respective agencies, which could be political or simply an exaggeration of facts.

### **5.10 Summary**

The methodology presented in this chapter was the most suitable in exploring the subjective and contextual nuances, in relation to the study questions, based on participants' knowledge and experience. The study, therefore, applied a phenomenological research design. Being a qualitative study, it employed methods based on a bottom-up approach. The methodology was influenced further by the researcher's previous work experience in the peacebuilding sector in Kenya. This positionality gave the researcher a preconception about the dilemma surrounding the peacebuilding sector in Africa. The qualitative data was collected through interviews and document analysis of secondary sources. The study uses Kenya as a case study for understanding the African situation. Hence, a total of 22

participants were interviewed on the phone and through Zoom. Other participants also submitted their responses on a Google form. All participants were purposively sampled from different categories of the population in Kenya, including community groups, peacebuilding actors at the national level such as government officials and programmes staff of non-state agencies, and other specialists and experts in P/CVE. While the study was successfully undertaken as planned, the travel restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic posed a number of challenges. Consequently, robust and reflexive ethical considerations were made by making quick adjustments to guarantee confidentiality participants and to successfully safeguard all participants.

### **PART III: EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL FINDINGS**

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **INTERVENTIONS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (P/CVE)**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

*Many peacebuilding actors have noted with concern the dwindling nature of the sector in Kenya in terms of its voice and impact to influence the course of events toward the realization of sustainable peace and social stability in the country.*  
(Ernstorfer, 2019, p. 12).

Besides making a specific response to the first sub question, this chapter provides analysis of the intervention frameworks on which the later chapters rely. The discussions here seek to establish the constructions that inform the conceptualisations and dynamics in both the interventions for P/CVE, and about the contexts of implementation. Hence, the chapter responds to the question that explores how violent extremism is constructed and the respective conditions that influence prevailing knowledge paradigms. Therefore, it considers what constitutes violent extremism in day-to-day conversations based on the tension between the international donor perspectives and local knowledge. The discussions, drawn from both document analysis and interviews, highlight the structural implications in the dynamics for P/CVE, which, in turn, helps to clarify the differences between subaltern voices with specific attention to African women in the next chapter. The chapter thus addresses the intervention frameworks, at the international and national levels, key challenges in the interventions and conceptual constructions of CVE.

#### **6.1 Interventions and the International Frameworks**

Intervention programmes for countering violent extremism (CVE) have been extensively studied over the years to determine their key components, and to establish the drivers of violent extremism (El-Said, 2015). The interventions for countering violent extremism, therefore, emerge in different contexts that encompasses diverse efforts of multiple actors (Randazzo, 2019). Such efforts share a rare consensus among scholars, most of whom submit that programme

interventions for CVE do not only overlap in scope, but they more often than not “rely on multiple layers [and] on multi-faceted missions” (Randazzo, 2021, p. 141). Hence, many activities have been designed to achieve democratisation, reforming the security sector, and for establishing transitional justice systems. As noted by one participant, “there is very little difference between peacebuilding and CVE in practice as many CSOs and state actors do not differentiate between the two forms of interventions” (interview 006; FUAPC - 7/06/2020). This demonstrates that what guides the interventions is the ultimate expectation of the actors, while designing programmes that are aimed at achieving outcomes for peace in society.

Despite the similarities and commonalities across some activities employed for peacebuilding and CVE, El-Said argues that the similarity is not a type of “universal panacea” (El-Said, 2015, p. 26) in the interventions to justify their replicability in different contexts. Hence, it is necessary to consider the different cultural, social political, and legal structures in each space that determine what aspects of interventions would work better in some contexts than in others (Aidoo, 2009; Caretta, 2015). A participant, for instance, suggests that “the intersection between CVE and peacebuilding lies in their common focus on addressing some underlying structural and cultural violence to prevent present and future violent conflicts” (interview 006; FUAPC-7/06/2020). Consequently, contextual uniqueness becomes an inevitable consideration in analysing different components of interventions. Acknowledging both similarities and unique complexities in the interventions for either peacebuilding or CVE, therefore, supports the position that “the problem-solving attitude of liberal actors” is more likely to meet challenges in delivering sustainable solutions for peace (Randazzo, 2021, p. 141). It is on this basis that most interventions are modified by different actors and adapted before they can be successfully implemented in different places. It is notable, thus, that directly transferring P/CVE projects between different knowledge platforms might be impractical or even ineffectual. Subsequently, this analysis seeks to challenge tendencies for dogmatic donor based programmes with “imposed solutions based on linear understandings of cause and effect” frameworks (El-Said, 2015; Randazzo, 2019).

In line with this call for contextualised interventions, peacebuilding or CVE interventions are significantly dependent on international funding, which reinforces the trends and missions of liberal actors in many aspects (Veron & Sherriff, 2020). Indisputably, the fast pace of subsequent global changes requires formidable adaptability and quick response by the peacebuilding community that also conforms with the evolving geopolitical dynamics (Veron & Sherriff, 2020). As a participant argues, “most interventions are fully dependent on donor funding and hence when the funding stops or changes conditions, the interventions also stop” (Interview 015; MNPN - 2/07/2020). For instance, the shifting political cultures among the most endowed countries of the world, which dominate the donor community, and the consequent political polarisations (Veron & Sherriff, 2020), have pushed some governments and their respective funding agencies to look inward by reviewing their priorities, including slashing international aid funds (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Veron & Sherriff, 2020).

In some circumstances, the participant explains, “some donors at times give funds for very short periods like one year which makes it unrealistic to achieve meaningful change” (Interview 015; MNPN - 2/07/2020). The shifting timelines of funding demonstrates how fast some conditions are already changing in the donor community. Klingebiel et al. (2008) argue, with specific reference to Africa, that in the same manner, the situation of peace and security interventions is part of this evolving global framework and is shaped both by the international contexts of politics and by groupings of foreign actors. This shows how the African context of CVE is affected by the dependency syndrome on the West. According to data from a UN report on international peace funding patterns, for example, African countries still are the highest beneficiaries, despite the global changes, of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)<sup>3</sup> of the United Nations, established in 2005 (Vieira, 2020). This pattern is derived from the number and frequency of projects funded over the period 2006 – 2020.

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<sup>3</sup> “The UN’s Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is one of the three pillars that integrates the known Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA), in conjunction with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)” (Vieira, 2020).

For the purposes of comparative analysis, though, the PBF can be used as an example of a multilateral funding agency in analysis between regional blocks regarding international financing of peace and CVE programmes. The PBF is a reasonable indicator because it pools joint contributions made by most of the global donors on peacebuilding, and by UN member states to which it is also accountable. From data available online, the African continent is more of a leading beneficiary of, rather than a contributor to, international funding. Moreover, there is extremely scarce information on how the region finances or accounts for their own domestic or local programmes on P/CVE. The scarcity of information on domestic financing raises the big question on how else the institutional frameworks for CVE can be reliable without local ownership at national level.

**Table 6: Number of PBF projects funded per continent in its first decade (2005–2015)**

Beneficiary Continent	Region/	Number of projects	Funding US\$	Proportion of funding
Africa		300	498,872,810.00	80%
Asia		50	70,808,985.00	11%
Middle East		16	23,712,026.00	4.3%
Central/South Americas		8	16,799,999.00	3%
Oceania		7	9,090,836.00	1.4%
Europe		1	2,000,000.00	0.3%
<b>Total number of projects</b>		<b>382</b>	<b>621,284,656.00</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: *UN PBF Report* (Vieira, 2020)

During the first decade of the PBF since its establishment, it provided funding to 382 projects for building peace globally, of which the projects in Africa constitute three quarters of all programmes funded over the period (Vieira, 2020). This statistic demonstrate how African governments have abdicated their peacebuilding obligations, interests, systems and facilitation to the control of international donors working in the continent (Mutahi & Ruteere, 2017).



The level of dependency on external financing trend does not only show patterns of negligence and helplessness in Africa about the conflict burden, but sadly, the bulk of peacebuilding interventions that benefits from international support contradicts the essence of the Pan African desire to find “African solutions to African problems”, which is intended to safeguard “African ownership of the peace and security architecture” (Klingebl et al., 2008, p. 67). Subsequently, while the AU is praised for being “a reliable partner to external and internal actors in conflict management” (Cocodia, 2021, p. 1), the findings provides sufficient evidence that the continental body (AU) has apparently failed to resist the pressure towards towing the line of its development partners, whether from the East or West.

This failure is exhibited frequently whenever “the interests of these partners collide with the objectives of the AU” (Cocodia, 2021, p. 1). The complicity in the partnership demonstrates significant aspects of a comprador relationship, where the AU and member states set their top priority to secure the promise of a good life to the continent and for citizens of member states respectively, but the institution ends up playing to the tune and manipulations of the international donor community in the execution of interventions for P/CVE. The same predicament is reported in the interventions for disaster management, humanitarian support, and in designing “prospects for economic integration and welfare of the average African” (Cocodia, 2021, p. 2; *see also* Mulugeta, 2014; Spandler, 2020).

Notably, the huge proportion (80%) of financial support from the international community (United Nations Development Programme, 2020), towards P/CVE interventions in Africa, masks an extreme level of “dependency on external actors”, which casts significant doubt about the tangible existence of “implementation capacities” (Klingebl et al., 2008, p. 67) by the national government structures and the local community groups. Consequently, considering the place of indigenous knowledge or subaltern voices in such circumstances exposes the huge risks of neglecting contextual considerations in designing local programmes for P/CVE that are hardly cushioned from international censorship. The acceptable interventions (by different implementing parties) might therefore be biased in favour of foreign interests and priorities rather than serving the welfare needs of intended citizens.

The dependency levels, possibly therefore, impinge on the spaces for indigenous knowledge, both in the design and implementation of the contemporary projects. Unfortunately, in many instances, African states are quick to raise the question of sovereignty when faced with the risk of foreign intrusion, instead of taking a constitutional mandate in addressing violent conflicts within or across their territorial boundaries. In respect of such upheaval, it is possible the funding gaps can be exploited by some powerful states, working through the internationally supported programmes, to conceal their foreign policy interests (Pingel, 2017). This notwithstanding, a bigger problem lies in the national systems that are blinded by the dependency on international aid at the expense of taking deliberate decisions to sufficiently finance their peace programmes.

## **6.2 Intervention Frameworks for P/CVE in Kenya**

Kenya has been considered among the countries with a “vibrant peacebuilding sector” (Ernstorfer, 2019, p. 4) that comprises initiatives by some state agencies and a robust system of civil society organisations (Ernstorfer, 2019; Swedberg & Reisman, 2013). In practice, the interventions overlap between peacebuilding and countering violent extremism, most of whose activities are implemented through strong collaborations between the local and international organisations. The interventions are also made in close networking with the state institutions, presenting a “colourful picture of peacebuilding efforts, actors, and coordination amongst them” (Ernstorfer, 2019, p. 4). Nonetheless, Kenya had not considered counterterrorism as a national priority by 2010 when the country promulgated a new constitution, changing its post-colonial institutions. It was in late 2011 when the country conceded to external pressure, “especially from the US which demanded for a greater commitment to the US agenda for the War on Terror” (Prestholdt, 2019, p. 390). This brings into perspective the proliferation of deficient but reactive interventions to terrorism and violent extremism that have relied heavily on quick-fix legislation (Boyle, 2019), and *ad hoc* military action like the decisions that pushed Kenyan troops into Somalia (Chome et al., 2017):

I have followed closely the Kenyan government's counter terrorism measures especially with the onslaught against the Al-Shabaab group. Why did they (military) have to go to Somalia when we are

being attacked right here in Nairobi? My observation is that as much as the government is trying to deal with problem, they still lack the right strategy. They even exposed the shame of poor coordination within the security apparatus given the embarrassing fiasco witnessed in their response to the West Gate attack and during the Garissa University attack. Our response in each case has exposed the high level of incompetence in Kenya's counter-terrorism initiatives. (Interview 004, FUAN- 2/06/2020).

As implied by the participant, the subsequent but reactive responses made by actors in Kenya have been criticised for being the result of direct manipulation by the international community (Prestholt, 2019) who finances the interventions and, hence, brings into question the effectiveness of globalised or UN driven strategies (Boyle, 2019). In some cases, the Kenyan government finds itself in a horrendous quagmire, which in the past has occasioned resistance to their “new legislation and coordination structures” which were aimed at satisfying the priorities of foreign allies (Boyle, 2019, p. 2). The foreign pressures also have resulted in complex circumstances of hasty momentum that entails contrasting ideologies between the “national” and the “international” on a purely domestic issue (Prestholt, 2019, p. 390). Some of the key interventions based on an Official Development Assistance (ODA) report that exhibit similar features of international domination of projects, include but are not limited to the following information in Table 6:

**Table 7: EU Projects on CVE/Counterterrorism (2010-2020)**

<b>Project/Intervention title</b>	<b>National Partners in Kenya</b>	<b>Grant in EUR '000'</b>	<b>Intervention areas in Kenya</b>
Kenya-EU Partnership for the implementation of the Kenya CVE strategy	National Counter Terrorism Centre	5,500	National coverage
Regional Development and Protection Programme in Kenya: Support to the Kalobeyei Development Programme	WFP; UNICEF; FAO; and UNHCR	15,000	Turkana County
Conflict Prevention, Peace, and Economic Opportunities for the Youth	Slovak Agency for International; GIZ; Royal United Services Institute; Red Cross Kenya	15,000	Garissa, Isiolo, Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, Mandera, Mombasa, Nairobi City, Wajir, Tana River
Piloting Private Sector Solutions for Refugees and Host Communities in North-West Kenya	Government of Kenya (Ministry of Interior)	5,000	Turkana County
Enhancing self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Kenya	Government of Kenya	25,400	Turkana County

*Source: Compiled by the researcher*

The information in Table 6 conforms to the evidence from a review undertaken on funding reports of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), indicating that Kenya has been among the three biggest beneficiaries of foreign funding from the EU and allied donors in Africa by 2014 (Mutahi and Ruteere (2017). While such a funding portfolio comprises of “a mixed bag of funding priorities” of development like support for refugees, education and healthcare, the significant focus on “conflict prevention and relief from natural crises” runs across the projects, which demonstrates the emphasis for tackling violent conflicts in the international agenda (Mutahi & Ruteere, 2017, p. 5). Other than Kenya, the other countries in Eastern Africa mostly funded by the EU to address the problems of violent conflicts facing the region are Ethiopia, Uganda, South Sudan, and Somalia (Karari et al., 2012; Mutahi & Ruteere, 2017).

Some intriguing features of the EU funded interventions in Kenya includes the prominence on the identification of implementation partners in Kenya. Major funding implementers comprise international organisations and government agencies raising concerns regarding their limitation to access the “right” community intervention structures. One participant registers a complaint with such interventions, noting they are mostly designed to “keep recycling implementors even among those who have no idea of the context” (interview 010 - MCTC; 20/06/2020). A community-based interviewee registers a more candid complaint about how international agencies perpetuate the exclusion of genuine actors:

There is peacebuilding through gate keepers. There are many organizations and even individuals whose main activities are just to attend donor workshops. Their work is to serve as gate keepers who know which activity is coming next to the ground and they will keep a list of all those events by government and NGOs, especially those from Nairobi. Their ultimate aim is not to do any advocacy but to maximise the little benefits like being booked in big hotels here at the coast, collecting some travel allowances and that's how they survive. Such gate-keeper mentality is a huge obstacle preventing real actor from being engaged. (Interview, 005; FCCC - 5/06/2020).

These respondents argue that since international organisations are so much affixed to managing their own funds, they end up assigning short term affiliates or individuals “whose activities are limited to holding workshops in hotels to undertake trainings regarding P/CVE. In some cases, the same people are called over and over based on their activism and publicity in CVE, which then turn into an avenue of earning regular income instead of achieving peaceful outcomes” (interview 010 - MCTC; 20/06/2020).

Another set of interventions in Kenya are supported by the US State Department, and the Agency for International Development (USAID). According to the US Bureau of Counterterrorism (2017), these interventions leverage a range of their development, diplomatic, and foreign assistance tools for realising discernible “impact on preventing and countering radicalization and recruitment to violence, both online and offline” (U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2017, p. 35). Most of the programmes funded in this cohort aim at building the capacities of the security

agencies responsible for law enforcement and correctional facilities, and in enhancing the capacity of organisations working on pursuit of justice in counterterrorism. Aldrich (2014) seems to confirm that the United States seeks to transform their support from hard-line military only support. Hence, the interventions are based on “a broader strategy based on a diplomacy, development, and defence platform that seeks to incorporate a soft-side approach in the fight against violent extremism” (Aldrich, 2014, p. 524). The following Table 7 includes some of the interventions captured through document review.

**Table 8: US funded Projects on CVE (2010 – 2020)**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Interventions implemented in partnership with County and National Government, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission and multiple non-governmental organizations focusing on:</b>	<b>Geographical Coverage</b>
Regional Peace for Development II (PDEV II)	Fostering community harmony and stability with a focus on youth empowerment using community-led approach	Kenya and multiple African countries
Transition Initiatives for Stabilization (TIS)	Enhancing Somalia’s stability through participatory processes that promote good governance and community cohesion in locations with a high risk of violent extremism	Kenya and Somalia
Kenya Transition Initiative	Countering radicalization of Somali youth in Nairobi	Kenya
Kenya NiWajibu Wetu (NIWETU)	Empowering communities and government institutions to take the lead in countering violent extremism (CVE)	Kenya
Strengthening Community Resilience against Extremism (SCORE), \$4.9 million (2014-2019)	Addressing the root causes of conflict and violent extremism (VE), and to reduce the allure of potentially radicalizing messages	Counties of: Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, Mombasa, Taita Taveta, and Tana River
People to People Program - \$1,199,942 (2020-2023)	Supporting peaceful coexistence between different ethnic groups by promoting a culture of peace and non-violent conflict resolution among communities.	Northern Kenya

*Source: Drawn from multiple documents of USAID funded projects*

The projects financed by USAID follow a similar trajectory of seeking to counter the multiple push and pull factors, which are considered to be facilitating radicalisation. For this goal to be achieved, most of the projects listed in Table 7 seek to apply initiatives for providing jobs to the youth, enhancing technical skills of the young population through technical and vocational training, and by incorporating techniques for diffusing information (Aldrich, 2014). In general, the intervention framework for P/CVE in Kenya is dominated by the international funding just as witnessed in the broader African context. These findings raise questions whether originality and space for local knowledge is possible in the externally supported programmes. Drawing from a report prepared by the OECD, the following list shows the potential donors in Kenya over the ten years' period between 2009 and 2018.

**Table 9: Top ten OECD donors to civilian peacebuilding and CVE 2009-2018**

Donor country	2009 in Million \$ (and rank for the year)	2018 in Million \$ (and rank for the years)	Average rank 2009-2018
US	336 (1)	371 (4)	1
Germany	181 (4)	772 (1)	2
UK	318 (2)	385 (3)	3
EU Institutions	250 (3)	393 (2)	4
Norway	108 (5)	135 (5)	5
Sweden	80 (6)	126 (7)	6
Netherlands	42 (9)	112 (8)	7
Switzerland	62 (7)	57 (11)	8
Denmark	9 (16)	98 (9)	9
UN agencies	13 (14)	130 (6)	10

Source: *Analysis from OECD figures* (Veron & Sherriff, 2020, p. 8).

According to the data in Table 8, some of the most conspicuous interventions in Kenya over the past decade have been directly linked to support by the global interventions such as the UN agencies, the USAID, and the EU countries and institutions, and the UK. For instance, one of the donor reports provides evidence of a commitment to international support indicating that,

the Government of Kenya has recently been at the forefront of seeking international support and responsibility-sharing for durable solutions. It hosted the Nairobi summit of IGAD Heads of State in March 2017 which resulted in the Nairobi Declaration and Action Plan (NAP). It was also a pledging member of the U.S. Leaders' Summit and, in late 2017, joined others in becoming a pilot country for implementation. (Document: *T05-EUTF-HOA-KE-69*, 2020, p. 3).

Without making any arrangements for financing its own mechanisms, it is evident Kenya accepts to become a testing ground for donor projects by offering to be the “pilot country”. Against the declaration, it is possible actors from the Global North have no problem penetrating the local interventions to assign meanings, priorities, and setting the agenda for interventions in countering violent extremism (Campling and Colás, 2018). By neglecting their own responsibility to initiate P/CVE programmes based on the local dynamics, Kenya, like the AU, has committed to serving the foreign actors and their hidden interests (Campling and Colás, 2018). In fact, Charbonneau (2017, p. 417) warns that unscrupulous actors are likely to frame their “claims about the possibilities of peace by mobilising accounts that peace must be contained within the parameters of the war against terrorism” Evidence of such hegemony can be discerned in the overarching USAID Policy blueprint, a document which guides the US supported project “the Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency”, which states in its introduction that:

Development is one of several tools of U.S. national power. As the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism states, “We are engaged in a broad, sustained, and integrated campaign that harnesses every tool of American power military, civilian, and the power of our values together with the concerted efforts of allies, partners, and multilateral institutions. These efforts must also be complemented by broader capabilities, such as diplomacy, development, strategic communications, and the power of the private sector. (Document: (USAID 006\_Strategy Paper on CVE, 2011)<sup>4</sup> .

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<sup>4</sup> *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*,  
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf), p.2.



Looking at the emphases in the American strategy guide on funding support for CVE clearly confirms that their foreign aid comes with strings attached, which as a priority, prioritises the interest of the American people and not the benefitting country. For example, the interventions by Americans after the bombing of the American embassy in Nairobi in 1998, prioritised support and rescue to American citizens as the local citizens languished in destruction. In fact, inserting the three elements of military power, state diplomacy, and the interest of the private sector, reveals more hegemonic tendency than is revealed about the profiteering aspect of the supported interventions (Lund, 2009). It is therefore important to examine the local interventions in Kenya as points of contradiction since the interventions are conceived in the native ideological contexts but actualised in the international perspectives.

### **6.3 The Architecture of P/CVE Interventions Framework in Kenya**

The historical response mechanisms to violent conflicts in Kenya have significantly informed the contemporary interventions for building peace and in countering violent extremism. For instance, a practitioner explains that “Kenya continues to grapple with finding an effective counter-terrorism strategy that is indigenous to local needs, contexts and that can be inclusive of subaltern voices” (Interview 004, FUAN-2/06/2020). This view (interview 004) demonstrates that the complex collection of state and non-state activities, some of which are very popular, are still grappling with “the failure of social relations and capacity gaps in many institutions at multiple levels of society”, which encompasses actions at the regional, national and local levels of programming (Pavanello & Scott-Villiers, 2013, p. 1).

The government of Kenya, for instance, often labels violent non-state groupings, especially the Al-Shabaab, to be generally synonymous “as criminals, extremists or terrorists” (Accord Insight, 2015, p. 10). While there are common points between all the categories, the obscured conceptualisation, risks conforming to the historical stereotypes developed by the colonial regimes against dissenting voices during the pre-independent period, which to date, makes it difficult to distinguish a terrorist from other criminals and vice versa. The indistinct classification provides justification for the choices about “military and security options” (Accord Insight, 2015, p. 10) as the primary form of intervention by the state. However, there are a

range of non-military interventions like those implemented by state commissions and departments. A government official reported that,

While we combine activities about CVE under peacebuilding, our implementation is mostly done through the Ministry of Interior - especially from the level of the County Commissioners and the National Steering Committee to the local Peace Committees. We also have some initiatives driven by the National Crime Research Centre (NCRC), and through the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC). All these institutions and state departments are funded by the taxpayers in the national budget. (Interview 019, FNEN-13/07/2020).

Broadly therefore, local interventions both at the national and subnational levels, can be clustered broadly into two categories by separating the state-run interventions from those implemented by the civil society organisations and the private sector.

### **6.3.1 The State-Led Interventions on P/CVE**

The interventions led by the state agencies tend to emphasise the “use of law enforcement, military and development resources to achieve its strategic objectives”, and some of these programmes have been reported to be riddled with corruption and human rights violations (Mwangi, 2017, p. 1047). The State-led interventions also adopt superficial “public policy on the basis of international relations perspectives” (Mwangi, 2017, p. 1046). Hence, the state agencies in Kenya have faced more challenges in effecting their selective “measures aimed at strengthening intelligence gathering, policing and surveillance of suspect communities” (Mwangi, 2017, pp. 1046–1048).

Using frameworks that are fully dependent on securitising peacebuilding, many interventions have been designed to create a prejudiced division between the criminal terrorists and the innocent victims (Bednarova, 2011, p. 1). This follows a repugnant colonial strategy in which dissenting voices like those of the Mau Mau were declared both as criminals and terrorists before they were indicted, dehumanised, and taken through extreme injustices. In such cases, state-led propaganda and stereotypes are used to justify the course of action. The presumed criminals, in such cases have been deliberately, but erroneously referred to as “at-

risk groups” or “violence hot-spots”. This produces collective condemnation of community groups often designated geographically or by ethnicity and religion (Whitaker, 2008). A key informant lamented about such grounds that,

violent extremism is always associated with youths from the Muslim communities, which covertly leads to the bias within interventions that promote stigmatisation against the youth and among Muslims in general. State interventions, specifically, have often profiled, targeted, and victimized Muslim populations in the Northern and Coastal parts of the Country based on such assumptions. The youth get more criminalised due to the vernacular meanings derived from the word “Al Shabaab” – which means “the youth” in the Somali language. (Interview 001, FMEN - 27/05/2020).

Based on such false conceptualisations, the government strategies have faced considerable resistance from human rights activists and civilians through litigation and consequent failures in state prosecution of terror suspects (Mwangi, 2012; Okolie-Osemene & Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Worsened by the dependency paradigm, Connell (2014, p. 211) argues that “the criminology model of knowledge provides a false intervention framework – even where its hegemony is a matter of importance”. Many intervention frameworks in Kenya are thus influenced by the dependency relationship between the powerful partner states and hosts of their agencies (Protasevich, 2019). While the exact number and scope of all the ongoing programmes could not be established due to the virtual method of investigations used, the scrutinised interventions still share a common challenge, whether implemented by the state or non-state agencies.

**Table 10: State agencies undertaking P/CVE interventions**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Establishment</b>	<b>Mandate</b>	<b>Source of Funding for CVE</b>
<b>The National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC)</b>	2014	State coordinating agency at policy level for all counter terrorism efforts for the government of Kenya.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State funds recurrent expenditure like salaries and providing office logistics.</li> <li>• Donors (USAID) funds training of law enforcers, border control personnel, and those in the prison services.</li> </ul>
<b>Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU)</b>	2003	A unit of the National Police Service responsible for counterterrorism, tackling organized crimes and cross-borders criminal gangs by collecting intelligence on terror targets, investigating terror crimes and arresting suspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All costs supported by State funds through the national budget.</li> </ul>
<b>The National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC)</b>	2001	An interagency committee and a secretariat for coordinating peacebuilding activities at the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative and Peacebuilding related costs are financed by the State funds through the national budget.</li> <li>• CVE programmes are financed by UNDP.</li> </ul>
<b>The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC)</b>	Act No.12 of 2008	National government agency responsible for addressing and reducing inter-ethnic conflicts by developing and sustaining processes for alleviating all forms of ethnic discrimination and by promoting diversity through knowledge dissemination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative and Peacebuilding related costs are financed by the State funds through the national budget.</li> <li>• CVE programmes are financed by different donor groups including UNDP, DfID, EU and USAID.</li> </ul>
<b>The National Crime Research Centre (NCRC)</b>	Act No: No. 4 of 1997	Mandated to carry out research into the causes of crime, its prevention and to disseminate the research findings and recommendations to Government Agencies concerned with the administration of criminal justice, stakeholders, and the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative and Peacebuilding related costs are financed by the State funds through the national budget.</li> <li>• CVE programmes are financed by different donor groups including UNDP, DfID, EU and USAID.</li> </ul>

*Source: Review of multiple online documents from Kenya government website*

Other than the national defence forces, there are at least five state agencies that are responsible for coordinating and making direct interventions on P/CVE. Some institutions are statutory bodies created by Acts of parliament, while others are formations by the executive and national security departments of national government. According to Table 9, only the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) have some direct mandate, either on countering violent extremism or on counterterrorism. However, all the agencies have some jurisdiction on peacebuilding and conflict management. That notwithstanding, the big setback arises in the fact that any programming by the agencies on CVE is, somewhat, supported by international donors. Even the anti-terrorism police units are huge beneficiaries of training by external forces from the UK or USA (Cawthra, 1997; Magogo, 2017).

Based on such constraints witnessed with interventions implemented by state agencies, it is apparent marginal difference exists between mechanisms for preventing and countering violent extremism and counterterrorism interventions, which are trained through the strategy of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). As observed by Kundnani and Hayes (2018, p. 3), it is noticeable that “through the development of P/CVE, ‘the War on Terror’ has given itself a new vocabulary and a wider set of partnering agencies”. No projects are specifically funded by the government towards CVE, with exception to the military and national police logistics in Kenya and Somalia.

Some of the government’s direct interventions include Kenya’s assault on Somalia through UN funding of the “Africa Union Mission in Somalia” [AMISOM] (United Nations, 2016); the US funded “Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism” [PREACT] (Gatuiku, 2016); and the UK’s Prevent and EU’s Contest strategies (Innes et al., 2017). While AMISOM sounds more like an African led intervention by neighbouring countries to Somalia, it perfectly fits into a pseudo-imperialist international system in which the neighbouring countries only contribute the troops (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018), but logistics and command come from the Western countries which contribute the bulk of the funds (Ehiane, 2018; Williams, 2018). Since 2009, this UN mission has been part of the overt and

protracted international campaign (Williams, 2018) which Kenya joined in 2011, leading to multiple casualties and dire consequences (Anderson & McKnight, 2015). As observed by Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene (2017), it is unfortunate that this joint approach by the regional military has blatantly failed to handle the Al-Shabaab threat.

In fact, the interventions through AMISOM have, unfortunately, escalated the cross-border threat between Kenya and Somalia by generating more grievances that saw the Al Shabaab militants executing lethal attacks on Kenya soil (Cannon & Iyekekpola, 2018). The escalating threats can be traced to numerous complaints about cases of extrajudicial killings (Cannon & Pkalya, 2017), and the lack of local support by communities (Okolie-Osemene & Okolie-Osemene, 2017), stereotyped and victimised in the perpetual phobia of “Al-Shabaabism”. A similar fate faces the PRACT interventions which is entirely foreign donor supported and designed for building “the capacity and cooperation of military, law enforcement and civilian actors as a multiyear and multidimensional programme to counter terrorism across East Africa” (Mwangi, 2017, p. 1046).

Whether interventions by state agencies are merited or not remains contestable (Hadzi-Vidanovic, 2011). Nonetheless, many of the state-led interventions have been criticised for adopting copy-cat tendencies between the Kenyan response in Somalia and the US response in Afghanistan and Iraq, a strategy which fights terror with terror (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2015). It is on this ground of using terror to counter terrorism that the Kenyan government has been criticised by a section of scholars (Botha, 2018; Botha & Abdile, 2019) for abetting state terrorism, which includes targeted killings and refoulement of Al Shabaab suspects (Choiruzzad, 2013). Undoubtedly, therefore, the obstacles faced by the state and military interventions have since generated their paradigm shift towards the guise of counter-radicalisation and claims of CVE, while in essence the interventions are shaped by counterterrorism.

This paradigm shift has given the increased space for the UK and European led strategies like *Prevent* and *Contest*, which are dominated by non-state agencies. These initiatives, which inform the basis of this study, have been financed through

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a host of country specific international agencies (Romaniuk et al., 2017). The leading financiers of these interventions, based on Table 8 above, have been various agencies of European countries like the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Union (EU), Department for International Development (DfID), USAID, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

### **6.3.2 Non-State Interventions on P/CVE**

Other than state frameworks, non-state interventions include those undertaken by International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and their affiliates in Kenya (Golicha, 2017). This category of actors comprises Non-Governmental Organisations registered in Kenya either as national entities or as subsidiary franchises to the international companies (Morema, 2020; Wells, 2020), and other private sector organisations (Browne & Weiss, 2015; Ogada, 2017). According to Mahiri (2016, p. 1), “an increasing number of non-governmental organizations are now working on CVE programmes”, posing undue competition in the local programming for international funding with governmental institutions (Brown et al., 2015). Many practitioners, therefore, struggle to distinguish the interventions they implement from those undertaken by the government:

Peacebuilding is done by the NGOs while CVE is done by the government. The problem is that both programs (whether by NGOs or Government) are mostly designed for us by the donors, who also put their own conditions for gender inclusion. Occasionally we do the same activities, but we just assign different terms to the programmes e.g., CVE due to the fierce competition for funding among NGOs and with government agencies like the NSC which sometimes have similar activities. (Interview 020; MNPDN - 17/07/2020).

This narrative by an NGO practitioner demonstrates an overlap in the scoping, conceptualisation, and competition between government interventions and those implemented by the NGOs. In practice, therefore, many of their initiatives are constructed within the framework of peacebuilding to provide some perspectives

“that may be universally accepted by international actors” (Martini & Njoku, 2017, p. 76). Likewise, the manner in which P/CVE interventions by government are dependent on funding by the international community, is the same way interventions by NGOs are donor funded (Browne & Weiss, 2015).

Examples of programmes implemented by non-state agencies include those benefitting from the Department of International Development (DfID) and the European Union (EU) funding. One such intervention is the ‘Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism’ (STRIVE), which was a pilot programme implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Puntland, South Central Somalia, and Somaliland between 2014 and 2017. This programme was aimed at testing the “assumptions around what works in CVE in the area” (Kelly, 2019, p. 5). Another programme specifically implemented in Kenya was the “Sustainable Employment and Economic Development” (SEED) funded by DfID. This initiative was designed as a livelihood programme with only one of its objectives being countering violent extremism (Kelly, 2019). The interviews express significant concern with the interventions at the local level:

We have problems with organizations implementing what we call “Prevent programme” financed by DFID. The donor only gives funds to UK commercial entities in Kenya, which do not work, specifically on CVE. Their interests are in livelihoods and economic development where they do business. But when funds come, they expand their mandate to include CVE about which they know very little or nothing. The intermediaries then sign sub-contracts with local partners working on peace. It is all business and nothing to do with CVE and peacebuilding programming. The entire communities end up being duped and excluded from CVE activities. (Interview 019; FNEN-13/07/2020).

The intrigues noted by this participant are captured in the evaluation report done by Kelly, which hold that the interventions supported by DFID “had limited efficacy having selected beneficiaries based on livelihood vulnerability rather than vulnerability to extremist recruitment” (Kelly, 2019, p. 7). Consequently, the CVE projects failed to tackle issues like the provision of justice and services by the government (Butler, 2015). In a similar way, Hogendoorn (2017, p. 3) observes that “the EU and other groups of donors have spent billions of Euros to counter the



Al Shabaab”, but such interventions have made little impact to achieve their goals. The challenge with some interventions has been associated with the donors’ failure to engender local political will and ownership “to reform dysfunctional and corrupt administrations that undermine their programmes” (Hogendoorn, 2017, p. 8). As an interviewee observes,

At times donor funding tend to promote corruption that also makes the interventions to be non-responsive to the interest of *mwananchi*<sup>5</sup>. Take, for instance, those agencies that mostly prefer working with the government. In many cases they would not involve community actors in the implementation because they schedule donor funded activities, not to solve problems on the ground but, to get huge sums of money in the form of per diem and traveling allowances. In such programmes, the community members are only gathered in workshops or public meetings for a few hours to be addressed project staff. But they hardly give any opportunity to the community members to say a word. At the end, they produce very good reports and attach a list of participants. (Interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020).

Besides corruption, additional challenges are reported about cohorts of interventions by non-state organisations. Several projects also faced major drawbacks based on their creation of “extremist hot spot communities” through an explicit classification of Muslim communities as constituting “subsets of the population at-risk of being attracted to VE” (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2014, p. 1). This was later blamed by community activists for unwarranted targeting by the government leading to the infamous Kasarani concentration camp after the Westgate attacks in Nairobi. Similarly, the BKBM project was primarily focused on Muslim communities in different parts of the country:

Violent extremism, according to these interventions, is typically linked to the Islamic extremism or fundamentalism. Based on such disturbing understanding, some interventions to prevent and counter violent extremism have ended up profiling, targeting, and victimising Muslim populations in most cases. This has led to the stigmatisation of Muslims and some ethnic groups in general, by the public and particularly, when speaking about extremism or terror in the everyday life. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

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<sup>5</sup> Kiswahili term for nationals or citizens.

These programmes all of which represent a Western approach to CVE are not only blamed for promoting exclusion, but also for associating violent extremism with stereotypes around Islamophobia, instead of pursuing a holistic approach for promoting national cohesion. Hence, it also became unreliable by overlooking the aspects of community ownership (Kelly 2019). Several other projects supported by the donor agencies and implemented by NGOs face relatively similar challenges that are linked to conceptualisation of the problems and exclusion of community perspectives in designing the interventions.

### **6.3.3 Commonalities in the Interventions by State and Non-State**

There is no doubt about the mix-up in the interventions, by both state and non-state actors, about what constitutes CT and CVE. The mix-up is a sure manifestation of the inherently vague understanding not only about the terms but also a concern on the activities designed for or by actors. Hence, many interventions for CVE may be an ill-equipped mission. This implies that most interventions are undertaken based on availability of resources and in the hope of bringing unspecified change but without significant accomplishment. Lazare (2016) argues that these initiatives are often dependent on flawed theories of radicalization, which also lack the necessary grounding in any rigorous research. It is the conceptual gaps that ignores the risk of violating basic human rights of some community beneficiaries and religious groups who suffer from unintended stigmatisation or unfair targeting by the very interventions. Vaid (2015) argues, for instance, that despite full acknowledgment of the bias in “epistemological underpinnings”, CVE programming remain fickle, disjointed, and incoherent to address the local problems, leaving both state and non-state actors in perpetual confusion.

A second issue that is common among the interventions by both state and non-state actors is connected to the tension between the Western and local knowledge paradigms. Emanating from a common dependency on donor funding, the international donor bias has a tendency to look at “the local knowledge” through the prejudiced lenses of Western knowledge and stereotypes. It is such an approach that Dunn (2004) associates with the “Western tourist gaze on Africa that often assumes to fix the local situations both in spatial and temporal sites” (Dunn, 2004: 384). An interviewee makes this point by stating that,

Many interventions appear to be quite abstract to many community actors while a few others like Muslims, feel unfairly targeted by the state. Indeed, as much as local knowledge, in terms of terminologies and practices exist among the most affected communities, many NGOs and foreign donor representatives, unfortunately and quite often, tend to influence the local actors to master the foreign terminologies through interminable capacity building workshops. (Interview, 006 - FUAPC; 7/06/2020).

This view by this practitioner exposes the prevailing struggle to mainstream local knowledge into some “universal” contexts to “fit in”. For the purposes of gaining space in the funding consideration, both state and non-state actors generate interventions that hardly seek to integrate the different knowledge systems and, instead, develop activities and indicators acceptable to the donors. It is on such realms that many programmes for tackling violent extremism place endless emphasis on the “capacity building of local actors” (Tom, 2017). The process, in such cases, is based on donor conditions as entrenched in the Western knowledge systems. An abridged excerpt from one call for proposals reads thus:

*Program Description:* Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce that funding is available through its Public Diplomacy Small Grants Program. This is an Annual Program Statement, outlining our funding priorities, the strategic themes we focus on, and the procedures for submitting requests for funding. Please carefully follow all instructions below. [...] PAS invites proposals for programs [...] that advances core U.S. foreign policy goals, highlights shared values, and promotes bilateral cooperation. All programs must include an American cultural element, or connection with American expert/s, organization/s, or institution/s in a specific field that will promote increased understanding of U.S. policy and perspectives. [Funding Opportunity #: AF-JUB-21-01; Deadline: June 1, 2021].

The description in the call for proposals is very explicit on what is expected about the applicants. The emphasis that “all programs must” include specific parameters leaves no space for negotiation on what can work better. Hence, the approaches used in any interventions that arise from the call largely ignore the place of local knowledge in preference for the donors’ understandings and perspectives. Consequently, these interventions leave the local actors with no choice but to ignore the knowledge of both the actors and the beneficiaries – as being inferior to the

language and knowledge of the donors' representatives – already referred to as experts. This international donor superiority explains the kind of assumptions made by Villa-Vicencio and team (2016, p. 6) during their interviews in Kenya, who found that equivalent terminologies for CVE do not exist because local definitions “were more likely to [only] reflect communities’ immediate security concerns regardless of the actors involved or the motive for violence”. An interview response reinforces the challenge in knowledge systems indicating that

Many donors do not solicit for any advice about the contextual setting for interventions. Therefore, design of our programs is never in line with the realities on the ground. What we try to do is to find some flexibility based on the context and still comply with the donor requirements. At least, to some extent, some change has been brought about by the NGOs based on activism which makes our interventions much better compared to what the government does. (Interview 019, FNEN-13/07/2020).

This voice of a participant based in an NGO shows some ray of hope in success arising from activism, but which points to some divergence from state-led interventions exhibiting less flexibility. The most unfortunate situation arises when the government decides to directly copy some foreign strategies and legislations for diplomatic purposes to please the Western allies for political convenience. In such cases, the implementing agencies and individual actors have no option but to take the instructions as given without questioning. The resulting intervention strategies and policy frameworks are adopted as prescriptions and assumed to solve all local problems or to serve the short-term interest of winning donor funding.

Whether by state or non-state agencies, any “prescriptive” interventions, based on borrowed scripts, perpetuate what Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2011) allude to as the “uniform and bureaucratically imposed structures that fails to pay due attention to the understanding of local conditions and contextual readiness to accommodate variety of voices” (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, p. 226). Therefore, the dependency patterns not only demonstrate biased power relations against the national interests of local communities, but they have had significant effects on the resolution of some violent conflicts which get turned into the emerging “new normal” of the permanent preference for military intervention (Charbonneau, 2017,

p. 416). Campling and Colás (2018, p. 780) thus, declare that the Western “capitalists’ form of appropriation and sovereignty” permeate the local contexts which form the pillars of Western domination in the interventions for P/CVE. The situation raised doubt about Kenya’s intellectual capacity, availability of financial resources, and adequacy of political will to develop and cultivate a decolonial or home-grown approach to programmes for countering violent extremism.

#### **6.4 Clashing Knowledge in the CVE interventions**

The over dependence on donor funding by African governments has prompted many African scholars (Dersso, 2012; Maloba, 2017; Mazrui et al., 2018b; Mazrui, 1967; Zeleza, 2019) to contemplate African solutions to peace and security based on local experiences and socio-cultural perspectives. This move anticipates potential transformation of the international order in the African peace and security architecture. The arguments here raise prospects for understanding the local problems through the lenses of local practices and seeking to increase the chances for enhancing indigenous solutions to the African situation of peace and security (Kwanya & Kiplang, 2016). A community leader, for instance, laments about challenges facing local interventions in this regard, stating,

The voice of the local community, which should be given preference is totally missing in many interventions. Therefore, there is no consistency in the training sessions done at the grass roots because every donor come with different approach and different concepts. Even the government has a problem in building the capacity of peace committees and community-based groups. First, multiple efforts by different actors are very helpful but they are poorly coordinated until communities remain more confused. Second, training is done by non-locals who either speak Kiswahili or English, so local participants rely on translators and often keep ‘floating’ [not understanding] in the discussions. (Interview 003; MFPW - 31/05/2020).

While recognising the great contribution made by the international community in filling the void left by the national government and local organisations, it is the missing voices of local communities that expose international interventions to a series of criticisms. Many interventions are blamed for using the liberal peacebuilding approach which fails to create an environment for sustainable peace. The main concern of this approach is therefore related to the knowledge gap, which

ordinarily, would be situated within the local community structures. Quite often, those actors who win the grants follow an orthodox and dogmatic positions by choosing to embrace the donors' knowledge uncritically or simply, they are ignorant about the local knowledge production (International Peace Institute, 2015). Ignoring indigenous knowledge production while fully endorsing "foreign" ideology, are therefore linked to the relics of colonialism and its resultant coloniality (Chirimambowa & Chimedza, 2019). According to Maloba (2017), colonialism entails a continual onslaught on a people's dignity or right of recognition that erodes the value in the indigenous knowledge, while coloniality perpetuates the systemic imbalance. Due to this knowledge bias, an interviewee remarks,

[T]here is a gap in implementing an African indigenous approach that recognises traditional structures for inclusion both in the interventions and in the policy formulation frameworks informed by interventions. These interventions on CVE or peacebuilding are all dependent on Western knowledge. Instead of merging the new ideas with local perspectives towards achieving peace, many actors disparage anything traditional as being irrational, which heightens chances for discrimination. Contrary to the expectations in many communities, the elderly and those who do not have higher levels of Western education are rarely recognised as "experts" in peacebuilding. (Interview 004; FUAN-2/06/2020).

Consequently, as Kundnani and Hayes (2018) argue, the international organisations' global agenda risks being perceived locally more as part of the global political agenda than as initiatives for supporting peace. This pessimistic perception arises from the fear that most programme ideas are designed largely in the systems of Western knowledge and applied with minimum inclusion of local ideas. The international structures, despite making frantic attempts to appear as being community driven, still end up [re]presenting a collection of abstract idealism distinct from the daily peacebuilding practices at community levels. It follows as a result that the pursuit of gender inclusion, as a human right, is treated casually by the target beneficiaries, not for being defective but simply because the local communities do not identify with the ideas. As noted by Tamale (2020), "human rights as articulated in contemporary discourse" still remains unfamiliar to a majority of the African communities. This implies the obscurity that faces the

interventions which do not consider the local voices and fails to address the people's fears and commitments.

It is the same obscurity that also faces the presentations made by the local civil society groups for their interventions that are often grounded in Western “formal” programme systems. The activities are mostly imbued with Western ideology and narratives derived from the universal framework of international order (Tamale, 2020). Eventually, many interventions face a double challenge. One is the abstractness of “universal” ideas, and the fact that the international order is built around the liberal state sovereignty.

Indeed, it becomes evident that as interventions continue being enshrined in the universality of knowledge, they tend to pay minimal attention to the contextual reality, which ignores the fact that despite assumptions in the “White” history about Africa, human rights were an integral part of the indigenous social and political ethos of the African communities (Ibhawoh, 2008). Recognising human rights in African contexts has been the case long before the European Treaty of Westphalia 1648 or the United Nations Declaration of 1948 (Tamale, 2020). But the colonial historians suppressed the facts to oblivion. It is on the same dimension that some practitioners have identified gaps in the campaigns on gender equality and on the contemporary agenda for inclusion, as steered by NGOs and state agencies, based on Western supported interventions. As one participant argues, “our programming itself creates obstacles for women's inclusion agenda” (interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020). In her explanation, she posits that,

To be *really* gender inclusive our strategies must also be inclusive of different voices. The framing of messages based on laws that are abstract to the masses has led to this failure of most gender equality campaigns, which create situations of *us versus them*. For instance, the two thirds gender rule is a constitutional provision, but it has created controversies where men feel that women are targeting them unfairly, or taking something from them, because of the language used in the debates like, *give us these slots*. If the messages were framed in such a way that show a communal gain, and that aims at uplifting of everyone in the society, we would see no resistance. As we speak, even the legislators cannot agree on implementing these provisions because the discussion is constructed as a “tug of war” between men

and women. (Interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020, *emphasis made by the participant during interviews*).

The interviews confirm the ramifications from the Western constructions that fail to incorporate indigenous understandings in the prevailing interventions. The narratives are based on superficial rights drummed up, for instance, without appreciating the role men would need to play in the process. As argued by Oloka-Onyango (2015), the language, structure and foundation of the legal instruments that ignores subaltern voices have been imported directly from the colonial institutions. Hence, intervention systems that seem to impose the same structures on the communities are very much likely to be misunderstood, rejected, and resisted in favour of the alternative justice systems (Nebe, 2012) that are based on the traditions of indigenous people.

The susceptibility to resistance in many intervention outcomes are also reflected in the confusions and suspicions between the state security and the non-state actors. By failing to contextualise the competing interests on the international funding, Simoncini argues that “at the centre of attention” has become the fear that international donors are being used by their parent states “to impose control through cooperation” (Simoncini, 2020, p. 182). The suspicion, most likely, is that western allies are more interested to gaining control of the security sectors in the non-Western countries, than they are in gaining peaceful outcomes.

The growing tensions were, for example, witnessed when the government of Kenya imposed horrendous sanctions on the NGO sector in 2013 after the newly elected president and deputy president were arraigned in the International Criminal Courts (ICC) at the Hague. The suspected political leaders accused the local NGOs, especially those working in human rights, of colluding with some Western powers on political grounds. They blamed local activist to be acting as surrogate spies and informers (Sakue-Collins, 2021), to undermine sovereignty of the government and the state. Hence, repulsive laws were quickly enacted by parliament to “tame” the (NGO) interventions. Sakue-Collins (2021) argues, frantically, that many NGOs find themselves in an awkward position by virtue of uncritically subscribing to the



Western ideologies and replicas through disproportionate financial support, which makes them to function more as ideological stooges in the African contexts.

The fear of external control, whether real or perceived, is embedded in the conflicting policies between the funding countries or their agencies and the hosting states. Some fears are pegged, genuinely, on the competing interests to gain access to valuable or protected information as a way of keeping at bay the interests of the Global South. Following the cues and same script from the Cold War period, Western allies like the US and UK have always switched focus between financing CVE and providing funds for security assistance as they compete to establish privileged relationships (Simoncini, 2020; Tsui, 2020). The politics around international interventions on P/CVE have therefore, generated multiple obstacles arising from suspicions and phobias about espionage that is linked directly to local interventions, as a participant who is a government official clearly expresses:

Some interventions are just but schemes for foreign forces to spy on the local context while pretending to be financing local organizations and then they disappear after getting some protected information. Most of such interventions are not sustainable because they are guarded by the embassies and *fully dependent on donor funding* such that when the funding stops, the interventions also stop. Some of those interventions are very short, like you find donors giving funds for only one year or less. What meaningful change can you achieve in a community within one year or less? The intension is very suspect. (Interview, MNPN 015 - 2/07/2020, *emphasis made by respondent*).

In connection to such contentions raised by the interviewee, streamlining of gender equality under the assumption of homogeneity of human race have been problematised by feminists. For instance, Tamale (2020) argues that racial homogeneity generates suspicions and ignores the diversity in culture, value systems, and diversity in strategic gender needs. Nonetheless, many African scholars of human rights, and African feminists, share a consensus about the positive milestones achieved in setting the standards by the UN Declaration on Human Rights and its principles. However, they point at an exception that being grounded exclusively in Western norms, the indicators for achieving human rights might be misleading because they are set with minimum diversity of

contexts (Ibhawoh, 2008). The problem, therefore, is in the universalistic and the scope of essentialising, normally exhibited when the rights are applied in the non-Western contexts (Oloka-Onyango, 2015; Oloka-Onyango & Tamale, 1995).

Arguably, a great paradox exists that in 1948 when the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) was made, all the African countries were still occupied by the European colonial authorities who reigned with terror, while the US regime also institutionalised racism. For example, it considerably excluded non-Euro-American identities at that time (Tamale, 2020). While South Africa was represented by the prime minister General Jan Christian Smuts, who was the author of the preamble to the UN Charter in 1941, it is notable the same prime minister was as well the chief architect of apartheid (Tamale, 2020; van der Vyver, 1979). It is, therefore, worth interrogating whose rights were, in essence, declared in the UN charter of 1948. In subsequent years, apart from putting pressure on the African countries to ratify the charter on UDHR, very minimal attention has been given to reviewing any of its provisions to incorporate the local/indigenous voices of the countries/territories from the Global South, most of which never existed or were under the tyranny of colonialism when the charter came into force. Consequently, there is little doubt that CVE interventions face many obstacles while implementing the gender and women inclusion strategies, which are derived from the Eurocentric UDHR.

Some African feminists have also faulted the gender interventions for promoting paradigms that are “founded on polarised dualism”, such as men versus women, female versus male, wife versus husband, or private versus public dichotomies (Tamale, 2020, p. 41). All these categories are adversarial classifications, which are adopted by many international agencies, including the UN Women, but still, they significantly ignore the spirit of *ubuntu* in the African context. Hence, the interventions are often received very sceptically by the target beneficiaries. The concerns raised also make it difficult to separate the interests of Western international funders of local interventions and their proclamations in support of human rights from the fear of hidden interests. Reception has therefore, been characterised by expressions of both panic and distrust about new gender concepts,

incessant fear and transmittable perceptions caused on, or shown by, the target beneficiaries (Sakue-Collins, 2021). These sets of obstacles most often reproduce more vulnerability to exclusion than creating trust in the structures of interventions. It is not surprising, therefore, that similar challenges are manifested in Western constructions about violent extremism that also problematises the success of interventions, as discussed in the next section.

### **6.5 Western Versus Local Constructions in the Intervention for CVE**

It is worth acknowledging that much emphases made in the past about the evolving terminology of terrorism, especially during and in the periods after the Cold War, has influenced the evolving terminologies between terrorism and violent extremism (Romaniuk et al., 2017). The evolution is not likely to end soon, as the problems associated with terrorism remain to be complex and challenging in different contexts. As admitted by Nalbandov (2017, p. 91), concepts are still “highly illusive and constantly mutating,” especially in the evaluation of counterterrorism measures and policies. For instance, the success of interventions has been commonly associated with the absence of extremist activities, and subsequently, based on the number of casualties either witnessed or purportedly prevented (Kundnani, 2015; Nalbandov, 2017). These measurements are rarely applicable to the non-security-based interventions (Nalbandov, 2017). Moreover, the evaluation interventions have been connected to the dearth in meanings and definitional problems of the very terms used (Royster, 2017).

It is for this purpose that interrogating the space for contextual understanding and the unique application of ideas becomes of essence in this study. In Kenya, for instance, interviews with different actors establish how the understanding of violent extremism is loosely and erroneously linked to “Islamism”, based on what is often portrayed to the public and politicians. Findings based on the voice of a media personality who was a key informant provides a narrative based on understanding previous predicament, reporting that,

Violent extremism, here, is typically associated with politics, and often, with Islamic extremism. Based on this troubled understanding, the state interventions to prevent and for countering violent extremism have ended up profiling, targeting, and victimising Muslim populations. Profiling leads to stigmatization of the Muslims in

general, even by the general public. When people speak about extremism or terror in the everyday life, they associate it with Islam, Somali ethnic group, or young people. Using the West-Gate attack, for example, which is a recent and among the most visible and vicious attacks in our country – it was the images shared in the media that were used by the public to figure out or to remember what constitutes terrorism. It is the image of an armed individual in Muslim attire, chanting Muslim prayer, and a scene of siege. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

While using an example of how constructions are shaped by the media, the participant not only demonstrates the misunderstanding that exists on the ground, but also manifests how the public seems to grapple with unpacking the reality about terror, terrorist, and terrorism. This viewpoint further illustrates the confusion that still prevails in the Kenyan intervention landscape, that most likely leads to problematic perceptions. The confusion in the public domain thus, provides evidence about the inconsistencies in conceptualisation about violent extremism that confronts interventions in the local contexts.

According to Martini and Njoku (2017), the prevailing upheavals in conceptualisation is part of the concerted efforts by both scholars and practitioners in the struggle “to distinguish terrorism from other forms of political violence” (Martini & Njoku, 2017, p. 73). Meisels (2009, p. 331) argues then that in this struggle, scholars might have only succeeded, so far, in pointing at “the inconsistencies and inadequacies of existing definitions and contradictions of terrorism”. Similar challenges, grounded in Western constructions, have faced many actors who struggle to make meanings in the difference between peacebuilding and CVE without accounting for the contextual constructions. Given the overwhelming desire about the changing interest on P/CVE programmes, Abu-Nimer (2018, p. 1) demonstrates how interests change to influence the funding regimes, consequently, leading to programming dilemmas. A manager of an international NGO, for instance, is quoted as lamenting that “in order to get funding for our peacebuilding programs, now we have to describe them in the context of violent extremism, otherwise we have no chance of being supported or even making it to the initial screening” (Abu-Nimer, 2018, p. 2). A similar observation emerges from interviews with practitioners in Kenya. For example, a participant shares his first-hand experience with shifting conceptualisation within programmes:

I would say, from my previous experience in Sri Lanka and later in Kenya, that it is very difficult bringing two parties who perceive each other as “the terrorists”, to the same table to talk about peace – so you need funds to keep the activities running. At the beginning we were undertaking peacebuilding activities. In search for more funds in Sri Lanka, we had to convert all our activities from Peacebuilding to CVE to be successful in securing funds. In Kenya we experienced a similar problem of shifting between peacebuilding and CVE. I am involved in training for various organisations, and suddenly, most organisations have shifted their programmes from peacebuilding to CVE interventions. Seemingly, the term CVE has now polarised programmes for communities to the extent that the term “peacebuilding” is being pushed to the periphery, because of shifting interests in the terminologies of international donors. Despite these changes, the activities remain similar except, while reporting. (Interview 011; MUAC -21/06/2020).

The two standpoints, presented by Abu-Nimer about the organisations in the United States, and the participant’s voice in Kenya about the changes in funding interests, reflect the wider vicissitudes and evolution in the practice, which includes financing and scoping of programmes on tackling violent extremism. Kundnani and Hayes (2018, p. 2) argue, therefore, in this regard that “as the language of countering and preventing violent extremism finds its way into various policy, legal and political settings, it is incumbent on entities and organisations to understand and be aware of this new language” (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018, p. 2).

Consequently, for the interventions to comply and to succeed in getting funds, the actors must swing with the tides “and pay attention when states and international organisations start to shape their policies and practices around this new vocabulary” (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018, p. 2). This explains how many of the local organisations and state agencies have uncritically embraced the renewed agenda for tackling violent extremism. Over the past two decades of the twenty first century, they have no option but to accept interventions that are conceptualised, designed and operationalised as P/CVE (Karlsrud, 2017). As an interviewee points out in relation to the resulting contentions, it emerges that,

Based on the contrasting meanings or lack of it, I would say the whole world is busy fighting against the same problems as terror, extremism, or violence, but it is how the problem manifests in our local contexts

and how it is perceived here, and not elsewhere that would best inform the interventions. Otherwise, the concepts produced and imported from a foreign policy, like the Kenyan laws which were copied from the American statutes or adopted from the British common laws, may not be as relevant as they appear to be. So, local interventions should be based on clear evidence generated locally here to ensure they have sustainable elements based on our local context and unique settings as a country. (Interview 015; MNPN - 2/07/2020).

It is the clash between the international perspectives in designing and financing the programmes for peacebuilding and CVE, and the conceptualised meaning assigned by the local actors and communities, that becomes problematic. In many cases, for instance, the conceptualisations driven by the supremacy of foreign knowledge often dominates the government interventions, just as it happens with the donor funded programmes, and it shutters the indigenous understanding on the same issues. The tragedy of knowledge supremacy, founded on the Western framework, is also entrenched through the legal instruments that wholly ignore indigenous ethnic diversity, cultural contexts, and by extension, local or indigenous knowledge paradigms. For example, most of the “official” definitions for terrorism, violent extremism, and peace, are enshrined in the statutory legislations which are in the “colonisers” language and spirit.

The bigger challenge, however, arises from the abstractness of these legislations from the realities of the local context, hence, ordinary citizens (known in Kenya as *wananchi*) are more likely to perceive the laws, mostly, as punitive instruments by those in power (Burbidge & Cheeseman, 2017). As noted by one study participant, “most initiatives for CVE and peacebuilding are contained in abstract policy documents that in most cases remain at policy proclamation stage and only used to punish instead of getting justice” (interview 009; FNDN - 15/06/2020). Kameri-Mbote and Akech also observe, for instance, that the Kenyan “laws are all in English, which is Kenya’s ‘official’ language” (Kameri-Mbote & Akech, 2011, p. 93), which is the language of the colonial powers – the British. An interviewee, therefore, argues about the laws for gender inclusion by observing that,

[A] gap lies between our law and practice. According to international and local laws, women should have equal rights as men. No one challenges this, but what is the reality? We all have unique needs that

cannot all be legislated. Social norms form the actual practice in communities. In many cases majority of women are not even aware of such rights enshrined in law. All these are different circumstances that interventions hardly incorporate while addressing exclusion. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

Undoubtedly, in such a circumstance, conceptualisation about these same laws would produce different outcomes if the *wananchi* had a better chance to identify with the provisions addressing gender inclusion and issues of violent extremism. Perhaps, this can be one hypothesis if laws were articulated in Kiswahili in the Kenyan context, as it is the case in Tanzania (Burbidge & Cheeseman, 2017). Instead, “there are currently no [such] copies of the Laws in Swahili, which is the ‘national’ language nor do we have vernacular versions” – on the pretext of a wide number of ethnic languages (Kameri-Mbote & Akech, 2011, p. 93). In contrast, election materials and political campaign messages are always translated into the diverse languages with ease, which are claimed to be complex and numerous for practical translation of the legislations. This excuse demonstrates an open double standard arising from the problem of the captive mind (Alatas, 2000), which also abhors innovation or is made deliberately to subjugate the subaltern voice, knowledge, and spaces.

These misgivings about the legal and policy instruments are closely connected to the issues that affect the programme interventions for tackling violent extremism, as they are about inclusion. The emerging contentions are in three steps. The first is a concern regarding the capacity of the law makers and policy implementers to legislate on issues they don’t understand (Ogada, 2017). Further, even after the laws and policies are enacted in the foreign language, text, and spirit, the challenges linger on whether the state decision makers (at sub-national levels), who work on various P/CVE intervention, do have the capacity and incentive to effectively implement the relevant policy instruments (Villa-Vicencio et al., 2016). It becomes more challenging when the actors are unable to interpret the issues of concern into the local context including in the national language, or in diverse vernaculars, for clarity in awareness and actioning (Aroussi, 2020). This concern, though coming from a different viewpoint, corresponds to observations made by Oando et al., (2011, p. 7) that over the past decade, “Kenya has considerably witnessed a

strengthened legal and policy frameworks, especially for reducing the gender disparity, but evidence still indicates significant problems of implementation”.

The second contention connects to the first, raising a question about the levels of understanding by both ordinary citizens (*wananchi*) and civil society actors. Unlike the situation in Tanzania where all the laws are made and disseminated in Kiswahili (Burbidge & Cheeseman, 2017), Kenyans are more likely to express disapproval for their own laws, fearing they are instrumentalising the actors, especially by gagging civil society organisations. Quite often, disapproval is expressed through interventions that use picketing in perpetual demand for *Haki Yetu* (our rights). The *haki yetu* slogan thus, grows into an expression of mistrust both in the political system as well as in disapproval of the national laws. Hence, Chome (2016) argues that Kenyans hardly trust anyone in tackling violent extremism as they don't believe in the very laws applied to execute the strategies.

Just as the citizens display mistrust towards the state, suspicion also exists in the relations “between and within communities, between and within generations, and between citizens and the state” (Chome, 2016, p. 8). It is worth noting though, that the enduring quest for *haki* (rights) by *wananchi* (citizens) is a thread worth exploring in unique contexts, beyond the scope of this study. For example, a participant provides quite a unique scenario in the clash between the law and cultural beliefs, and how rights can be interpreted:

In our community, the Digo, we believe people are forced in joining violent extremist groups by witchcraft. As in, the youth get radicalised through spiritual manipulation by *majini* (ghosts), and not by choice or consent. In this case, the remedy is by consulting a traditional witch doctor to ‘pull’ them back, and once they are back some traditional rituals are administered to appease the evil spirits, and to reintegrate them in society. Unfortunately, when our people successfully return [from Al Shabaab groups], they are seized by police. So, what do you expect? The community members go on demonstration asking for *haki yetu* to protect returnees – who are our kin. People cannot trust the police on this. (Interview 006; FUAPC - 7/06/2020).

What comes out most clearly is the lack of trust between the citizens and the intervention structures, especially the state, which explains the high anxieties



witnessed at the community level against P/CVE activities (Kamungi, 2017). In this regard, Kenyans are less likely to witness the desired harmony in their relationship with the state and between different ethnic communities because of the state's over reliance on "post-colonial institutions" (Deng, 2018, p. 107). This extends to mistrust of the Western allies of the state who finance and inform the strategies for tackling violent extremism, since they both have "divested the local communities and ethnic groups of their indigenous autonomy" (Deng, 2018, p. 107). Depriving local communities of their indigenous systems increases the chances of resistance to national identity in favour of indigenous knowledge systems that instead, are treated as being "informal" (Sakue-Collins, 2021). The anxieties from communities, therefore, extends to the uptake of activities and initiatives for gender inclusion. A participant posits, for instance, that:

[t]he lack of clear response to VE by failing to consider the structural and cultural factors that cause some forms of violence is the reason we can't resolve the problem. I should not say this openly, but our sources of funding, which are majorly Western, consider everything done by communities as informal and as initiatives which are difficult to be accounted for when making financial reports, hence, our responses always overlook crucial local voices on the ground. (Interview 013; FNARN - 26/06/2020).

These contentions, which arise from Western constructions, therefore, expose an element of systemic obstacles related to the clashing knowledge contexts, which converges in the fear about perpetuating colonial continuities, through the laws and programmes designed for tackling violent extremism. While legislations are more likely to exhibit inconsistencies by directly lifting copies from the colonial systems, some local programmes are trapped in "a problematic global trend" where interventions are guided by the donors' interest (Romaniuk et al., 2018, p. 171).

Consequently, Karbo and Virk (2018) make a case against the destructive role of external actors as leading contributors to the continuing situations of conflict in Africa and the consequent incapacity to address them effectively. This does not insinuate that donor funding is inappropriate for Africa. Instead, it seeks to explain that funding systems must devolve their control of the programmes in the African contexts, while African governments also make informed decisions to increase

their financing for initiatives for peace. In both cases, the contextual uniqueness of the intervention areas must be considered (Halafoff et al., 2019), to incorporate the people's diversity in identity, values, and belief systems (Sjøen & Jore, 2019).

These diverse views of conflicted civic knowledge, based on Western constructions, illustrate the dilemma in understanding the concepts of gender, women, equality, and inclusion. A participant highlights the first controversy arguing that “in local interventions many advocates pick incomplete information from their training, and they disseminate this wrong impression the same way, that misinforms the community” (interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020). Noting that practitioners do not have to be trained gender experts to partake in activities on gender equality, she clarifies the contention by raising more questions. She posits that,

Most programmes are designed in a flawed theory that seem to promote negative labelling of men as the problem. When the word ‘gender’ is mentioned, the insinuation to the public is that of ‘protecting women from men’. This is one reason Western feminism has really faced a lot of challenges from men in Kenya. Men, already, are labelled and coded as “patriarchs” or bad elements in the community, which is the obstacle. How do you expect support of inclusion packaged in that manner? (Interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020).

Tamale (2020) contends in this regard, that unless the complex equation of gender equality is addressed, the emancipation of women remains remote. She argues that the ensuing misunderstanding of gender arises from the tendency of interventions which are aimed at “undoing and erasing culture from the equation” as a means of achieving gender equality in the African contexts (Tamale, 2020, p. 205). In this perspective, the term gender suffers the risk of being essentialised by assuming that all women, especially in African cultural contexts, are always oppressed in the same way (Amadiume, 1987). The concept of equality is also faulted for implying “equivalence” or “sameness”, both of which are practically unrealistic as instruments for pursuing justice among the marginalised community groups (Furuzawa, 2020). It follows that unless the concepts are critically examined and contextualised, “gender equality” lingers as quite a complex goal to pursue,

especially as a universalised paradigm for the emancipation of women in their enhanced spaces within P/CVE interventions.

While narrowing down into specifics by seeking to engage the distinct category of “women” as a social group to challenge gender-specific exclusion, questions have also been raised about its “liberatory potential” (Moyo, 2020, p. 67). Tamale (2020), in this perspective, questions whether the concept “women” also include transgender women, intersex persons, or lesbian women, as recognised within the new paradigm of identity politics? While expressing the views of Grosfoguel (2011), Tamale suggests that “identity politics cannot lead to transformative change because of their links to coloniality of power” (Tamale, 2020, p. 206). Instead, she argues, identity politics only “addresses the goals of a single group, and demands equality within the system rather than developing a radical systemic struggle against the systemic Western-centric civilisation” (Tamale, 2020, p. 206). This debate exposes some level of ambiguity in the use of these terminologies, which unless addressed by the interventions based on context specific paradigms, makes it problematic for achieving the intended goals of inclusion. It is thus, a manifestation of the prevailing epistemological crises in Africa, which is embedded into the mainstream design and governance of many P/CVE interventions.

It follows, therefore, that making successful interventions should be based on whether they are framed in the correct context, which forms the foundation upon which diverse actors can deal with threats associated with violent extremism today and in the future. Considering the uniqueness of context is thus a significant determinant of people’s understanding about the events of conflicts without which conceptualisation remains impaired and consequently, impedes their capacity to make “the right” interventions (Matchett, 2017, p. 67). Hence, while adopting the shifting conceptualisation from terrorism to violent extremism, or rather, while pursuing gender equality and inclusion of women in the interventions, it remains imperative to also recognise the perspectives of local communities while designing interventions.

Debates around context-informed expressions thus opens the discursive front for reducing “the political effect” (Weinberg et al., 2004, p. 778) in the CVE

programmes that sets the geopolitical disparities. The issue of political manipulation has not only influenced the understanding about violent extremism in the intervention strategies but also creates the trouble around identity politics in each case. The focus on re-conceptualisation therefore, helps to counter the “synthetic conceptualisations” (Lewis, 2017, p. 7) which have been adopted from the international donor community by the P/CVE programmes, in preference to a situation where clear meanings that are specific to particular cultural values, belief systems and customs, are developed.

## **6.6 Chapter Summary**

Commencing from the design and methodological considerations in the preceding chapter, this chapter shares contextual conceptualisations that inform diverse interventions for tackling violent extremism. The findings show that most interventions in Africa are generally dependent on international donor funding, as do those interventions which are specific to Kenya. In this respect, the interventions are not necessarily free from direct influence of the funding countries and their agencies, most of which have strings attached to their funding. While Kenya and other African countries abdicate their duties associated with sovereignty to design and finance their local programmes, their foreign allies plug into the impending gap by influencing the design and setting implementation frameworks that seek to help the local beneficiaries. Consequently, many programmes often serve political and diplomatic interests of the financing countries more than the beneficiary states. This urge for state capture (neo-imperialism) through political and economic control then supersedes the short-term benefits derived from the funded CVE programmes. Hence, the financial support for comes intertwined in the knowledge system of the supporting agencies, which do not only manipulate the local understanding, but also overlook the input of the respective local agencies or the local knowledge structures. The chapter, therefore, exposes structural bias in the constructions within the interventions for tackling violent extremism and how they are constituted in the African context. The next chapter examines some gendered dynamics emanating from the constructions and how these constructions, differently, determine the space for African women during the interventions.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SPACE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN TACKLING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

#### **7.0 Introduction**

Having noted in the previous chapter the high levels of dependency on international support for most interventions, this chapter analyses the circumstances under which a more gender sensitive and inclusive approach is possible. Specifically, the chapter focusses on the second sub-question which examines how the interventions generate structural barriers that undermine the space for African women. Capturing the voices of different actors and a number of excerpts from secondary sources, the discussions extract the dominant ideational, normative, and discursive perspectives in the African and other contexts, all of which shape the realities behind the programmes aimed at achieving sustainable peace. Emphasis has thus been placed on the role of local knowledge systems and the implications thereof for the inclusion of African women. The chapter covers different aspects of gender inclusion in P/CVE, challenges in the global programming of P/CVE, and the opportunities available in the local contexts.

#### **7.1 Gender Inclusion and the Space for Women in P/CVE**

Feminist research over the years has witnessed the advancement of different scope and spaces in which women are often explored, either as agents or victims of violence. According to Adeogun and Muthuki (2018), the diversity in feminist representations is a demonstration of how violent conflicts impact differently on both women and men, both of which gender groups are not homogenous too. These scholars also make a significant case for a meaningful and inclusive participation of women in the respective processes of creating peace globally. However, reflection on the “local turn” demonstrate that CVE programmes face significant obstacles regarding the local agency of women (Millar, 2020). The prevailing obstacles to inclusion can thus be understood from the local turn scholarship which holds that the “everyday” actions are construed characteristically as potential “sites of politics” (Millar, 2020, p. 311). As highlighted in an interview with a media practitioner, compounded issues are raised through the contemporary interventions:

In my opinion, the biggest obstacle to creating the kind of peace that lasts and that benefits most people is that negotiations for peace and similar initiatives are often assumed from a political perspective. At the first instance, ‘folks’ make peace deals to share power and in the next order, they make peace deals to share resources. Such is a common characteristic of negotiations taking place globally at the highest levels of decision making for peace. The reality, therefore, means that often, the general populations are absolutely excluded and exploited by both the political class and their surrogates in building peace. Worse still, gender inclusion is never a factor nor agenda of discussion during many initiatives. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

The views expressed by this practitioner not only make a critical case that warrants continued advocacy for inclusive processes in peacebuilding, but also provides insight into how and why inclusion is necessary due to the predominant gaps in the contemporary interventions. Based on such predicaments, “feminists have always used gender as an analytical tool to uncover the unequal distribution of power and privilege” (Adeogun & Muthuki, 2018, p. 83). Both power and privilege are key elements in the global surge of violent conflicts, and which informs the international frameworks for peacebuilding. Consequently, many interventions have been instituted on a gender equality paradigm.

Despite using gender as a tool for inclusion, women-led organisations have been used as a sure bet to challenge violent conflicts or in CVE on a false assumption that “women are naturally predisposed to oppose religious extremism”, or rather that “women are strategically useful as the ‘heart’ of families and communities” (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018, p. 14). Incidentally, interventions that are based on these assumptions have only served to reinforce the underlying stereotypes based on gender. As argued by one interviewee,

We must be cautious about the sensational language used in many interventions by the NGOs. We get it wrong by appearing to blame gender inequality on the wrong people – the men. Activism for gender empowerment does not mean attacking men in every sitting. It is the reason some interventions face resistance by those who feel unfairly targeted or unfairly discriminated. Another false approach is the usual misreporting by activists, often indicating that it is only women and children who suffer most from violent extremism or from other forms of violent conflicts, even where men are the ones who are affected or killed. Sensational reporting insinuates the lives or welfare of men do

not count. This makes many community actors, both men and women to fear joining advocacy programmes for gender inclusion, because it emerges as a campaign against men in all spheres. (Interview 005; FCCC - 5/06/2020).

The argument in the narrative confirms the idea suggested by Hudson (2009) about what it means to make gender consideration, specifically, in a peacebuilding process. Hudson argues, for instance, that pursuing gender equality should transcend a mere acknowledgement of “gender inequality and foregrounding women’s needs in peace processes, [...] to include seeing the differential impact of conflict on men and women and the unique knowledge and experiences that both groups bring to the peace table” (Hudson, 2009, p. 288).

Hudson’s argument portrays a paradigm shift from the traditional feminist descriptions during the 1970s, when the concept of gender was ushered into the universal “development discourse” (Christensen, 2013). In this new dispensation, therefore, the concept of gender no longer refers simply to the differences that define social relationships between women and men (Connell, 2014). It is a departure from theorising in the early dispensation in which gender differences were explained “by presenting men as a dominant group and women as the victims group” (Harcourt, 2016, p. 167).

Further, contemporary realities like transgender experiences and changing gender identities have also transformed the gender debates by introducing an additional set of multiple power relation frameworks that also go beyond “emotional and shifting identities related to diverging femininities and masculinities” (Cornwall et al., 2007, p. 3). These changes have put into question the traditional binaries of male and female identities as distinct categories of femininity and masculinity (Harcourt, 2016; Szanto, 2016). This understanding places gender in the perspective of transforming structures of masculinity and femininity that perpetuate or seek to mitigate violent conflicts (Unsworth, 2019). Hence, a community actor argues for cascading the conversations around inclusion in peacebuilding, as in a more specific perspective, to include women where there is a problem of inequality. An interviewee suggests that,

Interventions for peace should focus more specifically on offering more space to women. This considers that women are not necessarily a homogenous group, but considers the realities of the local women, like different levels of formal education, age, indigenous knowledge, and other aspects in which they differ. This makes it possible to engage adequately from a point of social justice and without prejudice about positions held by women in society or in the organisations, or profiling women based on their level of education among other circumstances. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

Evidence from the participant's voice demonstrates that inclusion can be sought or achieved without creating additional binaries, or which may reproduce other forms of inequality. Thus, changing the conversation from gender inclusion to specifically focus on inclusion of women in the peacebuilding processes should be seen as a process informed by the evolving realities and conceptualisations in gender and sexuality studies (Okech, 2019). Hence, as Harcourt argues, gender conceptualisation in peacebuilding constitutes a "changing and complex historical process that is shaped by, and is shaping, systemic, social and cultural" structures for intervention (Harcourt, 2016, p. 167).

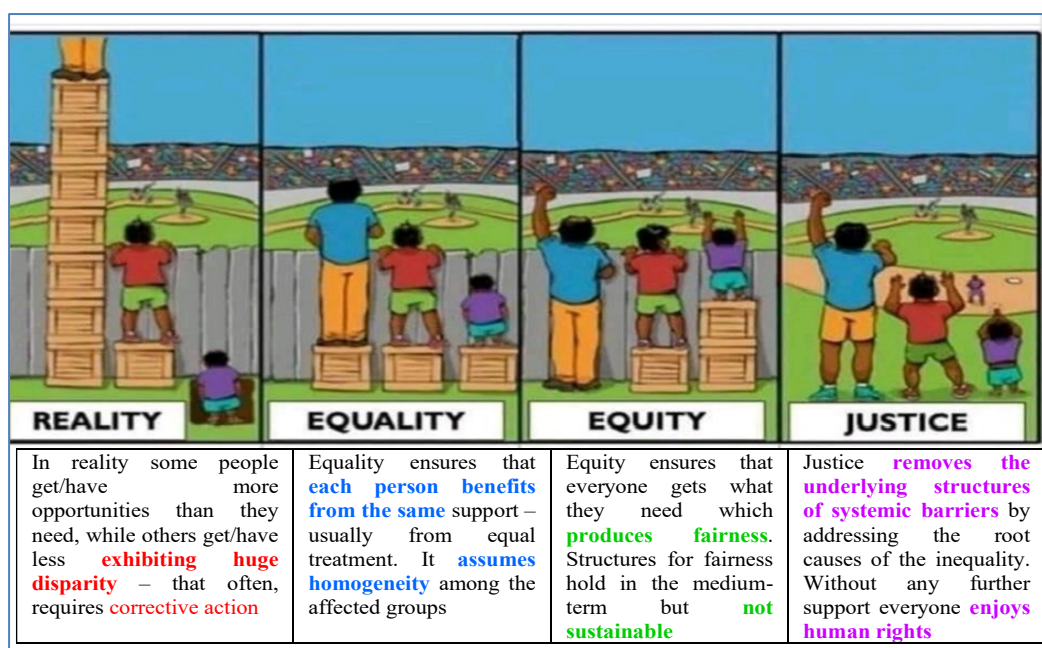
Consequently, inclusion of women in the interventions can be conceived of as a process towards achieving social justice and not as a parallel to, or in competition with, men's participation in P/CVE. This helps to transcend provisions that present women through simplistic slogans, such as that "women are less corrupt than men, [...] or that women are inherently peaceful" (Cornwall et al., 2007, p. 2). From this viewpoint, women's inclusion builds on contemporary constructions based on human rights, which seek to overcome the presentation of women based on their biological and societal limitations either "as mothers" or "as wives", subject to their family relations (Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019).

Hence, the space for women in peacebuilding and in countering violent extremism acknowledges women based on their individual and collective diversities as producers and custodians of knowledge in the interventions. This perspective holds that "implementers should understand how women can always be mobilised based on their capacity to manage conflict and efforts to preventing future conflicts irrespective of whether they are married nor have children" (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).



Cognisant that real-world scenarios are constituted by “natural and human” inequalities and diversities, the agenda for inclusion that seeks to change the reality for the purposes of improving societal welfare is of utmost essence (Hässler et al., 2020). McLeod and O’Reilly (2019, p. 128), for instance, observe that as much as the “Critical Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS)” caters for gender issues, the work by feminists has only received “token acknowledgement” by critical studies of peace and terrorism. This argument suggest the need for a “sustained engagement with feminist epistemologies, methodologies, and empirical analyses” to address marginalisation in the precincts of policy and practice of peace (McLeod & O’Reilly, 2019, pp. 128–130).

To this end, addressing inclusion from the perspective of social justice needs to tackle the underlying structural barriers beyond the scope of equality or equity both of which simply rely on the modification of institutional mechanisms (Edström et al., 2015). Social justice, thus, moves to transform the processes of engagement in which case the structures themselves are replaced, removed, or transformed into alternative systems altogether. The diagram below shows the different opportunities presented by such initiatives based on equality, equity, and justice through which situations of reality can be transformed. Wright (2014, p.3) argues that “Gender and peace are closely linked as peace is critical to promote gender equality, and gender inequality can also undermine peace and drive conflict and violence”.



**Figure 4: Pursuit of Social Justice**

*Source: Extracted from LinkedIn page of Saferworld (attributed to Wright, 2014)*

In Figure 4 above, the expression of reality shows that all people are different, given that individuals endowed or abled in unique ways. It implies that individuals and communities are affected differently by violent extremism in diverse contexts. Hence, there is no objective reality to be addressed by one intervention strategy, and so, both policy interventions for peace, and the initiatives to prevent and counter violent extremism, must be cognisant of these subjective realities (Botha & Abdile, 2019). In a similar pattern, women (and men) are advantaged or limited differently in the available spaces of participation within P/CVE programmes, in their bid towards taking corrective action to change the reality of violent conflicts (Sharif, 2018).

An agenda for equality, therefore, demands that support systems for the structured inclusion of women are put in place, such as by affirmative action, to reduce the gap in prevailing opportunities for accessing similar benefits and to enhance participation by women and men. For instance, Kabeer (2005, p. 13) argues for the modification of “social relationships that govern access to [opportunities] and resource in question that determines the extent to which this potential is realised”. These include the kind of constricted strategies used by liberals in peacebuilding

which focus more “on treaty commitments and the identification of equality as a foundational norm” (Guerrina & Wright, 2016, p. 293).

In contrast, strategies for equity would provide the structure for fairness by creating systems such as institutions that empower the disadvantaged groups based on their needs, irrespective of, or against, those who are perceived to have comparative advantage. This standpoint takes a cue from the views of feminists in the peace discourse based on their argument that inclusion can only be meaningfully realised “when universal values of equity and [of] securing the dignity of women are appropriated” (Chigudu, 2016, p. 19). The feminists in this discourse, as argued by Chigudu, (2016, p. 19), suggest that securing the dignity of women through expanded space for participation must be “re-signified through the cultural institutions and the collective memory of activists in their local settings”. Critical analysis by Nash (2002) also establishes that both situations of equality and equity have the potential to produce imbalances in favour of the disadvantaged group, a situation that may create further marginalisation in the long run. It is for this reason that Nash argues for a human rights-based strategy to be adopted by “poststructuralist feminists” towards the inclusion of women “as part of a long-term approach aimed at achieving equality” (Nash, 2002, p. 415).

Meaningful inclusion, therefore, can only be realised when the structures that cause inequality or inequity of participation in accessing benefits to all are removed. It is the reason an enhanced space for women in tackling violent extremism would pursue social justice as a primary framework. Eggert (2018, p. 5), for example, argues for an emphasis on a “social justice framework [...] to bridge the divide between academia, practitioners and communities who [are, or] often felt excluded and alienated” in the interventions. An interviewee exudes confidence that inclusion in P/CVE is possible. A practitioner who also doubles as an academic opines that,

In my view, inclusion is possible as much as the current peacebuilding *modus operandi* consists of mostly men. In reality, women are relegated to the periphery, like to undertake espionage roles for the community. But this imbalance can change if deliberate efforts are put in place to change the structures for peacebuilding. For profound

inclusivity to be accomplished, a grounded role of women, constituting a complete overhaul of the lenses used in viewing the women in peace processes, must be acknowledged. It is indeed preposterous to want to include women at the 'product' level of interventions when they were not part of the design process in the first place. (Interview 004; FUAN - 2/06/2020).

According to this participant, the approach for women's inclusion needs to go beyond the short-term measures of affirmative action limited to the considerations of the number of women participating in the programmes. Instead, the potential of women has to do with deliberate efforts to incorporate their subaltern voices in the design as well as in the operationalisation of the interventions. It is by recognising the space for women as knowledge producers that P/CVE and peacebuilding interventions will capture the appeal by Paffenholz et al., (2016) which makes a concerted assessment on the inclusion of women and their influence in the negotiations for peace. It is from this understanding that the unique experiences of African women in countering violent extremism are examined to understand the prevailing diversities that would require a different approach.

## **7.2 Inclusion of African Women in P/CVE Interventions**

As highlighted in the previous chapter, it appears rather obvious that the African Union and its respective state parties do not have a clear agenda for gender inclusion or a gender sensitive framework for confronting the huge challenge of inequalities in the peacebuilding and CVE programmes (Wamoto, 2016). Moreover, even the critical initiatives at the policy level do not respond adequately to the situation of women in Africa, either as actors in or as victims of violent extremism (Salifu & Ndung'u, 2017). This leaves a huge lacuna about the voice of African women who are engaged either in peacebuilding or in countering violent extremism. In addition, Njeri (2019) observes that prevailing initiatives and analysis of peace and conflict are characterised by a liberal state-bias which demonstrates little interest of the local diversities about women.

The pursuit of social justice is, therefore, of great importance if the unique challenges facing the peacebuilding architecture in Africa can be addressed for enhanced space of the women in Africa. Whether the situation of African women deserves special attention, a practitioner suggests that:

Interventions for P/CVE need to adopt indigenous knowledge which can be used to understand and to eliminate terrorism locally. The desired indigenous knowledge corresponds to empowering the respective local citizens and to uphold human rights in the mitigation of violent conflicts. (Interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020).

To engender sustainable processes of peacebuilding that considers local knowledge, therefore, entails mechanisms for inclusive approaches and theory for addressing unique and widespread social and political inequalities in the African setting. Ball (2019, p. 27) argues that “peacebuilding, from this perspective, is limited in time, space, and scope”. In the opinion of an interviewee,

Design of interventions must be well planned to consider the local differences. For instance, when designing an intervention, we must be cognisant of contextual reality, cultural sensitivity and include the local changes, like migration by some communities, all of which also contribute to the unique dynamics in the society. Unless such factors are considered then a critical point will be missed in the interventions. (Interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020).

It can be derived from the voice of a participant that African women might be actively engaged in actions for peace in CVE at every level, but without such efforts receiving adequate recognition, this could lead to missing the “local” voices of African women in the prevailing mechanisms. It is in such cases that Ball (2019, p. 4) argues that “their work is often not made visible and thus their voices and perspectives are sometimes not heard or regarded as credible”. Drawing from experiences in Uganda, Ball attributes the invisibility partly to the informality of some activities undertaken by many African women. This is attributed to women’s involvement that informally and continuously takes place at the grassroots or at the local community level, and whereby the actors themselves often do not view their work as in making peace (Ball, 2019).

The informality in the interventions connects to some hypotheses by Väyrynen (2019) drawn on critical feminist scholars, suggesting a new agenda for research with different “framing of peace” which can be applicable in P/CVE. Väyrynen (2019, p. 146) argues, for instance, that the new research agenda must aim at

grasping “the richness and fluidity of the everyday techniques of interaction that are relevant for peace”. To enhance the visibility of the missing voices, significant attention must then be put on actions that go “beyond representation” and instead tackle the dynamics of “everyday life against which relations unfold” in the context of African women (Väyrynen, 2019).

Taking initiatives for social justice portends an unambiguous understanding of what constitutes an African woman, and what makes them distinctive. This analysis acknowledges, first, the complexities of what it means to be African before one becomes an African Woman. According to Tamale (2020, p. 11), “Africa is a vast continent of fifty-four countries with diverse and rich cultures and different relationships to economies”.

It is in recognition of the multiplicity which abounds in the continent that Alumona and Azom (2018) suggest a contextual construction by theorising that being African emerges from the politics of identity. The politics of identity thus, describes how people choose to define themselves, or to be defined, irrespective of any ambiguities or contestations around the concept of identity. The conceptual debates about identity, in this regard, comprise relationships within which a people or individuals are defined or express themselves based on the collective basis of culture, language, ethnicity, or race (Alumona & Azom, 2018; Gumede, 2020; Saleh, 2015). Other modes of identity consist of social constructions like gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations and many other aspects (Saleh, 2015).

Ndhlovu (2008), therefore, argues that Africa and African identities can thus be described based on “numerous taxonomies” that include the peoples’ historical and geographical frames of language, religion, ecology, ethnicity, and biology. As pointed out by Tamale (2020, p. 10), being African depends, therefore, on the context by which different aspects of identity “exhibit important variations in ways [people of] the continent deal with birth, marriage, descent, death, succession, and so forth”. An interviewee adds a new twist to the debate suggesting that “being African is a personal conscience in which one identifies with indigenous knowledge, acts, and practices that define the Africanness in an individual or groups of individuals most who share common descent, culture, religion, and

lifelong belief systems” (Interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020). According to this view, therefore, “Africanness presents itself in the form of a lifelong conversation without an end precisely because of the ever-evolving, unfinished, unfolding multiplicities of conjectural African identifications at play in the grand drama of life” (Tamale, 2020, p. 10). African women can thus be described as those who identify as African or subscribe to the African identity and that manifests a sense of Africanness.

While it appears to be obvious, Zeleza (2006) suggests some caution in defining what constitutes Africa, arguing that it can be extremely problematic. Zeleza (2019b, p. 5) observes a kind of “double consciousness” among many African scholars, which complicates the understanding about what or who is African. The dilemma that encumbrances even the scholars who identify as African is “spawned by the contradiction between their high academic achievements and an inferiorised identity in ... the racial hierarchy, and between their alienation from Africa and the need to come to terms with their Africanity and to promote Africa” (Zeleza, 2019b, pp. 5–6). Tamale concurs that there is a larger complexity than it appears in reality, suggesting that, in a real sense there might be no such thing as Africa (Tamale, 2020), but only a derived identity, which in specific terms, originates as a product of a European gaze (Appiah, 1993).

While Zeleza (2019b, p. 5) suggests that African identity is connected to “the reconfiguration of global power”, Tamale (2020) depicts the complexity of being African to be associated with the colonial portrayals, which aimed at describing Africa as a space [mis]-presented in reference to the West. In the colonial reference, Africa is discussed with disapproval in a stereotyped discourse. It is portrayed as a continent whose people are underdeveloped, as a community incapable of governing itself, and as a society riddled with poverty and primitive cultures (Tamale, 2020).

Alumona and Azom (2018, p. 292) partly agree with the complexity, especially with respect to the colonality, given that “African nations we see today were products of colonialism”. However, they disagree that Africa does not exist, arguing that communities of Africa have distinctively existed, acknowledged

themselves, understood their values and boundaries, and respected and guarded their unique identities long before colonialism. Subsequently, “colonialism”, through its instruments of exploitation and inherently distorted knowledge system, is the main source of this “crisis of identity” in Africa (Alumona & Azom, 2018, p. 293).

Putting the focus on the experiences of African women, therefore, navigates the conceptual complexities through Afro-Feminist analysis to articulate the contributions and achievements made in P/CVE. Some interviews help in the understanding of what makes one to be an African woman, before exploring their role in countering violent extremism, starting by appreciating historical developments in the African society. A women leader in Kenya, for instance, argues during an interview that “we refer to both oral and written history to know whom [sic] we are” (interview 005; FCCC - 5/06/2020). She explains that “as a people, therefore, we refer to things which happened long time ago like colonialism, changing cultural norms, religion, and community migrations among others, and we learn from these historical experiences to know where we belong” (interview 005; FCCC - 5/06/2020). Additional explanation of the thoughts in this narrative, about historical events, is reinforced by Aderemi and Agaigbe who are in concurrence, stating that,

What bestows Africanness primarily, though not exclusively, is the common experiences of the pre-slavery, slave trade, colonial, and postcolonial epochs. The rich history of the trans-Saharan trade and cultural exchanges over many centuries. These, added to geography, neo-imperial exploitation and global marginalisation, are the most common denominators of Africanness in the twenty-first century (Aderemi & Agaigbe, 2018, p. 600).

Ngwena (2018, p. viii) delves into the dialogue of Africanness by trying to analyse the “reductive sameness, or nativism, in the naming of Africans”. By invoking the question of “*What is Africanness?*” Ngwena demonstrates how Africans have been identified or how they identify themselves. This analysis uses Foucauldian theory to challenge the idea of nativism, and instead, reimagine “inclusive ways” to identify Africans and to understand the changing norms of Africanness (Ngwena, 2018, p. 3). While referring to the changing identities, therefore, another interview



with a woman peace actor and community activist contends that “[of course] there are changes in the identities of Africans and by extension women of Africa” (interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020). The participant makes a justification that many changes in identity emerged “through colonialism, education, trade, and religion, hence, we have those cultural practices which have been overtaken by time, but many positive ones have prevailed, and they are the cultural norms which make us stronger and unique as a people” (interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020). The historical changes and recognition of evolving identities connects to the aspects of indigenous African knowledge system, as one more participant suggests that,

Clarity of whom we are comes with our local knowledge grounded in our traditions. Any woman who identifies, or who can be identified with this kind indigenous knowledge of Africa becomes the role model. It is the local knowledge that matters because there are some women from our society who feel ashamed to be African, but there are those who are well-known to have invested their strengths to practicing and promoting what is African like the Wangari Mathai’s of Kenya. (Interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020).

These fragile but grounded identities underscore what must be considered in the local interventions for meaningful inclusion. Significantly, the interviews demonstrate that being African is by no means the same as “blackness”. Instead, “to be African” is inextricable from “community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community identity” (Alumona & Azom, 2018, p. 301). Being African is therefore anchored on significance of one’s identity like social status pegged on gender, kinship, and multiple principles of cultural norms associated with Africa.

Consequently, the most common challenge in contemporary interventions, especially in the context of violent extremism that is crucially gendered, is the limitation in knowledge about the unique identities, which are directly tied to the levels of agency (Richmond, 2011) of the African woman in the interventions. Programmes which are designed based exclusively on Western indicators, due to the strict demands of international donor conditions (Miller et al., 2014), may thus contribute to the highest levels of inequality, exclusion and discrimination based on subtle structural barriers and knowledge paradigms which are alien to many

communities in most African countries (Ndlovu-Gatssheni, 2020). Moreover, women's contribution in tackling violent extremist is more likely to remain informal (Åkesson, 2020) or is simply overlooked "as part of their traditional social roles and responsibilities" (Ball, 2019, p. 4). Such assumptions can be more challenging because "extremist violence" is equally a more complex combination of individual and collective circumstances, some of which involve interpersonal relationships, collective attitudes, and community inclinations, as well as being more proximate to social, political, and economic issues (Kessels et al., 2016).

Because of these underlying differences, contributions made by many of the African women in tackling violent extremism are either unappreciated or unrecognised by practitioners of Western descent (Ball, 2019). There is no doubt, therefore, that these underlying considerations about unique identities (Rothermel, 2020) are critical to the realisation of UNSCR 1325, which is the outstanding instrument by the international community for understanding and addressing salient gender exclusion in P/CVE (Shepherd, 2020).

It is thus evident that by situating the voice of women through the socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts, as manifested in the dynamics of violent extremism. Hence, it is possible African women have been inadequately [re]presented, or simply, insignificant attention has been paid to their missing voices at the international level. Given the silence or missing voices creates a situation for momentary voices from other geopolitical spaces purporting to fight for the African women, leading to a different dimension of systemic exclusion (Chimakonam, 2018; Sabaratnam, 2017). Missing agency in the international framework is the clearest sign the voice of African women is either unrecognised or misrecognised in the contemporary interventions, as well as in the academic and policy research. Evidence of systemic exclusion in many interventions takes different forms, as one interviewee laments:

Our programming, in some ways, creates impediments for inclusive participation of indigenous African women in the international platform. To achieve justice, real inclusion must look at not just exclusion of a small group of participants at a moment. It must take meaningful strategies for sustainability. Again, since the work on countering extremism effectively commenced, like in Kenya, it has

been dominated by many actors from the global West. These are ‘women experts’ on secondment by the donor organisations some of whom were, and remain, at the forefront. I would refer to this group as ‘project tourists’ because they always move to different countries or regions as funding interests change over time as they take advantage to write a lot about Africa and extremism from their vantage positions. These privileges clearly show how international domination set the pace in both research and documentation about CVE and peacebuilding practice. (*A case story shared during interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020*).

The claims of comparative advantage by actors from the donor countries elaborated in this case study corroborates the views of Thompsell (2019, p. 53) that interventions for peace have become “big business for the leading state funders of UN missions”. It is on the same basis that interventions, often made through international aid, turn out to be an axis for engaging with Africa. Drawing from theorising of historical events, Thompsell (2019) connects these patterns used in some interventions to the agreements made during the scramble for Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which defined the pathways for coloniality in Africa. It is imperative that covert liberalism observed in contemporary programmes for CVE have, most likely, taken cue from such twisted historical claims by authors of the colonial script “that European conquest and rule was a humanitarian effort” (Thompsell, 2019, p. 56) designed to support Africa, as opposed to the fact that it was serving the interests of the West. In this aspect, interventions for countering violent extremism are often turned into instruments for imperialism – and not on the peace dividend.

Additional evidence emerges from interviews after probing why some practitioners would get more publicity than others while all the actors work on the same project at the same time. The participant explained that,

Due to their [experts from the West] privilege, their work gets published as opposed to what we do down here – and so, they continue to dominate while we are never noticed. Their work is done from boardrooms with a few agents on the ground because they also fear community contexts to be volatile. It follows, the visibility of our practice remains limited because practitioners are mainly action oriented at community level, and much of our work is hardly documented as independent outputs from the projects. Even those that are documented in reports are hardly published. It’s

therefore difficult to tell what is happening locally, especially the great work being done by the indigenous women, due to such limited international outreach. But I'm happy this situation has also taken an upward shift where local practitioners are now coming up with practice papers, which may not be academic in style, and we are also trying to document and publish in some online platforms. With this positive change, the work of African women will soon get noticed as we start to tell our own stories. (*A case story shared during interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020*).

The experience shared by this local participant, who works with an established national NGO, ends with great words of hope – showing the real prospects of women's work in the local contexts gaining increased visibility. However, the voice also provides detailed evidence about the uphill tasks that confounds practitioners from different geopolitical spaces. Based on isolated confines in the practice of P/CVE, there is a valid concern that African women are likely to remain “crowded out from the initiatives for countering violent extremism” (Eggert, 2018, p. 3) beyond their physical presence (Chang et al., 2015) in some of the interventions by international agencies.

Some of those conditions that come with donor funding, like in predetermining expertise based on superiority by race, linguistic advantage, and nationality, or simply based on personalised proximity to the donor community, perpetuates most of the structural conditions against the African women. Perhaps the most specific question is why most experts must come from the Euro-American context, and only a guided fewer come from African countries? Such systemic conditions are worsened by the international (Western) perspective when they are embedded in the theory of international political manipulations and fears (Dunn, 2004). Kaplan's (1994) travelogue is such a presentation in the situation in Africa that strongly seeks to perpetuate unfounded generalisations, and that reproduces more exclusion.

As Dunn observes, the most unfortunate thing is not just in the content of the travelogue, but in the logic on which the US government relied to shape their foreign policy on Africa (Dunn, 2004). This brings into question whether African women, who might have been engaged actively in local interventions either as actors or as participants, are simply counted in the programme reports while their voices do not necessarily count into the negotiation process (Paffenholz et al.,

2016a). In turn, this leads to an examination of the diverse circumstances in the initiatives which aim at tackling the escalating situation of violent extremism in Kenya.

### **7.3 Transformations in the P/CVE Programming**

Proponents of CVE on the global stage struggle to change the way interventions at both local and international levels are undertaken. In continuous pursuit of effective and acceptable responses to the escalating “national security threats”, activities in many countries have intensified with an aim of strengthening the prevention of violent conflicts. Despite the intensified interventions on the global stage, evidence emerges which demonstrates a huge gap between theory and practice in the interventions. This disparity is demonstrated by overlapping activities between the peacebuilding programmes and those for CVE. In practice, therefore, there is a departure from the theoretical conceptualisation, for both peacebuilding and CVE, which occasionally or quite often are inseparable and fully intertwined with each other. An interviewee captures this connection in practice:

During our programming as we undertake project implementation, peacebuilding mechanisms and CVE interventions are but two sides of the same coin. Hence, in practice one aspect cannot exist without the other. We, however, face the fundamental question as to whether the CVE interventions are about achieving coercion and suppression (as occasioned by the state) or to bring peace (as promoted by the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). (Interview 004; FUAN - 2/06/2020).

While the overlapping conceptualisations do not in any way alter the likelihood that the theoretical backgrounds of both peacebuilding and CVE remain worlds apart, it is important to acknowledge that the theoretical differences between the concepts may only be ideological, but they are not grounded in practice.

Abu-Nimer (2018), for instance, acknowledges this connection, arguing that the distinction between the two sets of interventions is merely ideological that is not compatible with practice, showing a close connection between CVE and peacebuilding. The Kenyan practitioners are therefore sharing one objective – *amani* (peace) – in all their interventions. Hence, violence by any other name,

source, or impact is treated as a threat to humanity whose solution in the local context is rooted in the African philosophy conceptualised around *ubuntu* (communal essence of being). Contextually therefore, indigenised interventions on P/CVE must be embedded in the “shared values of communal life and group solidarity” which distinguishes the African strategies from those designed in the epistemologies of academic “Euro-American societies” (Tamale, 2020, p. 11). A participant summarises this notion with utmost simplicity in the narrative below:

I would say that in our world [local context], it is a perpetual dance from one violent conflict to another. Interventions are also trained on a similar pathway from addressing causes to effects of violence and by always identifying a problem to developing a solution. It is a cycle of moving from breakdown to resuscitation and from conflict to negotiation for peace. The expected result is one – a perpetual search for peace. Therefore, violence from extremists disturbs our peace just as violence by the government forces do, and so, where there is CVE interventions, peacebuilding always exists. We only ‘brand’ the interventions differently in our funding proposals for purposes of eligibility criteria of different donor organisations. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

The participant’s voice breaks down the dilemma associated with practical interventions as often experienced between the securitised state intervention and the non-state negotiations and dialogue-based interventions. Therefore, it is valid to argue that globalised, as opposed to context-specific, interventions only differ in the language (brand) used between the elite experts and the immediate community actors in practice.

Globalised initiatives, historically, have thus been influenced by theories situating peacebuilding approaches as being inclined to engaging with “human relationships, justice, compassion, collaboration and cooperation, mutual recognition, and nonviolence” (Abu-Nimer, 2018, p. 14). This implies that unlike in CVE, “peacebuilding emerges from rather ‘idealist’ than the ‘realist’ power paradigm that dominates international diplomacy and international relations” (Abu-Nimer, 2018, p. 14). In contrast, CVE approaches are presented discursively as a tactful admission of the flaws realised in the GWOT (Karlsrud, 2017) to embrace non-militaristic, soft power approaches to violent extremism and counterterrorism. The principle behind the CVE approach is, therefore, situated more in line with “the

realist paradigm” (Abu-Nimer, 2018, p. 14), based on the doctrines of the state which identify security as an ultimate outcome of all interventions. Hence, it seldom pays attention to the tenets of nonviolence and justice (Qureshi, 2017).

These differences are not entirely visible in practice, as the participants suggest that both sets of interventions are but two sides of the same coin. This implies that the principles of nonviolence, compassion, negotiations, social justice, and mutual recognition between the parties are significantly applicable in CVE, as well as in peacebuilding. Essentially, “there is very little difference as actor in the CSOs do not differentiate between the two forms of interventions unless it is meant to attract donor funding” (interview 006; FUAPC - 7/06/2020). The subject of branding for purposes of winning donor funds emerges again – a pointer that the differences are situated elsewhere between the implementers and the donors who design the programmes.

According to this participant, “there is an intersection between CVE and peacebuilding because both focus on addressing underlying structural and cultural violence and to prevent conflict as they do in preventing violent extremism” (interview 006; FUAPC - 7/06/2020). It becomes evident, therefore, that in the views of national practitioners, the variations made between many initiatives arise from the changing patterns of international networks and partnerships, mostly through donor funding, in supporting programme activities intended to create peace by addressing violent extremism at the global and national stages (Eijkman & Roodnat, 2017, p. 176). It also confirms the situated dependency in the programmes for P/CVE in many contexts of the Global South, most of which are dependent, wholly, or significantly, on the support of the international community. It is the aspect of dependency that also provides room for continuities in the imperial control through foreign policies designed by the Global North, as strings attached to interventions in the Global South. In this regard, the international community, basically outsiders to the “local” contexts, seek to shape the structures of the relatively “weaker societies” into their own prevailing notions of “good” or “civilised governance” (Njeri, 2019, p. 38).

As opposed to the differences between interventions labelled as either peacebuilding or CVE, it emerges that in practice, the interventions are either indigenous or liberal state building. Indigenous perspectives are informally injected into the mainstream liberal paradigms controlled by the state and international agencies, but often are assumed as informal initiatives. One practitioner interviewed argues, for instance,

[that] the two sets of interventions are like unidentical twins. The difference is based on who wields the control at what level. On the one hand, donors and the state believe in state building – using assumptions of creating development and strengthening state security, while on the other hand, the local actors are the ones who meet the communities and develop reports. So, they coexist but pose different faces depending on whoever is talking. In my view, the interventions are similar because they aim at saving life and creating social stability. Without indigenous knowledge and support or ownership of the local people you will end nowhere. (Interview 010; MCTC - 20/06/2020).

The participant's voice insinuates some tension between the local actors on one side and their benefactors and the state on the other. The argument demonstrates that despite being happy to implement the donor funded interventions, some discomfort with the foreign ideas remains about the interventions. It also provides evidence that devoid of the assumption on the lack of subaltern voices, most interventions are embedded in the informal settings of indigenous knowledge, but the indigenous knowledge is relegated to the periphery of mainstream (formal) activity design. The resulting contextual imbalance and subjugation of such knowledge, coupled with the general assumptions by the international community about what works for Africa, connects to the argument that "Africa is a continent that is often misunderstood" (Schmidt, 2018, p. 1), especially by the West.

It follows that the intervention practices for P/CVE in Africa and in other geopolitical spaces of the Global South suffer from what Mac Ginty (2015) refers to as a potential saviour attitude, in the contemporary interventions by individuals and agencies from the Global North. Those perceptions conceived in the saviour attitude ignore, to a great extent, contributions by the local communities at the expense of training in more privileged donor developed strategies, indicators, and



frameworks for change. Knowledge which is indigenous to the beneficiary communities, consequently, get the least attention if any, and is likely to be ignored or rather be viewed as traditional by the agents of the international organizations (Mac Ginty, 2015). A practitioner working with a national NGO, for example, attest to this domination by the global West, indicating that “existing knowledge about violent extremism and of peacebuilding used here are all influenced by the Western culture, practice, and language” (Interview 002; MNPW - 30/05/2020).

Indigenous knowledge in P/CVE, thus, sets the platform for the missing voices of indigenous people in the inclusive, functional, and sustainable interventions for peace. It is indicative therefore, that indigenous knowledge provides the desired platform for the African indigenous women to effectively participate in peacebuilding through the decision-making structure of state and non-state agencies. Finding a guarantee for the substantial involvement of African women at the table of dialogue for peace-making provides a voice of subjugated knowledge as opposed to the current situation where the African women are either observers or get reduced to accept tokenism during negotiations for peace. Incidentally, many interventions provide very positive reports on how women have been incorporated in local programmes.

Despite a couple of positive reports about successful results in affirmative action and of gender mainstreaming in the contexts of programme implementation in P/CVE, there’s no doubt that the “production of knowledge” continue to be constituted through the “global liberal government” (Cuadro, 2020, p. 56). Hence, given the perspectives of liberal government interventionist approach, “the discourses mostly function to constitute a moderate liberal subject that actualises and reinforces a particular form of global governmentality” (Cuadro, 2020, p. 56). Based on this observation, it is apparent that the knowledge and practice of P/CVE programming has been shaped by international politics just as the associated terminologies around terrorism and violent extremism have been similarly determined (Martini, 2020). Instead, the genuine inclusion of women has been obscured by the resulting systemic failures of the liberal framework that ignores the space for informal and context specific initiatives, based on indigenous knowledge – where majority of the African women are situated. The obscurity can

be explained by a patriarchal “imperial legacy” in the countering violent extremism. Historicity of imperialism centres around issues of power relations nuanced in explicit practices that are built in the imperialist’s humanitarian antagonism. The lopsided power relations then determines existing connections between international and local practitioners (Charbonneau, 2014).

#### **7.4 Opportunities for Transformation Towards a Gender-Inclusive Approach**

The next focus of discussion argues for unconditional gender inclusion in CVE interventions by state and non-state actors, the enhancement of women’s participation as members of local community peace committees, and expanding the existing space for women in civil society organizations. Nwangwu and Ezeibe (2019, p. 173), for instance, advance the argument for increased inclusion of women in “political leadership, security agencies”. Guerrina and Wright (2016) similarly argue that actors at different levels in the P/CVE sector have crucial roles to play in enhancing gender and women inclusion. They argue for accepting enhanced space for women to play an active role in promoting their unconditional inclusion in all programmes for building peace in diverse contexts. This position is reinforced by women leaders at the community level indicating the possibility:

Certainly, gender inclusion is possible, if only there was political will. From my experience, women's contributions to peacebuilding have been viewed as being secondary to the ‘main event’. Women’s voices are largely excluded from the 'high table' where all the visible peace deals are made. For instance, even in the organisations led by local women, many decisions in designing the programmes are still made by the donors. Similarly, while there is value in working at the grassroots, deliberate space must be created for local women to participate at the broader and strategic levels decisions for every intervention. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

The argument by this community leader implies that participation cannot be guaranteed simply by the provisions of policy and legislative frameworks. The participants’ voice signifies a call for mainstreaming both gender and women inclusion in programming for CVE. This aspect of mainstreaming is, however, possible with a greater level of acceptance of knowledge constituted by women at the grassroot level, some of whom do not have as high levels of education. An understanding thus aims at having interventions that are designed to address the

structural conditions that allow meaningful participation as observed in the Fig. 5 below.



**Figure 5: Message for inclusion of women**

The call by DCAF has been recognised and applied by many organisations which acknowledge that many interventions may only aim at “fixing women” into the mainstream. Hence, achieving equal access to decision making opportunities and ensuring the active involvement of local women in designing the structures of power in the P/CVE programmes remains the most important strategy for adoption by the state agencies and the international donors (Hudson, 2005).

Nwangwu and Ezeibe (2019) thus make a case for deliberate efforts to create space for gendered inclusion from a rights perspective, arguing that the participation of women, just as for men and the transgender community, in the spaces for P/CVE interventions is both a civil and political right. Adeogun and Muthuki (2018, p. 83) also reinforce the observation, arguing that dominant “feminist approaches in the area of conflict and peacebuilding, must deliberately shift attention to the need for inclusion of marginalised women’s perspectives and on examination of the processes that have sanctioned these exclusions”. An interviewee points out that such approaches can easily work in situations where donors consider supporting initiatives and innovations made at the community level, instead of generating ideas for the local women actors to consider. The participant argues, for example, as follows:

Programmes should focus more on Community Based Initiatives. By community-based initiative, I mean ideas generated by, and at, the community level, and based on practical as opposed to strategic needs. Many of such initiatives offer more space to women because they are on the ground and some of them are already working. So, the local women, irrespective of their levels of education have a chance to engaged adequately make valuable contribution without prejudice about their education level or other circumstances. This bottom-up approach comes from the understanding that local women, have knowledge to address issues based on how they are affected, as opposed to when women who are more privileged and less affected by the conflict come with ideas and then ask for their (local women's) participation. (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

This line of argument exposes where the problem has been in the Kenyan inclusion frameworks, where affirmative action led by the activism of a few privileged women only benefits those individuals deemed to be politically correct (Booth & Unsworth, 2014). In Kenya, for example, a participant argues that “affirmative action for gender inclusion has been led by women who have political interests, seeking to be elected as women representatives but they quickly disappear from the local scenes making their roles to be misunderstood in different perspectives as being ‘saviours’ instead of being allies anymore” (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020). This shows how gender activism for equality and the strides made by government institutions through legal provisions have been exploited by the privileged at the expense of serving the eligible groups, and hence, perpetuating systemic exclusion of women. These are the reasons “some people in Kenya do not support affirmative action or quota system” (interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020). Similar frustrations emerge in the interventions for P/CVE where the meaning, conceptualisations and purpose of women's inclusion are seldom clarified by the privileged implementers.

The analysis underscores that women's role in P/CVE remains deficient if the understanding about their contribution is limited to women's position as “enablers or actors of violent extremism, [hence] the [field] is an understudied but critical contemporary issue” (Fink et al., 2016, p. 3). Subsequently, positioning indigenous African women in the critical realm of designing and in the implementation of programmes for P/CVE and peacebuilding, provides the much needed agency to address the “central challenge, which is the lack of evidence-based knowledge on

the precise role and impact of women's inclusion on peace processes" (Paffenholz et al., 2016, p. 5).

It is on this realization that the issue of "political will", by both the state and international agencies, keeps arising repeatedly in the call for gender inclusion. The calls include the provisions of UNSC Resolution 1325 which makes a powerful recognition of women's participation as a right in the process of building peace, and at all levels of decision-making in the interventions for preventing, resolving and transforming violent conflicts (Basu et al., 2020; Shepherd, 2020). Subsequently, True and Riveros-Morales (2019) argue that clear efforts be put towards achieving instructive inclusion of women in a manner that analyses their fundamental portrayals. This view demonstrates that a sustainable peace process remains a mirage unless the perspectives of women are captured in a constructive manner.

It is important therefore, to acknowledging the importance of inclusive approaches in both political processes and in the interventions as a vital step for regaining the lost and underutilised opportunities for harvesting the strength drawn from indigenous knowledge. Inclusion, as a right, and on the basis of indigenous knowledge, also provides room for securing all other voices of "marginalised societal groups" (Eggert, 2018, p. 1) other than women. According to Eggert, instead of processing ready-made solutions for women, it is of paramount significance to ensure that women participate actively from the inception stages of designing any peace project, up to the implementation of activities and in the reporting of outcomes, to "give them a safe space to debate the issues before coming up with solutions" (Eggert, 2018, p. 6). The participation contemplated by Eggert must be based on women's explicit experiences and independent ideas.

In defence of active participation, a study participant seems to advise against putting so much emphasis on perceived male domination, unless there is evidence, to avoid a situation where the inclusion of women causes the exclusion of men. She argues that "society is not a matter of "men only" or "women only" affair, and despite the so-called patriarchy, the call to be active citizens applies to both men and women. Hence, inclusion of one party should not subject the other to

exclusion” (Interview-FMEN 001 - 27/05/2020). This response provides the first case for having women’s voices included in the mainstream processes as a duty of citizenship without pushing men out on the mere basis of perception.

The argument by this participant synchronises with the need to recognise women’s voices as a right and not in comparison with men, but as embodied in the “theories of citizenship, a situation in which everyone possesses civil rights even where no cultural differences are pronounced” (Silbergeld, 1997, p. 170). Gender-inclusion, therefore, provides an opportunity to promote civil rights as a first step to tackling violent extremism. And so, “whenever one chooses to speak about violence or peace, we should be cognisant that every citizen has a role to play, which deserve consideration for inclusion” (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020).

Nonetheless, Nwangwu and Ezeibe (2019) argue that based on the realities of marginalisation in the peace and security sectors, emphasis must still be placed on increasing efforts to continuously involve more women than previously in the evolving debates on countering violent extremism. The increased involvement should take place both at the global and national levels by expanding the spaces in decision making at all institutions working on building peace. The expanded space at the institutional level facilitates the recognition of women as producers of knowledge who can make a significant contribution to advancing the “global knowledge” at the “critical front” (World Bank Group, 2014, p. ix).

An interviewee reinforces this quest to recognise the inclusion of women as knowledge producers rather than limiting our focus to the number of women participating in programme implementation at a single moment, by raising a critical view that “even where men and women may have the same access to, and opportunities in education, they are often skilled differently in the manner in which they deploy their expertise” (Interview 001; FMEN - 27/05/2020). Another participant provides additional views which position women at the centre of the community in terms of knowledge sharing. She suggests that,

indigenous women know what goes on in the family and in the community more than anyone else because of our community-based

activities. This is how we become more important in gathering and disseminating knowledge which can be crucial for tackling violent extremism. This central position and knowledge about issues and how they can be resolved make our role to be very essentially important. (Interview 016; FGAN - 4/07/2020).

These sentiments bring out three aspects that lay emphasis on women's position in society that makes gender inclusion necessary. One is the silenced presence, and the control women seem to have at the community level based on their daily chores. The next is the knowledge based on levels of information right from the family level and beyond. And finally, there is some connection with networks that women bring for information sharing. It is inevitable, therefore, that knowledge production and sharing becomes prominent in moving the focus on gender inclusion towards exploring women's individual capacities "which also points to the importance of broad-based and systemic change" for successful implementation of community-based P/CVE interventions (World Bank Group, 2014, p. 22, 28).

The need for gender inclusion, thus, cuts across the perspectives held in "social norms, laws and legal institutions as drivers of gender equality outcomes" (World Bank Group, 2014, pp. 22, 28). Subsequently, the principle of gender inclusion should be harnessed as part and parcel of human rights obligation that are developed through "social and working relationships [and as] communicated by speaking and writing, though language" based on existing community networks (Khan, 2014, p. 148). In some sense, language and gender relations are a central focus of several respondents. This makes it is important to focus on the gender inclusion that identifies women as custodians of language (mother tongue) and by extension, the knowledge constructed through language.

These perspectives bolster similar views about "the role of culture, language, and discourse" in knowledge production, and the consequent application in counterterrorism noting that "the limits of 'my language' are the limits of 'my world'" (Holland, 2016, p. 204). The aspects of systemic changes and social norms, therefore, bring into perspective "the construction of gender within the language of counterterrorism" and by extension, countering violent extremism (Holland, 2016, p. 205). As pointed out by an interviewee,

The benefits of having a gendered approach are numerous. Based on experience, interventions that are inclusive are better placed to address the gendered recruitment incentives into violent extremism. Likewise, gender inclusive interventions will tackle the underlying structural violence embedded in cultures and societies based on gender relations, language, and influence. In this regard, both women and men have their own unique contributions that they bring into the interventions. For example, women are pivotal in the identification of early warning signs of their family members as they can suggest the possible solution, while men would still play their traditional roles in negotiations. Interventions for the negotiation or mediation processes must, therefore, create the desired space for women to participate fully in the same processes as men. (Interview 006; FUAPC - 7/06/2020).

It follows in this regard that gender inclusion in tackling violent extremism needs to incorporate bottom-up information sharing, as opposed to the dominant donor (top-down) approaches in many programmes. This would ensure that the knowledge produced, of the form of locally generated ideas, does not remain purely at the level of the individual, but rather, is expressed and shared. Hence, the knowledge produced transforms from “being subjective to be intersubjective and back again” (Holland, 2016, p. 204). A connection between the different layers of knowledge sharing commencing at the grassroots, moving to the national, and finally to the international actors, should thus seek to incorporate the inclusion of indigenous knowledge upon which subaltern voices are entrenched and expressed as opposed to the knowledge system created by the donors which is then forced down to the community beneficiaries as a complete package. Using a decolonial perspective, Ndhlovu (2008, p. 37) argues that “the role of women would be incomplete because they both occupy an important position in any meaningful dialogue on African development and on Africa’s engagement with herself”.

## **7.5 Chapter Summary**

In a departure from the theoretical conceptualisation, both peacebuilding and CVE in practice seem to be inseparable and are fully intertwined with each other. However, findings demonstrate how practitioners struggle to navigate between peacebuilding activities and programs for countering violent extremism to get themselves relevant for international funding, irrespective of the local situations



that may need actions. The tension between the local and the international frameworks, therefore, generates systemic obstacles that ignore indigenous knowledge frameworks and hence, perpetuate gender exclusion. Despite the deliberate indecision in programming, the global agenda of international organisations is dominating many interventions. This explains how the control by international donors of the interventions for tackling violent extremism exclude the local initiatives which might be seen as underdeveloped or informal, based on the donor's indicators. This notwithstanding, it is in the space of the informal that indigenous knowledge is produced, shared, and actualised. Hence, crowding out indigenous knowledge as being informal and irrelevant obscures the space of African women, most of whom are in this space, as the interventions provide space for the already privileged – and hence the cycle of exclusion continues. Genuine inclusion of African women is based on local experiences and socio-cultural perspectives, which raises the prospect for understanding the local problems through the local practices and seeking to increase the chances for enhancing indigenous solutions to the African situation of building peace.

It is argued in this chapter that a gender inclusive approach needs to go beyond the short-term measures of affirmative action, which limits the consideration for inclusion to the number of women participating in the programmes. Instead, the potential of women has to do with deliberate efforts to incorporate their subaltern voices in the design as well as in the operationalisation of the interventions. This can be achieved better by recognising the space for women as knowledge producers in the P/CVE and peacebuilding interventions, and not simply basing the decision for inclusion on gender roles or on the flawed principle of family relations as mothers or wives. The next chapter tackles the theoretical question moving forward by developing a framework which seeks to explain how the space for African Women can be expanded, by mainstreaming subaltern voices in the interventions for CVE. The prospect discussed in the next chapter envisages a model based on hybrid knowledge production system, while building on conflict transformation and empowerment paradigms.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **ENHANCING SPACE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

#### **8.0 Introduction**

Discussions in this chapter are derived from the interpretations of findings and analysis already made in the preceding three chapters. Based on the background of P/CVE interventions and arising from the subsequent obstacles to both gender and women's inclusion in the local contexts, this chapter explores how the theory and practice of the Conflict Transformation Framework can be adapted to promote an expanded space for women based on an Afrocentric model. The determining factors about exclusion are, therefore, summarised to include institutional funding, structural relationships, and knowledge production systems. Designing a framework that incorporates the underlying influencers is contemplated to tackle the issues which have the potential to perpetuate imperialistic identity politics. Hence, the new framework aims at addressing prejudice or stereotypes, and explores how to deconstruct systemic coloniality in the CVE interventions. The analysis in this chapter also makes a claim to re-imagine the local interventions based on practical engagement with indigenous women practitioners, while protecting them from predispositions that promote supremacy of knowledge. The chapter proposes an empowerment model based on conflict transformation to embrace a hybrid system of both indigenous knowledge and Western paradigms and provides for conditions to expand a gender sensitive space for indigenous voices.

#### **8.1 Intersectionality Between Western Knowledge and Indigenous Models of Intervention**

Conversations regarding women and gender issues continue to gain attention in Africa and beyond. The debate revolves around “the complexities and contestations” that need to be addressed towards “making sense” of gender considerations for the purposes of attaining equality in many perspectives of society (Porter, 2018, p. 317). In the international arena, these discussions have been mainstreamed through the UN's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda (Basu et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2014; Olonisakin et al., 2010; Porter, 2018). Basu

and Confortini , for instance, argue that the WPS agenda provides a timely moment for reflecting on “the contemporary status of international politics” based on the provisions and pillars as stipulated in “the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325 2000) on Women and Peace and Security” (Basu & Confortini, 2017, p. 43). By referring to the UNSCR 1325 as a landmark instrument, Basu and Confortini's work demonstrates the high premium attached to discussions concerning gender equality as a priority area of awareness in the WPS agenda. However, WPS agenda thrives in a monocultural and Eurocentric process leading to a neoliberal knowledge production in the UN systems that is devoid of diversity concerns of indigenous communities. This challenge borders on imperial control given its top-down design with minimum space for subaltern voices. Consequently, the WPS agenda, despite being very progressive, still risks disseminating hegemonic knowledge that may rationalise domination and promote imperialism by powerful states (Akena, 2012).

Subsequently, while acknowledging that sustainability of efforts for inclusion in the peace and security agenda is crucial for women to enjoy equal rights and space as equal partners in preventing and countering violent conflicts, Holmer et al. (2018) argue for a more effective structure of participation. Transformed structures form a critical pillar in leading initiatives for recovery from conflict, in delivering relief services, and in establishing negotiations for long-lasting peace. Similarly, Kuehnast and Robertson (2018), in a study guide to the USIP intervention team, provide evidence gathered from implementing UNSCR 1325 globally which demonstrates that the participation of women in peace processes rarely tackles the issues of power structures.

This lapse in analysing power relations raises more concerns about the critical components for a lasting peace. Shepherd (2015) suggests in this regard that more women should be significantly involved, beyond tokenism, in the process for building peace. Such a move is more necessary especially in those initiatives led by international partners “to effectively build amicable relationships between entities in conflict” and by considering the “unique skill sets” and the geopolitical “experiences that women possess” (Shepherd, 2015, p. 59). A participant posits in the interviews that “programmes for preventing and countering violent extremism

fits very well within this space of peacebuilding, by seeking to enhance participation of women as a priority and not as a privilege, especially in areas where systemic and structural barriers still pose gender exclusion” (interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020).

Consequently, it is inevitable that the “international organizations [still] need to work toward ameliorating the representation imbalance and take gender into account when planning for peace [interventions] through legal activism that provides for the needs of women” (Shepherd, 2015, p. 54). These prospects are crucial as shown by evidence from the interviews, demonstrating contextual gaps in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. A participant remarks, for example, that,

I have attended trainings on UNSCR 1325 supported by many donors and by the UN Women since 2014 to date. I have also attended multiple talks, workshops seminars and conferences on WPS since 2018. It is from these trainings, workshops, and conferences that I realise, when they talk about participation of women, the focus is on the few privileged groups of women who can travel abroad for big events. No one cares about many women peace actors who are in the community. I have come face to face with these levels of exclusion where many of us attend the events, and only get lectures about the progress already made in achieving UNSCR 1325, and I wonder, ‘where is this progress?’ I wish we could be able to offer solutions and foster peace as Women of Africa. (Interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020).

The voice of this participant acknowledges that a lot of initiatives are ongoing in the struggle to achieve adequate and reasonable participation of all women based on the global WPS agenda. However, the intensity of interventions at the international level is yet to yield the desired outcomes of effective participation. Part of the challenge lies right in the systemic exclusion embedded in the racial and geopolitical representation in the agenda. Basu and Confortini (2017) observe, in this case, that the UN processes are characterised by slow and laborious methods for safeguarding inclusion of women within the structures for decision-making, which are also marked by multiple impediments. Shepherd thus cautions against confusing the demands for women’s “participation and inclusion with the ability to affect political change” (Shepherd, 2011, p. 510), especially in the geopolitical spaces where colonial structures still abound.

A systemic gap in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is attributed to the dominance of the interventions by the Western participants, some of whom are negligent about the local dynamics. A case of structural barriers that connects to the relationship between the West and the local set up is shared by a practitioner in the narrative below:

In the framework of P/CVE programming, inclusion of women in Kenya may help increase access to local spaces particularly within cultures where women are not encouraged to take leading roles in peacebuilding. However, the immediate problem that keeps local women from the frontline in Peacebuilding interventions has nothing to do with men or patriarchy. The situation is very difficult and sensitive. In many cases, it is the donor representatives, mostly *wazungu* ('whites'), and not locals [who] are always taking the leading roles by virtue of having direct contact with the donor organisations/affiliates overseas. The gender expectations of women thus, are overlooked in CVE programs just in the same way men from the locality are excluded. Here, gender-inclusive or sensitive interventions would seek to understand how and why women are involved in VE based on our unique conditions like culture, faith, belief systems and so on, but that is not the case. Instead, many participants in the interventions don't understand nor contribute to the discussions of concepts which are brought about by the donor organisations, and so, we must adopt them as they are. These interventions need to broaden the conversation and begin addressing racial exclusion in the programmes. Having voices of local women can, of course, promote less militarized CVE interventions since they would be better information collectors and disseminators at the community level. (Interview 013; FNARN - 26/06/2020).

Based on the evidence adduced by the participant's voice, it is consistent to argue that Kenya's intervention architecture for P/CVE simply constitutes a collection of activities, most of which are adopted and adapted uncritically by the local actors, without articulating our homegrown strategy (Oando & Achieng', 2021). Consequently, whereas there is a growing consensus that the participation of women is adequately catered for in the three pillars of UNSCR 1325, it remains an open question how best to develop adequate strategies for identifying entry points for women in the Global South to share relatively privileged spaces with their counterparts from the Global North (Haastrup & Hagen, 2021). Hence, an integrated and holistic approach to incorporate the voice of African women in

peacebuilding must espouse complementarity and navigation between the prevailing structural systems of the West, and the political, socio-economic, and cultural factors of the continent (Körppen et al., 2008).

The situation at different levels can get be quite demanding if appropriate capacities have to be engaged and for proactive actions to be taken in contextually unique spaces for CVE interventions (Botha, 2014; Lind et al., 2015). It is for this reason that a decolonial and coherent strategy for gender inclusion (Azmiya & Goldsmith, 2018; Iyekekpolo, 2016), which takes conflict transformation as a starting point, is deemed to be more appropriate. Accordingly, the need for more local agency becomes of essence, to be understood primarily as emancipatory despite the difficulty in conceptualising what exactly constitutes “the local” (Bargués-Pedreny, 2018). The analysis must, however, be framed within the context of a mutually constitutive local–international relationship (Kappler 2015; Paffenholz 2015) in the context of knowledge sharing and transforming the colonial structures in the local interventions. This begs the question of whether an indigenous intervention is possible, and whether such prospects exist locally in Kenya. The next section discusses the possibilities and realities behind such initiatives that might have been overlooked in different local contexts.

## **8.2 Designing Interventions Where the Voice of Indigenous Women is Discernible**

The role of indigenous women in local peace processes can be realised from multiple facets, ranging from the micro to macro levels without limiting the parameters that only assess participation at the national and international levels of resolving conflicts (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). Subsequently, accounts of inclusion highlight some historical manoeuvres and modalities for navigating entrenched structural barriers by indigenous women to thrive in spaces where multinational actors would be constrained (Appiah-Thompson, 2020). While the role of women at the micro-level has often set the groundwork for formal negotiations, it is rarely appreciated by the donor organizations, state agencies, and international organizations, all of which treat such initiatives as being “informal” (Uleanya et al., 2019). Nonetheless, it is the informal tasks, activities, and engagements by women in peacebuilding that count at the local levels (Angom,

2018). Often, indigenous women encounter several tiers of barriers that conspire against their involvement and participation. Unless tackled, the barriers always deny the actors the appropriate visibility and unquestioned access to the accruing benefits from the work at which they so toiled.

Subsequently, indigenous women's participation in peace interventions is often recorded at the lowest point of conflict in communities. Some of the interventions come at the earliest stages of the conflict, at times, even before they turn violent and hence, play a very important role in conflict prevention. In the voice of a participant, we can trace the initial actions that define active agency for women and define the momentum for enhanced space for indigenous women in peacebuilding. She notes first that "having a gender inclusive programme is the way to go especially having our local women as equal or as leading participants at the negotiation table" (interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020). This provides a commitment that suggests a departure from the current practice so that inclusion can navigate the structural context related to both the geopolitical and local institutional obstacles. To make the urgent case, the participant shares an example indicating that "in places where local women have taken lead in peace building, the results are different. A good example can be seen among our neighbouring Somalia women from whom we [in Kenya] have learned to take courage" (interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020). This interviewee finally provides a justification and a disclaimer noting,

[T]hough not yet completely accepted in that space, local women have bravely confronted their issues by challenging both the hostile government interventions and the surge of Al Shabaab militia, which brings some sanity. Women organised in clan-based clusters began to organise mediation between the warring factions at community level. The volunteer negotiators in the mediation process were among those women with no formal education but are highly valued and respected in our community. The initial meetings held in households succeeded in restoring relations between victim families by developing common understanding through mutual respect of family ties. This tells us, as Obama said in his visit to Kenya, that we cannot go to a football match and be expected to win when more than half of the team [who are women] are outside the pitch. (Interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020).

The initial initiatives cited in the interview bring into prospect the unique design of interventions based on the principle of care and in the context of the collective memory of the community (Mason, 2018, p. 3). This confirms that interventions which consider mutual respect, care, and understanding are more likely to succeed in restoring peace than the military approach which is always preferred by the government. The observation is in line with the arguments in the everyday peace scholarship. Vaittinen et al. (2019, p. 2), for example, explain “how the simple everyday activities can present the realm of the possible” to achieve peace among feuding social groups in the local circumstances of violent conflicts.

Quite often these “simple” interventions involve a sense of moral attitude change, based on the cultural or religious value systems between the conflict parties. Interventions based on care fits within the indigenous appeals to masculinity or femininity, while “grounded in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness” (Noddings, 2003, p. 2). By rooting for a shift from liberal to everyday peace research, Vaittinen et al. (2019, p. 2) therefore, propose a transformative initiative that moves from focusing on institutions to a focus on the people. In its place, emphasis should be made towards bottom-up approaches, which are built through social practices. Everyday peace scholars, therefore, argue that “localised and particularistic measures would go beyond negative peace and move towards people-to-people activities” to achieve positive peace (Vaittinen et al., 2019, pp. 2–4).

Consequently, accommodating the local turn in the CVE interventions based on subaltern voices illustrates how the opinions of (local women) actors, which have been customarily marginalised by male domination in society, can gradually and finally get an expanded space (Tuso & Flaherty, 2016). Unfortunately, whatever gains are made often gets constrained by a hidden but vicious system of imperialism that silently locks out indigenous voices based on the actors’ levels of formal education or worse still, based on their ability to speak the colonisers’ languages. These, imperialistic knowledge systems, as discussed in earlier chapters, disregards the knowledge expressed by the indigenous groups as “informal” and immeasurable.



Women actors, most of who represent subaltern voices, then face a double exclusion because of both their “minority” status and gender identity. Hence, the missing voices of women deserve to be accounted for in the pursuit of UNSCR 1325 commitments (UN Women, 2017). While the term “indigenous” may also remain controversial given the diversity among the local groups in different subnational contexts, Tusso and Flaherty (2016) observe that it becomes more appropriate to describe the actors by their geopolitical space. For instance, African women can be described as indigenous based on their lineages through which they identify with the local context. Likewise, African women can be described based on whether they attribute their identity to Africanness as they live and work with communities (Ball, 2019).

Substantively, therefore, subaltern voices of women and indigenous African (women) actors share a common experience of marginalisation both in systemic and contextual terms. Undoubtedly, therefore, some of the intervention frameworks designed or implemented by indigenous African women still struggle to find the space of recognition within the parameters of international CVE programming. As observed by de Sousa Santos et al. (2008), it is not possible to claim any achievement in global justice unless the contextual cognitive justice is acknowledged globally. Some leading lights of peacebuilding theory (Lidén et al. (2009) raise pertinent questions about whether peace actors who may not identify with the ideas of liberal peace can be involved in, or excluded from, a more pragmatic process. The discussions in the next sub sections provide insight into how the indigenous African women have navigated the terrain of tackling violent extremism towards achieving sustainable peace. The examples discussed in the next subsections include a sample of interventions, not as alternatives to Western interventions, but as a demonstration that indigenous strategies are possible but seldom recognised.

### **8.2.1 Invoking the Traditional African Sacred Value System**

In seeking commitment of the aggrieved parties to convene at the negotiation table, indigenous women have successfully invoked the powerful cultural and religious value systems. Noting that sustainable peaceful solutions are rarely achieved in political settlements, indigenous women have worked in collaboration with

religious leaders and the council of elders to set rules and procedures based on sacred values, which are binding even without appending of signatures by the parties. An interview with a practitioner in the NGO sector reveals how “women have been quietly doing a lot of shuttle diplomacy in many communities and holding ‘backdoor’ negotiation with the militants without going public” (interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020). The participant also notes that, “after slowly gaining trust of the aggrieved parties, they have been successfully, but gradually dismantling some of the structures that harden the hearts of the extremist group members” (interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020). This explanation shows how strategic and gradual the indigenous interventions can be, which explains the challenge of involving international actors. Again, it acknowledges that trust building is a slow process and might be frustrating for the international financiers to have such patience to wait for the outcome.

In a clear departure from the Western Knowledge systems, negotiations that arise from traditional or religious oaths are often oral and may not necessarily have sufficient “evidence” in the Western context for verification. The interviewee, who is a long-term community-based practitioner, asserts that “in cultural terms, oath-taking during peace negotiations holds greater value than the signature on paper. It is based on the fear of the unknown that is rooted in a curse but mostly enforced by isolating, as an outcast, anyone who fails to comply to the terms of the oath” (interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020). Attribution is made to the efforts of women in such negotiations for peace, as the process is outlined below:

Women have been doing these interventions since time immemorial in our communities. We ride on the cultural norms to reach out to the families of those people recruited by violent groups. Then, we form networks of women groups that creates an avenue for negotiating with the recruits to abandon the course, as we negotiate with their leaders for mercy. We (women groups) also establish alternative sources of livelihoods for returnees to help them integrate easily into the community. Some of our negotiations have saved lives as the militias give us time to issue warning about improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that have been planted on the roads. Once the militias commit not to do anything they have always obeyed. That is the first step towards preventing and countering violent extremism. You can’t achieve anything better by deploying the armed police. (Interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020).

According to Atran and Axelrod (2008, p. 222), “sacred values incorporate moral beliefs that drive collective actions in ways that otherwise seem dissociated from prospects for success”. In the local context, such interventions often ride on moral belief systems, which are integrated in the negotiations for peace. The actions taken in most affected areas are interwoven into the cultural oath-taking or in the shared religious teachings of the Quran. By committing to sacred values, therefore, whoever breaks these agreements may risk harsh punishment sanctioned by the cultural and religious norms that no one would dare challenge. The traditional practices based on sacred values of African communities would guarantee that “for all human actions, there is a certain logic to those values that impel them” (Aidoo, 2009, p. 47). Hence, compelling factors in the indigenised interventions for peace harness those values that work in each ethnic context to alleviate the threats of violent conflicts.

### **8.2.2 Trauma Healing and Social Transformation**

Another form of indigenous intervention framework can be derived from examples of practices popular among women of Somali ethnic groups. It is notable that the Somali ethnic community has been targeted by some of the most challenging interventions on CVE both by the government and the NGOs. More than any other communities in Kenya, the local populations have often expressed fears of being profiled due to their ethnicity, proximity to Somalia, and their religious affiliation. Interviews reveal how women, faced with such an impasse, get involved in resolving violent conflicts and excel as mediators through local and informal trauma healing frameworks:

Indigenous groups of women from the villages, apparently, revived some long-established cultural practices, some of which have been at the brink of neglect, as renewed strategies for resolving contemporary violent conflicts. In the Somali community, there are cultural practices that have been revered over time like “*Galeysa* (traditional dance where men and women recite choral verses and dance), *Shabaal* (Clapping competition), *Xirsi gur* (Collecting milk for the poor households and village guests), *Gurigeyn* (taking the bride to her home) among others. The most recurrent among these practices and has been adopted by women in peacebuilding activities across the divide, is the tradition known as *Abay Abay*. This practice would

translate in literal as ‘sister to sister. It is an event where groups of women in the community, most of whom share kinship, come together, and share their grievances before agreeing on the resolution framework. (Interviews 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020).

During the event of *Abay Abay*, a group of women from the same or different clans converge to support each other and open dialogue for peace. Such events also take place to offer blessings to pregnant mothers known as *Madax Shub*, hence:

it becomes difficult to be stopped even when the antagonists from the involved parties may not want to negotiate. During the ceremonies, women from different clans apply incense on each other, especially in circumstances where the hosting household has been directly affected by violence or is expecting a baby. After gaining trust of the affected families and sharing the implications, women leaders would start making concrete discussions on what needs to be done so peace can be achieved. Women would then agree on actions to be taken as they (women) assign appropriate tasks to each other based on expected solutions. (Interviews 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020).

This strategy is just but one example, which shows that each community in the African context may still have some practices from which the implementors of CVE programmes can learn to initiate sustainable interventions. The crucial lessons drawn from the nature of these indigenous intervention frameworks is that one doesn’t need advanced western education, always, to be a successful actor in peacebuilding. It also shows that many interventions can be designed at minimum cost that may not be too expensive for the state and local authorities to finance their own negotiation activities. The principal idea might be to have the government and NGOs support such initiatives that already exist within the community structure, even where new initiatives have been designed or supported by the international community.

What is important is then how to develop trust and to encourage the participating parties to open up and talk about the issues of violent conflicts that affect them and suggest options for resolution. Most importantly, the interventions made in such arrangements would help with trauma healing among the most affected. It is thus evident that indigenous women, with no prior capacity-building by the international

agencies, have managed to initiate and enforce dialogue platforms with elders and religious leaders, and often convinced aggrieved parties into dialogue, negotiations, and reconciliation for peace through soft appeal for a truce in the traditional way.

According to Porter (2007, p. 95), conflicts escalate when “adversaries refuse to engage with each other and where the ‘other’ is dehumanised and feared”. The activities that go through *Abay Abay* events shows it can also be a better strategy for overcoming dehumanising circumstances, which often arises from military interventions by the government, based on its contextual acceptance and given its roots in common belief systems. The initiative provides the unchallenged space to women, through “social reconciliation” which gains its strength in the traditional systems that bring communities together, hence, reconstructing peacebuilding through the systemic “turn to indigeneity which, at best, succeeds in enabling the endeavour of social transformation at the root of peacebuilding” (Randazzo, 2021, p. 142).

### **8.2.3 Enhancing the Sense of Belonging Through Care and Compassion**

It is commonplace that interventions for countering violent extremism have attracted quite a heavy investment, spearheaded by the government (Cannon & Pkalya, 2017). The state-led interventions, most of which involve deployment of the police and military forces, have occasionally set communities and the government at loggerheads. In some cases, Al-Shabaab sympathisers have used the resulting grievances to spur on community anger against government interventions which employ excess force (Chome, 2016). These interventions have impeded the situation of peace, and the interventions to achieve peace, because the state and Al Shabaab are seen to be on the same side of excessive violence, due to claims of “target killing of Somali ethnic and Muslim populations” (Lind et al., 2017, p. 119).

In some difficult circumstances, interventions by INGOs have not helped, especially in situations when they are perceived to be collaborating with the government, or whenever the trust in the community is betrayed. To overcome these circumstantial losses of life without acrimony, the local communities turn to the power of mourning (Butler, 2004) as a mechanism for attaining relief from grief, and as an entry point to calm animosity within and against the communities.

This unusual intervention brings into perspective the power of personalised care and compassion to start a dialogue for peace even after a bloody encounter (White, 2007). As noted by an interviewee,

Government interventions can often make situations to be very difficult for us who are doing peacebuilding at the community level. Their 'shoot-to-kill' orders help no one as people [who] are real terrorists are never afraid to die, but whenever an innocent person is killed due to misplaced violence by the state, the other community members like to avenge their death. And so state violence becomes the real source of extremism in such circumstances that generates more violence by community members. In this case we consider violent extremism by the state as terrorism and should be called just that. Why do we sugar coat it with words like extrajudicial killing? Because all of them, whether by Al Shabaab or state agencies, are killings from extremist approach, we must act swiftly to ease the anger in the community. (Interview 022; MGCC - 27/07/2020).

Like in many African communities, Kenyan ethnic groups are always committed to ceremonies intended to confer utmost respect and dignity to the departed souls (Wamuyu, 2013). In a sharing mode, many family and community members are often swathed in compassion and continuous consultations (White, 2007). While the contemporary burial ceremonies are done according to the religious rites, mourning is always a cultural and communal ritual that can always last for quite a prolonged period after burial of the dead:

During violent clashes, deaths and injuries are the common ways in which members of the communities get affected. Most people are killed from attacks by the Al Shabaab but when the security agencies arrive to help, additional people from the community are always killed during law enforcement. It is during these unfortunate circumstances when we resort to one key action, which is mourning the traditional way. It is painful and many people are helpless, so mourning takes centre stage, and mostly it is women who lead the process. I can say with certainty that we have seen a clear difference in the approach used by local women when they use mourning to commence reconciliation and to convince the men against revenge. They always say that revenge is left to God. The elaborate and emotional initiatives start by offering dignified send-off to the dead. It also extends to collective mourning, offering care and support for the bereaved, especially orphans, and to consoling with the elders whose families are most affected. All these interventions bring about relief from personalised care and compassion, which often generates genuine realisation and concerns for negotiating peace in whatever circumstance. (Interview 007; FUAN - 9/06/2020).

Depending on how funerals are handled, and the kind of emotions generated, the mourning period can be used to evoke more grievances and cause more violence. In contrast, the situation can also be harnessed to generate conscientisation which brings calm and reasoning (Butler, 2004). It is from this knowledge that women from the local peacebuilding groups have often converged to observe the ritual of mourning together with fellow women as they make calls for peace where mutual understanding prevails. Such a practice is what Porter (2007, p. 93) refers to as the “ritualised and shared suffering”, which, she argues, was observed by both Hutu and Tutsi women to expand the space for dialogue for peace in Rwanda during the genocide. The voices of these two participants above, therefore, demonstrate how “commemorative mourning rituals”, as opposed to living in denial (Szanto, 2016, p. 317), can be harnessed for the willingness to open dialogue and to begin negotiations for peace.

It is notable indeed, that severe painful memories from violent conflicts can prolong the destruction in people’s lives, especially where terminal injuries and displacement of populations are experienced (Coyle, 2003). There are thus possibilities of collective victimhood perpetuated in the collective memories of the affected communities (Cardozo & Maber, 2019). The emerging complex experiences in such circumstances, therefore, call for an intervention that would tackle both collective and competitive victimhood and facilitate forgiveness (Shnabel et al., 2013), a situation that often is untenable through the formal interventions like in those financed by donors due to the time and resource limitations.

Consequently, these practices enshrined in indigenous systems of knowledge become a priority. The discussions and decision-making platforms during these circumstances embrace wide and inclusive participation of community members, irrespective of gender, age, or social status (Porter, 2007a; Shnabel et al., 2013). In each case, everyone shares in the abundance of communal care and compassion in the spirit of *ubuntu*. As observed by Aidoo, based on evidence gathered from the interventions initiated by community members during and after the civil war in Mozambique, “a remarkable and rare act of compassion, wins towards forgiveness

and reconciliation” (Aidoo, 2009, p. 49). Like in the other two intervention frameworks that are designed in the indigenous contexts of knowledge, minimum costs would be involved in such interventions which are embedded in care and support, and at the same time, everyone in the community gets to be involved in one way or the other.

#### **8.2.4 Non-violence Approach in the Indigenous CVE Interventions**

The most fascinating aspect of the indigenous knowledge emerge from the three sets of intervention (as discussed above) namely, sacred value systems, care and compassion, and trauma healing. The design of these interventions offer a unique intersection between the “informal” activities presented through personal touch, and the formal negotiations for peace, by sharing so much in common with non-violence approaches. Broughton (2013), in articulating the non-violent elements of building peace amongst the indigenous communities, uses “approaches based on compassion” in Central Africa (Broughton, 2013, p. 8).

It is notable from the types of interventions discussed above that indigenous communities do not apply any form of coercion, force, or violence in order to succeed. The interventions thus, demystify the fictions that are used to justify militarised interventions as witnessed, mostly, in the government CVE architecture. At the same time, they prove that international funding can only be a source of facilitation, but not the primary source of both ideas and funds. Eventually, it is notable that interventions designed from indigenous value systems, which are more likely to be overlooked for being underdeveloped or seen as being theoretically untenable, can still form the mainstay of P/CVE interventions based on the principle of nonviolence. Subsequently, it is evident that,

Compassion based work is what changes the peoples’ hearts and mind. Consequently, the transformation in hearts and mind of the community acquires new peaceful, respectful relations. Sometimes a change in heart can motivate people to negotiate in good faith or to recognize rights or abide by just laws, reducing the need for coercive strategies. Nonviolent direct actions, even those which seek to force a stop to something, are often designed to appeal to human compassion, to open a new opportunity for dialogue. Along with encounter and dialogue programs, trauma healing and healing of memories are compassion-based work. (Broughton, 2013, p. 10).



According to Clements (2016, p. 134), a move towards strategic “compassion becomes crucial because the world is far too small to accommodate the application of dominatory, hegemonic, authoritarian, and bullying politics”. It is the art of dominance and hegemony which prioritises state building and structural bureaucracy, and which impedes the liberal peacebuilding approaches (Wolff, 2015). Nonetheless, liberal peacebuilding remains the most popular approach with international donor agencies and the state apparatus.

Another crucial feature of the indigenous interventions is in their kind of randomness. Randomness here implies that the interventions can commence at any time based on a cultural routine or they can be triggered by any adverse event, but it is not easy determining when the interventions will end. This makes such interventions to, at times, be incompatible with donor funded programmes which must have clear start and end dates. Perhaps by defying the pressure of time, these interventions can access such personalised strategies to change the hearts of communities. As opposed to the frictions faced with, or superficial attention witnessed in, international frameworks of peacebuilding and CVE, most of which are built on the premise of state-building, these activities are fluid and flexible but determined to achieve the anticipated outcomes.

These distinct characteristics make the indigenous knowledge paradigm to be outstanding as a proactive and powerful tool for building trust in the theory and practice of interventions for peace. Through such paradigms, trust becomes the medium for achieving sustainable peace among rival parties. Rothbart and Allen (2019, p. 2) argue in favour of indigenous interventions, noting that many traditional practices upon which the activities are modelled are “centred on the human rights agenda and are grounded on bottom-up practices of everyday peace”. The outcomes of such an indigenous peace process gains its sustainability from the scope of ownership, as it is an intervention led by the “civilians [who are themselves] caught in the tumult of violent conflict” (Rothbart & Allen, 2019, p. 2).

Mac Ginty (2014, p. 549) upholds that everyday peace is an “important building block of peace formation”, which demonstrates how interventions based on indigenous knowledge can be reliable in CVE. The strength of the non-violence approaches, which are adopted in the indigenous strategies transcends the formal conflict-calming actions, and hence, encompasses positive activities associated with conflict transformation (Mac Ginty, 2014). Therefore, the hope for sustainable breakthrough in the CVE interventions by indigenous women builds on the call to learn from cultural practices as a vital factor for influencing the empowerment of women, and to overcome the structural barriers that exist (Chimakonam & du Toit, 2018; Huis et al., 2017).

### **8.3 The Paradox in Knowledge Production Systems for P/CVE**

Some of the proactive interventions by indigenous women in the Kenyan context can best be expressed in the history of the late peace laureate Professor Wangari Maathai (Noma et al., 2012). Prof. Maathai faced significant political impediments to successfully connect activism for peace, democracy, and sustainable development. In her book, *The Challenge for Africa*, Maathai (2009) provides the connections between peace, justice, and the role of women in the struggle for political change. Unlike many other women who lead such struggles against violent conflicts in communities, Wangari Maathai enjoyed the privilege of an advanced level of education, and distinguished recognition by the international community. It is possible many other indigenous women have endured similar efforts within the local architecture for peace and security, but their efforts lack recognition with no visibility.

The interventions based on indigenous knowledge have thus weathered the harsh terrain, plagued by clashing knowledge paradigms in contemporary peacebuilding frameworks. Asmare (2020) therefore, argues that in conflict situations where multiple peace actors follow incompatible agendas, the actors are doomed to fail or work at the disadvantage of each other. This kind of gap exposes the contentions between the Indigenous and Western paradigms that also define the clashes in contemporary peacebuilding frameworks for many contexts of the African continent. For example,

Customary conflict resolution institutions, especially in Africa, are experiencing a revival along with debates about their effectiveness in the current modern environment. [However,] discussions about mechanisms of conflict resolution on the African continent have long opposed traditionalists to modernists. On the one hand, traditionalists affirm that indigenous rituals and proverbs prevent and resolve local, inter-regional, and intercommunal conflicts. On the other hand, modernists argue that these patriarchal traditional systems often silence the voices of women and youth and instead emphasise the key role of elders. (Asmare, 2020, p. 3).

While making an observation to deconstruct the contentions between the contemporary and indigenous standpoints in peacebuilding and counterterrorism, Oando and Achieng' (2021) argue for the need to transform the existing interventions "towards indigenous frameworks", while remaining cognisant that systems of coloniality do actively perpetuate the knowledge systems. This argument points out, for example, that Kenya's counterterrorism and peacebuilding architecture "do not reflect the reality of the country's history and struggles. In the contrary, the global dynamics and forces, articulated through global knowledge production systems, are dominated by the powerful Western ideologies, assumptions, and stereotypes" (Oando & Achieng', 2021, p. 369).

The onus, therefore, shifts to the position of African and decolonial scholars like Maria Lugones, Walter D. Mignolo, Cheikh Anta Diop, and Anibal Quijano, most of whom propose to challenge the predominant "Eurocentric historiography" in many fields (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 882). By seeking to unravel the cognitive empire and intellectual imperialism that confound the western knowledge systems, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020, p. 883) interrogates "why the African genealogy of decolonisation scholarship is often side-lined". This radical viewpoint delves into "epistemic debates and politics of knowledge", which then underscores the existence of "the primacy of epistemology as a creator of ontology" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 883).

These debates and contentions which define the paradox between the knowledge systems in the Global North and South, seek to deepen the analysis in the dynamics for decolonising the politics of knowledge production, and consequently, prevailing cognitive empires that would influence both the interventions in P/CVE

and the desired goals for a gender inclusive approach. Tamale (2020, p. 20) notes however, that “de-coloniality” as a concept “connotes an active action of undoing or reversal of colonialism”. She observes that “for Africa, the concept is heavily burdened with deep histories, many of whose consequences are irreversible” (Tamale, 2020, p. 20). Hence, great caution must be taken with clear reflection about what needs to be achieved in each context. Demonstrating the complexity that confounds the concept, it is acknowledged that,

[Decoloniality] speaks to the dismantling of several layers of complex and entrenched colonial structures, ideologies, narratives, identities, and practices that pervade every aspect of our lives. Most of these systems have become commonplace, if not common sense in our day today lives among them are religion, language, education, dressing, music, media, [and] sports. We witness the legacies of colonisation every day when our presidents beg for aid from Western capitals; we refer to the largest lake in the continent as Lake Victoria; the riot police sprays tear gas into a peaceful crowd protesting oppression; a teacher punishes a student for using their mother tongue; and people use dangerous skin ‘whitening’ products to bleach their skins. (Tamale, 2020, p. 21).

Indigenous African knowledge, on the contrary, forms “an integral part of traditional belief systems, where folklores, myths, sooth sayings, religion, education, socio-political organisations, and other aspects of African culture” are the forms of transmission (Fairfax, 2017, p. 3). The point of departure is based on the conspiracy that all these paradigms are not fully recognised, in the Western paradigms of knowledge, for inclusion into the universal methodologies for creative, logical and critical examination of theory and practice (Gumede, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). It follows, therefore, that “Africa must think beyond deconstruction, but more specifically, consider the agenda for decolonisation [which] involves re-construction” (Tamale, 2020, p. 21). To achieve reconstruction in the realms of peacebuilding and countering violent extremism, the African systems must collectively generate counter-narratives embedded in African knowledge systems that can build trust in the intervention frameworks (Ike et al., 2021).

The emerging knowledge frameworks must seek to address the project of decoloniality as a fundamental step towards restoring both the knowledge systems and dignity of the African communities (Okech et al., 2021). The process must

endeavour, not on naivety in the hope of returning to “a romanticised pre-colonial past, but rather, [towards] reconstructing the relationship between African people and the colonisers” (Austin, 2015, p. 490). This paradigm shift is inevitable because “the world has changed tremendously, as have the people of Africa” (Tamale, 2020, p. 21), which provides no room or excuse for creating a parallel or alternative hegemony in the knowledge production systems (Kithinji et al., 2016). As observed by Tamale, “the complex identities that African people have forged as a result of multiple experiences, affiliations and multiculturalism, would indeed render them ‘aliens’ in the pre-colonial contexts” (Tamale, 2020, p. 21).

The threat of alienation becomes more obvious if the African indigenous knowledge is presented simply as a counter hegemonic expression to the Eurocentric paradigms. It is therefore, necessary for decolonial scholarship to sharpen the consciousness about coloniality, but also remain cognisant about the impossibility of rejecting Western knowledge in its totality (Quijano, 2007). In recognition of the fundamental task, the next section explores a framework based on African knowledge that provides room for hybridity in the knowledge systems in the interventions for peacebuilding and countering violent extremism.

#### **8.4 Conceptual Framework for an Inclusive Approach in P/CVE Interventions**

Given the paradox in the prevailing knowledge systems which informs the intervention frameworks, developing a model for engendering indigenous knowledge within which the participation of local women is guaranteed, starts by acknowledging the need for “empowerment as a salient measure of social change” (Miedema et al., 2018, p. 453). The search for empowerment brings the aspect of relationships in the intervention structures, which can be explained from the voice of a community activist who suggests that a continual empowerment program would be ultimately an important step in enhancing the agency and capacity for women. She opines that “to successfully work with local women and local groups for peace, mentorship for young people is vital” (interview 013; FNARN - 26/06/2020). This implies that empowerment programme should enhance the capacity of women both individually and collectively to achieve meaningful outcomes at the community level.

Drawing from her personal experience, the participant admits that being trained both in the traditional and the formal mechanisms for peace have enabled many actors, including herself, to make outstanding achievements. The achievements are visible, despite the meagre resources they had at their disposal. In this context, “if all actors worked with young women for empowerment by enhancing ‘sharing of indigenous knowledge’ and enabling acquisition of new skills, we will have achieved grand milestones in peacebuilding” (interview 013; FNARN - 26/06/2020). This line of reasoning places indigenous knowledge for P/CVE at the centre of local peacebuilding, and as well points to the outcomes of embracing the hybridity of knowledge production in the capacity for peacebuilding (Appiah-Thompson, 2020; Chimakonam & du Toit, 2018).

#### **8.4.1 Women’s Empowerment and the Three Fire-stones Model**

The quest for hybridity in line with empowerment is strengthened by a proposal regarding the collective community approach. An interviewee, who works with an international NGO, argues that “coming together as peace actors and dropping our different tags that makes us different, while focusing on what brings the required synergy, is the way to go in peacebuilding” (interview 013; FNARN - 26/06/2020). For this synergy to be achieved, “women peacebuilders must come together, first as women, and second as peacebuilders, without external tags of academics, age, race, and identities of superiority between individuals or groups. This way, greater things will happen, and women’s triumphs will remain visible forever” (interview 017; FCDN - 6/07/2020). It is interesting the choice of words in these proposals for hybrid systems of knowledge for interventions. For instance, the first idea suggests “coming together”, followed by desired “synergy” and then “identities of superiority”, all of which are connected to empowerment.

The voices of study participants connect to the call by de Sousa Santos et al. (2008, p. vii) about recognition of diverse epistemologies and the cultural diversities which [re]produce “diversity of knowledge systems”. The connections must be informed by the fundamental “practices of different social groups across the globe” (de Sousa Santos et al., 2008, p. vii). These suggestions carry the implication that as much as the local women are happy with their achievements made from the indigenous frameworks, they are fully conscious about the tremendous

improvement that can be possible after learning new skills. This realisation finally paves the way for the anticipated empowerment model, as pointed out by the informants below:

Women already have good networks for passing information, which places us ahead as agents of knowledge sharing. The structures developed by women in the traditional setting start from ‘informal’ gatherings in the villages, locally known as *Chama* (group) in the form of *merry-go-round* (a revolving fund by households, taken in turns) and self-help groups. The *chamas* provide the necessary bonding and trust among the members. The trust therefore makes it easy discussing crucial and even confidential information. Based on trust women can work mutually to bring into the discussions the entire community through their individual families. At this stage, we are talking about the household triangle. The women groups can then approach men and the youth at the community level to participate in the CVE initiatives without fear of reprisal at the family level. (Interview 018; FNEW - 10/07/2020).

This voice of an NGO practitioner is also based on what has worked before, which is in sync with basic models being adopted by some NGOs in practice. Huis et al. (2017) observes for example, that most NGOs seek to empower women as the first step to achieve equality. For the purposes of clarity, “women’s empowerment is the process through which individual [women] attain the ability to make their choices under conditions in which the same choices were previously denied” (Kabeer, 2005, p. 13). This argument about empowerment thus provides an opportunity for women to restate their commitment to make progress through informal interventions such as the use of sacred value systems (as discussed in section 8.2 above). Another participant suggests the nature and form that can be taken by an optimum empowerment model,

At community level, women prevail in peacebuilding by their right and virtue to occupy their rightful place. An intervention takes, for instance, the model of our traditional three fire stones for a cooking pot. The use of firestones is one practice that is common among all communities in Kenya, I don’t know what happens elsewhere! If one of the three stones is removed, the remaining two cannot hold a cooking pot. Taking an intervention as being the process of cooking, it follows that different actors (represented by the fire stones) must hold together for the process to be complete. Therefore, working jointly in collective responsibility, with all gender groups, and age-groups, and in collaboration with different community groupings like

religious leaders is inevitable. This collaboration must be based on the capabilities of actors using both indigenous and Western methods in peacebuilding. This way we address exclusion of anyone and still guarantee the space for women to play active role in the community. (Interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020).

The voice in this interview not only suggests the model, but also uses evidence to reinforce earlier calls, as made in a dialogue forum organised by the “*Council for Development and Assistance Studies*, Uppsala University, in October 2000” (Sida, 2001, p. 6). The proceedings of the dialogue forum contemplate an open platform for both “practitioners and researchers” to have a joint conversation focusing “on gender and power relations” for the purposes of establishing new theoretical stand-points in the practice of CVE (Sida, 2001, p. 6). A model built on the framework of three-firestones, therefore, connects to creating three (micro, meso and macro) levels of collaboration, in the P/CVE interventions. The different levels of action also provide, somewhat, a platform for women to make appropriate choices for social change – agency – in peacebuilding, with minimum resistance from other categories of actors.

The three-point structure, therefore, engenders the conceptual framework that demonstrates how women can overcome the problems of exclusion, both at the community level *vis-a-vis* the regional, and in the international contexts. Based on the interviews above, one level of action represents the micro context, pointing to collaboration at the household level. This forms the foundation for building trust that also enhances the chances of women taking a significant lead in family decision-making processes, to challenge the cultural dogmas and repugnant practices. The second level comprises of the meso-context, where women chart their path in decision-making at the community level.

This second point of action is feasible by bringing together families which are tied under kinship in the same clan. At this level, women form collaborations to challenge the traditional conditions, which in the past, have put a premium on the role of elders (mostly male) in the negotiations for peace. Consequently, the third level of collaboration emerges at the macro-context in which women from different clans, form clan-based organizations. These multiple points of action then help in



creating close partnerships to work together in addressing the violence at the extra-community level. The macro-context, therefore, can expand the space for women beyond the county and national borders to constitute a much broader intervention.

#### **8.4.2 Empowerment, the Three Firestones Model, and Women's Agency in P/CVE Interventions**

Following the interviewees' model about the three firestones, these emerging triangular connections in the practice of P/CVE would be incomplete if the contribution by one actor (party) goes unrecognised or gets eclipsed by the other actors. Conceptually, therefore, the empowerment of indigenous women can be "theorized as a multi-faceted and context-specific process" (Miedema et al., 2018, p. 463), to effectively claim their space in P/CVE interventions. The aspect of being context-specific makes the empowerment of women incongruent with the application of the concept simply "as a priority indicator for, women's ability to attain their potential" (Miedema et al., 2018, p. 463). It is on this basis that the three firestones model connects to Kabeer's (2005, p. 13) proposal about re-thinking the conceptualisation of empowerment to include the power relations between the local [women] actors in terms of "agency, resources, and achievement".

For an effective intervention to be achieved, CVE interventions must strive to transform "the basic challenges faced by local women in the local community, by expanding their limited opportunities to participate in the formal peace processes" (interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020). Therefore, these three parameters of agency, resources, and achievements do not only serve to facilitate the P/CVE interventions, but they also help in determining the outcomes of the entire intervention process. Hence, interventions which ignore the agency of indigenous women in preference to the Western voices, perpetuates systemic exclusion as they become the catalyst for failure in CVE practice. As observed by Lee (2020), the lack of local agency defeats the need for local ownership and the subsequent hope for sustainability.

Likewise, the disproportionate distribution of resources between different actors diminishes the opportunity available to exercise agency, which also results in systemic exclusion. Given that the agency [of women] is exercised through

resources (Kabeer, 2005), it follows that whenever the indigenous groups are disadvantaged in comparison to the state and the well-financed NGOs, both of which are financed by the taxpayers and international donors respectively, then the agency of the indigenous actors is inevitably compromised. Quite often, the CVE practice seldom hears the voice of indigenous women, most of whom find themselves pushed out to the periphery due to a lack of resources.

A women leader explains that “as a matter of fact, a challenge we struggle with, day in day out, is the lack of resources. Sometimes we work with nothing literally but because of hope and passion for our community. Some well-funded NGOs and the state departments, on the contrary, have funds but cannot be on the ground because they fear for the security of their staff” (interview 016; FGAN - 4/07/2020). This experience exposes two sides of systemic exclusion: one where the core actors cannot operate effectively due to lack of funds, and two, a situation where those with adequate funding cannot operate effectively due to improper systems at the community level. The already adverse situation is then worsened by the fact that some “actors have a privileged position over others concerning how resources are distributed or how rules, norms, and conventions [about resources] are interpreted, as well as how they are put into effect” (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15).

Finally, the attribution of achievements becomes vital in demonstrating the capability of the actors by accounting for the efforts made to bring change – the extent to which expectations, potential and choices are realized at the community level. Incidentally, the level of attributing achievements depends strongly on the agency and resources applied in the peacebuilding process. For instance, the funding agencies determine whose efforts can be acknowledged. Those actors with comparative advantage in designing the interventions and setting the indicators also squander the space for the agency to measure achievements and to make appropriate attribution to indigenous actors. Acknowledging the diversity that exists in acknowledging the achievements from interventions, the women leader decries that,

Here, you know, people just tell stories that favour them even if it does not represent reality. Unfortunately, people who know the true history

of peace and conflict, and the success achieved in the struggle for peace might die with this (indigenous) knowledge. Our challenge (as indigenous women) is poor documentation. The information about any achievements made by indigenous women, some of whom are not educated, can even be put into books for people to learn about it. Those books can attribute the achievement to the actual actors on the ground, and not only showing the privileged European researchers or project staff from Nairobi as the authors, while it is common mwananchi (ordinary people) who did the work. (Interview 019; FNEN - 13/07/2020)

The participant's voice in this circumstance provides evidence on a direct connection between agency and the manipulation of knowledge production. Mwambari and Owor (2019) analyse this relationship, describing the patterns of attribution of achievements to donor supported interventions. In line with this analysis, the indigenous women most often face exclusion because of their inability to express agency by documentation. This argument contends that the "black market" of knowledge is manifested where much "informed decisions about development aid and humanitarian aid, is often controlled by academics, policymakers, and journalists most of who travel to *indigenous* communities to collect knowledge" (Mwambari & Owor, 2019, p. 1, emphasis added). Thereafter, these external actors rely always on the efforts of local experts to facilitate their interventions "to gather knowledge, while they almost and always make" minimal attribution to the indigenous voices (Mwambari & Owor, 2019, pp. 1–3).

Based on the multiple layers that determine relationships between actors at different levels, the conceptual framework for empowerment must seek to achieve "Transformative Agency" (Moyo, 2020, p. 33). The term transformative agency is proposed to represent the ways of enhancing the capacity of women to claim their space as a right. Kabeer (2005, p. 15) describes an aspect of transformative agency as the ability to change "the restrictive aspects of their roles, responsibilities" and relationships with other actors to actively negotiate available choices through the underlying obstacles in the intervention frameworks. In this respect, it is important to further track the parameters of transformative agency in CVE to pave the way for understanding the voices of indigenous women as part of "situated knowledge" (Caretta, 2015, pp. 489–490, Haraway, 1991).

Transformative Agency, therefore, “highlights the contingent, hierarchical, contextual, experiential, and relational nature of knowledge production” necessary for designing effective interventions for CVE. As argued by Haraway (1991), it is evident that the empowerment of indigenous women through the three firestones model is a form of “situated knowledge” in that it embraces some aspects of examining the “process by looking inward through self-reflexivity and by reflecting on the relations with others” (Haraway, 1991, p. 183). The process of inward and outward reflections can be described by the Kiswahili term *Hamasisha* (an aspect of empowerment) which also translates descriptively as changes in the form of human ability to take action. The term, *hamasisha* is generated from the interviews to introduce the final framework for describing Transformative Agency as a theory in P/CVE interventions.

### **8.5 Transformative Agency Theory: *Hamasisha* Framework**

Drawing from the *Hamasisha* (empowerment) models above, the Transformative Agency Theory emerges from the ability to express self-reflexivity (looking in) and engage with external relationships (looking out). It depicts the determination of agency through active engagement with the subaltern voices, and within the paradigms of both indigenous and Western knowledge. Randazzo, for instance, argues against the predominant “use of indigenous knowledge as a ploy to ‘save’ indigenous communities” (Randazzo, 2019, p. 38). Such application would not only portray the indigenous actors as subjects who have failed, but also perpetuates the false “narrative of *saviourship* that frames indigenous knowledge as a tool” (Randazzo, 2019, p. 38). Appallingly, the terms have been used by international interventions without questioning the claimed ability of external/international actors and the methods deigned therefrom (Randazzo, 2021).

Transformative Agency, therefore, seeks to integrate both Western approaches and Indigenous perspectives in the empowerment and emancipation process, as opposed to the fallacy, which is grounded in “saving” the marginalised communities (Randazzo, 2021). The emerging scope of a hybrid framework bridges the profound gap between the application of the indigenous and Western knowledge systems by seeking to transform some crucial contradictions often presented by or witnessed in the interventions, which often, are exclusively based

on Western knowledge (Mac Ginty, 2011). Transformative Agency, as proposed by Moyo (2020), counters many ambiguities which are likely to arise from liberal intervention approaches, most of which are plagued by “self-image of righteousness and superiority in the face of local alternatives” (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 60).

Consequently, the basis of the Three-Firestones Model and the Conflict Transformation framework embraces a conceptualisation of empowerment both “as a framework and a process aimed toward addressing inequity” (Huis et al., 2017, p. 1). This facet of conceptualisation captures the expanding interface between Afro-feminism in the practice of P/CVE, but also “founded on the premise of conscientisation” (Tandon, 2016, p. 6). Hence, “theorising empowerment” in this study emphasises three main viewpoints: The first is the individual transformation, which forms the process of enhancing the capacity of individual women to freely exercise their personal choices right from the household – as the micro-context (Huis et al., 2017; Kabeer, 2005).

The second viewpoint focuses on collective transformation, which brings in the collective organization by women into smaller groups within homogenous contexts, often in the form of *chamas*, and community-based structures such as those used in *Abay Abay*, and in religious groupings (the meso-level context). These distinct aspects of collective transformation leverage the already existing indigenous structures based on “collective behaviour and adherence to cultural norms which emphasise collective growth” (Huis et al., 2017, p. 1). The third component in theorizing empowerment for this model touches on the relational transformation. It brings the interaction between individual women and the groupings of indigenous women with the wider societal institutions while taking initiatives in the broader community, national and international frameworks (macro-level context). Huis et al. (2017) discusses this aspect of transformation as part of the societal dimensions where the empowerment of women is measured through the complex indices of gender exclusion.

Transformative Agency, thus, conforms to the framework developed by Huis et al. (2017) which proposes that “women’s empowerment can be differentiated in three

different dimensions, namely: personal [individual beliefs], relational [actions concerning relevant others such as a spouse, family, and community], and societal [choices at the larger social context] empowerment” (Huis et al., 2017, p. 4). Consequently, empowerment of indigenous women can be conceptualised “in its emancipatory meaning, which brings up the question of personal agency that links action to needs” and extends to the choices “that results in making significant collective change” (Tandon, 2016, pp. 6–8).

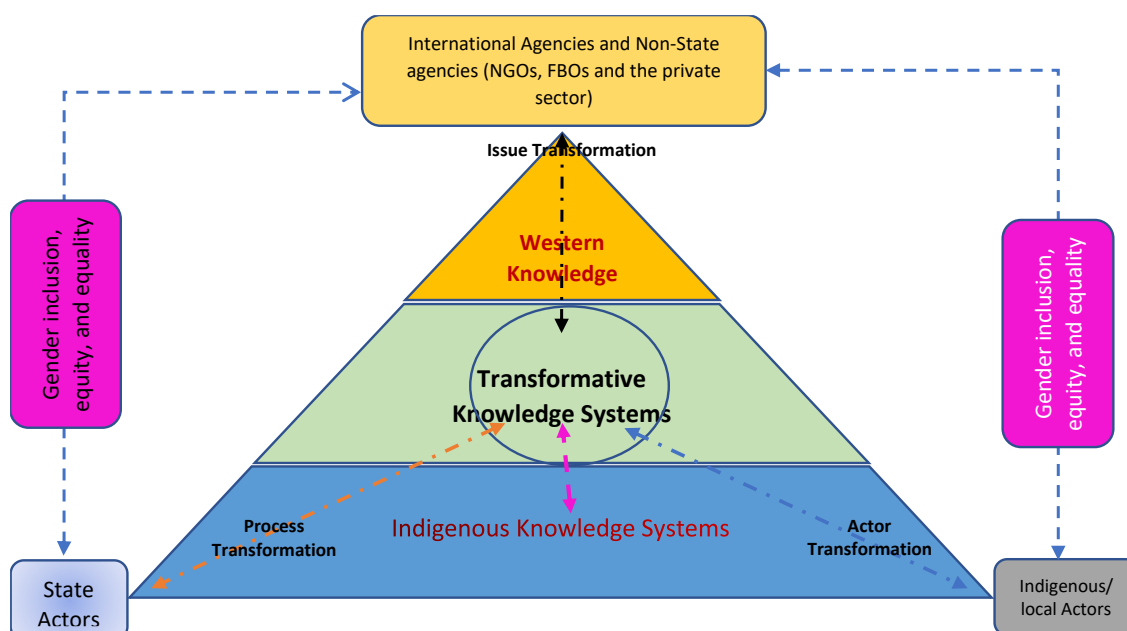
### **8.5.1 Linking the Three-Firestones Model and the Conflict Transformation Framework**

In theoretical terms, Transformative Agency sufficiently illustrates “the three dimensions of women’s empowerment” (Huis et al., 2017, p. 7) that connects both the three-firestones model and the Conflict Transformation framework. This connection illustrates how knowledge production systems, applied in P/CVE interventions, can be informed, and be expressed for better outcomes, in the initiatives for sustainability and ownership by local communities. This connection relates closely to the three pillars of Conflict Transformation (namely, actor transformation, issue transformation and process transformation) as embedded in the constructivist approach.

The stepwise connection offers a framework in which a more complex and nuanced understanding of personal and collective identities is possible (Dixon, 2012). This relationship between identities gives a framework that also creates a platform for addressing both the issues presented and the changes needed for deeper relational patterns (Lederach, 2014). In this regard, Conflict Transformation Theory brings into understanding the reality that more dialogue, and evidence-based comparative learning, are both necessary for sustainable peace processes (Austin & Giessmann, 2018). The aspect of transformation is, however, an evolving process that is dependent on multiple other factors beyond the control of the actors in peacebuilding.

The structural relationships between the framework of conflict transformation and the three-firestone model can be presented as a triangular process that places theory and practice in peacebuilding interventions within the perspectives of continual

change. Transformative Agency Theory, therefore, is designed to combine both conflict transformation and the three firestones model to provide the possible links between the actors, the issues and the process, and the knowledge production systems. The connection also creates a basis for an understanding of the reflexive approaches used by indigenous women in peacebuilding.



**Figure 6: Transformative Agency Theory**

*Source: drawn by Author based on reflections from data*

Corresponding to the basics of Transformative Agency Theory, indigenous knowledge forms the foundation (basis for interventions) for effective and sustainable peacebuilding. At the centre of the framework is the transformative knowledge system that builds a hybrid knowledge space for all actors. The hybridity then informs and is informed by the various actors at different levels. At the base of the knowledge pyramid is the indigenous knowledge production systems. The primary actions in P/CVE interventions should thus be driven by indigenous or local actors, alongside the initiatives implemented by the state agencies – based on their grassroots structures. The international agencies and the NGOs should undertake, mostly, facilitating roles while working in partnership with local actors and state agencies.

The collaborative approach of this theory, therefore, builds on the assumption that “European colonialism left an indelible mark in the political and economic structures of the current world system [including] the fields of culture, science and

education” (Dylan & Knobloch, 2020, p. 1). It is thus inevitable that all entities – local and foreign – must transform their intervention approaches to embrace hybridity of knowledge production. In the transformative framework, Africa women do not only have an expanded space, through indigenous knowledge systems, to participate in the interventions, but they also possess the individual and collective agency to claim the diminished spaces.

Against this background, it is noted that despite their rich cultural heritage, post-colonial states have been rendered subservient through the “wholesale adoption of foreign ideas” (Akinwale, 2017, p. 40). The resulting subjugated knowledge then raises “the demand for a comprehensive epistemic decolonisation” (Dylan & Knobloch, 2020, pp. 1–2), through continual transformation processes. This begins with the realisation of the positionality of knowledge in the sense that even though knowledge production is often projected as apolitical, it is intensely political (Sithole et al., 2017). Emphatically, proponents of the “local turn” perspective in peacebuilding propose the need to transform any epistemic privileges against the “local” promoted “by Western liberal frameworks, by engaging openly with alternative worldviews and knowledge” (Randazzo, 2019, p. 32).

Transformative Agency Theory, thus, is concerned about modifying the epistemological dichotomies created between the “local” and the “international” to attribute achievements in a manner that promotes equity (P. Bargués-Pedreny, 2018). Hence, the theory helps to understand the three aspects of transformations based on the three firestones model. The three dimensions thus link to the conflict transformation model through actor transformation, issue transformation, and process transformation. The triangulation process is therefore cyclic, without a specific causal direction. Such a conceptualization of peacebuilding recognizes the importance not only of the resolution of conflict and the rebuilding of knowledge systems, but also the cultivation, nurturing, ownership, and transformation of the overall context in which conflict is embedded (Ball, 2019).

The conflict transformation framework in this sense, emphasises transforming the very systems, structures and relationships which give rise to violence and injustice (Ball, 2019; Parlevliet, 2010). The Transformative Agency theory thus builds on



the Conflict Transformation framework to comprehend conflict prevention in the purview of social change by placing primary emphasis on the question of social justice (Parlevliet, 2010, p.17). As a viable alternative to overcome the prevailing challenges identified in contemporary peacebuilding, the conflict transformation framework provides the platform for shifting attention to peacebuilding within the local context, rather than highlighting the role of external, international interveners, which might be limiting (Parlevliet, 2010; Schmelzle & Fischer, 2009). The focus in achieving sustainable peace, thus, “is not merely on ending violence” – negative peace – “but on creating and ensuring the conditions in which people’s rights and basic human needs can be protected and met” – positive peace (Ball, 2019, p. 23).

### **8.5.2 Enhancing the Voice of Indigenous African Women in Different Spheres**

Enhancing the voice and space for indigenous African women is premised on the principle that equal participation is a basic human right and not a favour (Karim & Beardsley, 2013; True & Riveros-Morales, 2019). Moreover, it has been established that women’s participation in peacebuilding may not only contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflicts, but the lack of this participation may undermine the entire peace process (Confortini, 2011; Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019; True & Riveros-Morales, 2019). It is thus reasonable to argue that women, as well as men, play important roles in rebuilding the fabric of recovering societies (True & Riveros-Morales, 2019), especially those affected by violent extremism. Consequently, Transformative Agency Theory offers the rare and Afrocentric approach to enhance the voice of indigenous women in the interventions for P/CVE (Paffenholz et al., 2016a, p. 5). More specifically, it plugs the gap in the lack of evidence-based knowledge on the precise role and impact of women’s inclusion. Paffenholz et al., (2016a, p. 18) observe, for instance, that “when women have been included in the past, it was due to normative pressure applied by women’s groups and their international supporters”.

While assessing the link between formal political participation and gender equality, Seckinelgin & Klot (2014, p. 38) hypothesise that “in most cases, the relationships in identity politics are often provided only as a normative statement, articulated through the issue of representation and its associated processes”. Therefore, Seckinelgin & Klot (2014) seek to challenge the typical deficiency of evidence

about indigenous knowledge that only represents what they term as “the orthodox position” on the issue of women’s participation in peacebuilding. Giving some evidence from Liberia, Shepherd (2015) advises that by being restricted to informal processes, many women in Africa may lose the opportunity to voice their perspectives within the formal processes where permanent and lasting decisions are made. To enhance gender equality and to position African women in the mainstream, it is, therefore, necessary to explore peacebuilding approaches that offer a strategic framework, and are accessible to a range of actors, and allow the interventions taking place at the micro and meso level to achieve better and more focused impacts at the macropolitical level.

## **8.6 Chapter Summary**

Commencing from the assessment of UNSCR 1325 as the starting point for understanding the predicaments of participation of African women in P/CVE, this chapter has discussed multiple opportunities for enhanced involvement of African women in different aspect of intervention frameworks. Drawing from discussions and evidence gathered and analysed in the preceding chapters, a sample of indigenous interventions frameworks were discussed, to show the possibility of having the inclusion of women – even of women-only interventions – without creating the polarising binary of men and women. Indigenous intervention of trauma healing and social transformation, care and compassion, and invoking sacred value systems, demonstrate the possibilities of designing indigenous activities for peace, based on a nonviolence approach that requires very minimal financing and facilitation. It means, therefore, that expanding the space for indigenous knowledge into mainstream interventions not only increases the level of agency by women, but also creates an opportunity to increase the visibility of women without appealing to the superiority dilemma in the politics of identity. Built on a community-based structure, the interventions can be a better bet for ensuring sustainable interventions in some of the most volatile contexts. For this to happen, an empowerment approach based on the Afrocentric model of Transformative Agency Theory is proposed to address the relational gaps in the knowledge production systems that perpetuate exclusion in P/CVE.

In this framework, transformative knowledge, based on a hybrid system, is at the centre of the knowledge pyramid. The hybrid knowledge informs, and is informed by, the actors, comprising of the indigenous voices and state support at the base. The emerging arrangement of equal power relations expands the sphere of indigenous knowledge, which quite often has been relegated to the periphery as being unscientific or inferior to Western knowledge. The transformative knowledge system, therefore, puts a check on the coloniality in knowledge production systems, with its implicit pressure on the need for indigenous knowledge, and the indigenous actors, to “catch up” with Western knowledge. This research, therefore, builds on the school of thought espousing local positionality of/in knowledge production (Mwambari, 2019b) that contests the mendacious discourse of western knowledge by postulating that “there is no such thing as “global knowledge” – which is often wrapped as a gift, under the spell of another deceptive term – the universal” (Sithole et al., 2017, p. 226).

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **9.0 Introduction**

The findings in chapters six and seven analyse different features of interventions for CVE and the underlying structural barriers, respectively, that undermine the participation of the African women. Chapter eight, consequently, presents a major contribution of this study that introduces a new framework for holistic inclusion. First, Conflict Transformation Theory is introduced as a framework for expanding the general spaces for participation women as we seek to transform the programmes in CVE. The approach of CTT has, however, been improved by introducing a new empowerment model called *Hamasisha*. This model, introduced in chapter eight proposes to specifically integrate the contextual knowledge of indigenous African women into the mainstream knowledge production system. Second, the resulting Transformative Agency Theory makes a clear departure from the dominant P/CVE literature, and it adds a new perspective to the orthodox counterterrorism literature by rooting for a hybrid system of knowledge that accommodates both the Eurocentric Knowledge, (emphasised in the CTT) and indigenous Afrocentric Knowledge (underscored in the *Hamasisha* Model).

The discussions presented in this chapter thus take a cue from the previous understanding, first, that peacebuilding and countering violent extremism can share some strategies for achieving peace, and second, that it is possible to achieve the inclusion agenda for women in the interventions. This chapter, therefore, summarises key arguments of this thesis based on the gaps and the respective findings of the study. The discussions are highlighted under the flaws in the intervention frameworks, theoretical implication on P/CVE, and finally, the relevance of *Hamasisha* and the Transformative Agency Theory.

#### **9.1 Fixing the Flaws in the CVE Intervention Frameworks**

This study offers a global South standpoint to counterterrorism studies, in particular an African perspective and a bottom-up point of view, both of which represent an original contribution to the wider conflict studies, CVE research, terrorism studies

and counterterrorism literature. This literature, especially taking a critical terrorism studies approach, is currently dominated by white men writing about the West and then transferring their perspectives directly to the African and other non-Western geopolitical spaces. Even the feminist scholarship in these fields often is dominated by white women who study Africa as “the experts” on African people and contexts. This contribution to enhancing the voices in the global South, therefore, concretely provides additional viewpoints to the CVE and peacebuilding literature, particularly in relation to the ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding. In this regard, I argue that no intervention meets its “premium” expectations in varied contexts unless an empowerment approach that accounts for indigenous systems of knowledge production are considered.

The review of literature for this study, for instance, demonstrates that contextual understanding of both terminologies and policy designations is fundamental in shaping the mechanisms for P/CVE. Whether the initiatives take place at the global, national, or subnational levels, conceptualisation needs to capture the ecology of knowledge production systems (de Sousa Santos et al., 2008). Rooted in both racial and gender identities (Charbonneau, 2014), broadening the knowledge production system has the potential to safeguard the space for the inclusion of different actors in P/CVE programmes. A major gap in the design of the programmes thus points to the structural barriers to developing inclusive measures for P/CVE. Instead, the interventions, most of which are financed by external donors, are designed and implemented based on the imperial knowledge frameworks by the supporting countries – often being the developed countries of the West.

The dominant presence of the West in programmes for CVE in the African context must be reconstructed for better outcomes (Njoku, 2022). While Western knowledge systems remain progressive, the over reliance on the foreign structures and languages at the expense of fundamental recognition of contextual knowledge of the beneficiary communities have only facilitated hegemonic approaches (Charbonneau, 2017). Quite often, the liberal strategies adopted by contemporary P/CVE programmes promote coloniality through the systems (donor institutions) that uphold superiority of knowledge in the global identity politics, especially

between Africa and the West. Subsequently, coloniality and superiority of knowledge perpetuates structural exclusion in the interventions.

To a great extent, contemporary interventions for P/CVE in Africa explain how most countries continue to face a dilemma as they struggle to balance between the softer (preventing) approaches and the military (countering) interventions (Vlaronou, 2019). In many situations of response to VE, African governments and the African Union have resorted to military responses through the African Peace and Security Architecture, but ignore, quite often, the community-based preventive mechanisms (Abadi, 2019). That notwithstanding, as much as the AU has a substantive continental framework for countering violent extremism, most of their programmes continue to be significantly dependent on Western donor support (George, 2016; Vlaronou, 2019).

For instance, the literature review demonstrates that the US-funded Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) programme has dominated interventions in the entire West Africa region for more than two decades (US-DS, 2018). The TSCTP aims to build local capacities on counterterrorism by establishing cooperation between law enforcement and civilian actors. A partner programme in Eastern Africa, known as Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT), also dominates the interventions in twelve countries. These PREACT interventions also emphasise engagement with state agencies through military and surveillance support. Likewise, approaches targeting Non-State agencies such as the CSOs and community based organisation (CBOs) have received significant support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2018). Neither the AU nor any of the African member states has ever invested their budgets to finance local interventions to the scope of these programmes supported by Western donors. Hence, African countries face severe limitations in making adequate responses to violent extremism based on homegrown strategies (Kessels et al., 2016). It is from this gap of ownership that the local actors find themselves isolated in the decision-making structures of the programmes. Consequently, the local voices continually struggle to gain space in the P/CVE strategies and interventions locally.

Many researchers of terrorism and CVE (see Elshimi, 2015; Harris-Hogan, Barrelle, & Zammit, 2016; Romaniuk, 2015; Romaniuk & Durner, 2018) observe that international interventions have not only failed to reflect what they mean ontologically, but they have also failed to accurately capture what happens on the ground in Africa. On the same note, there is limited evidence that the programmes have managed to reduce the prevalence of violent extremism in the diverse contexts of intervention (Elshimi, 2015; Romaniuk, 2015). Despite this challenge of interventions being over-reliant on Western funding, many African countries seem stuck in the confusion of dependency. Some of these countries are trapped in the circus of resource scarcity by claiming to have inadequate budget provisions (Turner, 2020), while the same countries have allocated excess funds to heavily finance the military and security agencies. Incidentally, the excess allocations to the military in some countries result in governance issues such as corruption and autocratic leadership.

These challenges also increase their vulnerability through frequent military coups (Matissek, 2019), as well as making the countries to be “easy targets” for attacks by extremist groups (Piazza, 2006). Some of these challenges are manifested negatively through ill-equipped security apparatus, porous borders, internal ethnic disagreements, and disjointed peacebuilding and P/CVE initiatives (Glazzard, Jespersen, Maguire, & Winterbotham, 2018). The situation then, is likely to determine the level of preparedness to threats of VE and persistent failure to develop constructive responses (Buchanan-Clarke & Lekalake, 2016).

Consequently, Western knowledge, which is more likely to be embraced and applied into African legal and policy frameworks without scrutiny, continues to reign, but it faces and reproduces glaring flaws in the local programmes. As a result of the issues, a critical gap emerges in the form of systemic exclusion that pervades missing gendered perspectives where male voices and the privileged women from the Euro-American contexts dominate both academic and policy narratives. While evidence from interviews reveal some significant contributions made by indigenous African women working at the community level, their contributions remain relegated to the periphery. That notwithstanding, the local initiatives have often set the ground for formal negotiation which are increasingly appreciated by

the donor organizations, state agencies, and international organizations. In many circumstances, though, the tasks undertaken by women at local levels continue to be undermined as being informal, hence contributing further to the systemic exclusion and negligible attribution.

In this regard, this study argues that P/CVE can draw some lessons from peacebuilding theory concerning the “conceptual scoping in the notion and practice of everyday peace” (Mac Ginty, 2014, p. 548). Everyday peace uses a bottom-up approach which considers the contributions of individual peace actors “to navigate their ways through life even in deeply divided societies” (Ibid), as opposed to over relying on the (liberalist) institutional structures to measure intervention outcomes. Brewer et al. (2018, p. 199), for instance, argues that because violence “brutalises everyday life well into the peace process stage”, it follows that the interventions for peace must have an overwhelming impact on individuals, most of whom are victims. Consequently, the everyday peace process “gives victims cultural and political tropes” for voicing concerns and priorities by those affected (Brewer et al., 2018, p. 199). The theory of Conflict Transformation provides the basis for incorporating these strategies of everyday peace into the interventions. Hence, P/CVE programmes can adopt the strategies for centring the voices of indigenous women “in debates about the past and the future, so their voices are heard above the cacophony of people who deem to speak on their behalf” (Brewer et al., 2018, p. 200). This argument is also connected to the study by Mac Ginty (2014, p. 549) which “constructs a typology of different types of social practices that constitute everyday peace”. The constructions open the application of everyday peace strategies in the scope of interventions to address violent conflicts.

## **9.2 Theoretical Implications for the Inclusion of Women in CVE**

As discussed above, several tiers of participation of women get curtailed by a combination of barriers that conspire against indigenous perspectives. These barriers deny some women the appropriate visibility and unquestioned access to the benefits accrued from work they toil to achieve. The obstacles also render much effort made by indigenous women to be pushed from the centre of the action to the periphery of knowledge (Standish, 2019). Subsequently, indigenous women’s contribution in the interventions only gets recorded at the lowest point of conflict



impact in communities. Despite this oversight, some of the interventions made by indigenous women come at the earliest stages, and hence, play a very important role in conflict prevention (Nebe, 2012). The success of contributions made by indigenous communities, despite the structural barriers that push them away, is a demonstration that “another knowledge is possible” beyond the “moral and cultural imperialism and neoliberal globalization” (de Sousa Santos, 2008, p. 166). While making a case to re-invent “social emancipation,” de Sousa Santos (2008) argues that contextual knowledge exists in the developing countries as an alternative to the epistemology of the Global North.

Subsequently, it is argued in this study that conceptualising subaltern voices illustrates how the opinions of indigenous women actors have been marginalised in P/CVE by dominant sections of society. It also demonstrates that women can claim their rightful space and express their missing voices (Tuso & Flaherty, 2016). It is on this basis that Adebayo and Njoku (2022, p. 1) contest “the notion of objectivity in knowledge production” as presently constituted, especially in P/CVE programming. Hence, CTT which accounts for the subjective perspectives in the implementation strategies provides appropriate parameters for taking account of the interests, identities, and needs of all actors. By so doing, CTT creates a discursive framework of mutual accommodation of different parties and invokes the principle of social justice which recognises both contextual and gender differences between actors. Considering the principle of social justice in P/CVE programming enables CTT to support systems for potential inclusion of women, including those engaged in the informal structures of interventions.

Given that women (just like men) do not constitute a homogeneous social group, the Conflict Transformation framework provides the tools for interrogating the prevailing diversity. Tackling heterogeneity among and between social groups for purposes of diversity commences by acknowledging that interventions are often grounded on the geopolitical disparities in knowledge production (Mwambari, 2019a). The disparity then brings into focus evidence from the findings which demonstrates how African women are consigned to the periphery of knowledge production systems, compared to those from other global geo-spaces. CTT, therefore, links with the Afrocentric paradigms to provide a comprehensive

approach for addressing the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict in different knowledge settings.

It is by considering the unique contexts of African female researchers and actors in P/CVE that their distinctive identities and positionality contributes to “the dual purpose of advancing peace research” (Adebayo & Njoku, 2022, p. 2). Hence, advancing group positionality is more essential in the post-independent states of the Global South (like in Africa) which are faced with the problem of violent extremism. Recognising positionality must always deal with manipulative polarisation and the politics of oppression based on liberal institutional paradigms of state building. Through Conflict Transformation, therefore, emphasis can be made in identifying and reframing of positions beyond the conventional win-win outcomes in the situations of countering violent extremism. The identity of African women can thus be expanded by accounting for indigenous actors’ ethnicity, racial identity, sexual and gender orientation, and religious memberships, all of which determine their positionality (Adebayo & Njoku, 2022).

Drawing on the evidence from the findings in chapter seven also demonstrates that African women have been using subtle and informal platforms such as women groups or prayer groups as their home-grown networks. These structures have served as alternatives to the imperial programme structures. They instead provide a coping mechanism for their inclusion to make meaningful contributions in the peace process (Alaga, 2010). The revival and resilience of these traditional structures expands the space for indigenous knowledge that protects African women from epistemic exclusion. Moreover, indigenous knowledge of African communities has been shared through these structures to reflect on the Africanness, and not to be seen in comparison to the Western knowledge. It is tenable, therefore, to make a claim that a combination of CTT and Afrocentrism provides adequate space for inclusivity and equal participation. Hence, P/CVE interventions can be designed to consider indigeneity and positionality in knowledge production, both of which are crucial for contextual understanding and for enhanced conceptualisation (Mwambari, 2021). By extension, taking the indigenous viewpoints can make P/CVE programmes to recognise inclusive decision-making

systems, which are seldom feasible unless they integrate the knowledge produced and consumed by the local community (Lundström & Denkovski, 2019).

### **9.3 Implications of the Hamasisha Model in P/CVE**

The *Hamasisha* Model is an empowerment framework for capacity enhancement by marginalised groups that are facing the threat of, or experiencing, exclusion to claim their rightful space through social justice. The model is developed as a modification of the CTT based on theoretical traditions that involve an analysis of unfolding realities to make sense of contextual circumstances. The model seeks to address the power relations at the global stage of knowledge production by seeking to engage transformative agency to enhance the voice of women generally in tackling violent extremism.

As already mentioned in chapters four and five, the model is based on a constructivist ontology that helps to clarify the claims in the reality and practice of P/VE. This clarification comes from the steps to incorporate different aspects through which communities engage with those realities. Constructivist Grounded Theory (CTG) has informed the integration of CTT, Afrocentrism and Afro-Feminism to accommodate gender inclusive strategies for addressing the unique challenges of African actors in P/CVE. To capture the scope of exclusion of women, CTG facilitates analysis of the underlying social processes (Process transformation), people's actions (actor transformation), and both interactions and relationships (issues transformation) that emerge in the design of P/CVE programmes.

Application of the *Hamasisha* model in P/CVE, therefore, begins from the understanding that CTT is instrumental in explaining unequal conflict structures by considering the specific roles of both non-state armed groups and state actors. The model thus informs the analysis of the needs and interests of, and the relationships between, male and female perpetrators or victims of violence (Körppen et al., 2008; Parlevliet, 2010; Wils et al., 2006). It is the aspect of an empowerment paradigm which is differentiated in three different dimensions, that connects the *Hamasisha* model to the Transformative Agency, by seeking to enhance individual belief systems, relational consciousness, and societal liberation (Huis et al., 2017).

Transformative Agency, therefore, encapsulates the empowerment of indigenous women through emancipatory dynamics that promote personal/individual agency by linking their actions to the collective interests of local community actors in P/CVE (Tandon, 2016).

Transformative Agency Theory, then, becomes the basis through which P/CVE programmes acknowledge unique needs for empowerment, especially for marginalised groups. As demonstrated by the findings in chapters seven and eight, African women face unique forms of exclusion most of which are connected to their contextual interests and relationships. In this regard, the *Hamasisha* Model, which establishes the Transformative Agency Theory, helps to ease epistemic exclusion. The model can thus bolster many P/CVE interventions by streamlining theories of change to recognise constructive relationships in the peace process (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

Finally, the *Hamasisha* model builds significantly on Afro-Feminism by encapsulating the divergent efforts for gender equality that are aimed at transforming the situation of the African woman to reverse different forms of discrimination (Amaefula, 2021). Consequently, Afro-feminism enriches the model to address “the colonial filters” (Tamale, 2020, p. ix) in which realm Africa and the constituent knowledge systems is non-existent (Muchie et al., 2016; Oloruntoba & Falola, 2018a). It follows, therefore, that increasing the role of women in P/CVE must be given special attention globally to include those women actors in Africa, some of whom do not have formal Western education (Chimakonam, 2018).

## Conclusions

This study makes a succinct argument that despite the great work, and outstanding achievements made in peace processes by indigenous African women, some of their efforts risk remaining on the periphery of the mainstream knowledge production systems. The main barriers are confounded in the systems of knowledge production and dissemination as presently constituted by the international donor community. Programmes for P/CVE are predominantly underpinned by Western intellectualism that is also rooted in Eurocentrism. The design and documentation of formal interventions in P/CVE have failed to acknowledge the plurality of perspectives which accommodate indigenous knowledge as it is. Nonetheless, the resilient initiatives by indigenous groups still bring into prospect the unique design of interventions based on the principle of “human caring or the memory of caring and being cared for” (Mason, 2018, p. 3).

Unlike in the state-led initiatives which favour military intervention approaches, the interventions led by indigenous communities lay emphasis on mutual respect based on sacred values, care and compassion, and unique norms grounded in receptivity, responsiveness, and relatedness, that involves a sense of moral attitude between the conflict parties (Noddings, 2003). It is, thus, important to recognise how women activism in Africa has spiralled into negotiations for peace in a context that is culturally and structurally challenging to recognising the voice of women. Appreciating their cognitive capacity and processes can, therefore, play a key role as peace negotiators and as advocates against violent extremism.

It is thus important to historicize how the initiatives and interactions between the indigenous African and the Western voices can complement each other to overcome structural exclusion in P/CVE programmes. This complementarity can allow community groups of women, who quite often face marginalization from peace interventions, to create their space through individual and collective empowerment. The localised interventions at the grassroots levels are, therefore, a significant platform for entrenching the diverse identities and authority of women through the *Hamasisha* Model included in the Transformative Agency Theory. The *Hamasisha* model thus enables indigenous knowledge to take centre stage in P/CVE interventions by promoting hybridity of knowledge at the expense of racial

superiority. Entrenching the voice of women at the grassroots level subsequently provides a gendered and candid case for the local turn in the peace process (Lee, 2020b; Mac Ginty, 2008; Reilly, 2013) that can crucially inform the design of P/CVE programmes. According to Randazzo (2021, p. 142), “the ‘local turn’ helps to shed light on what is left unexplored by mainstream approaches, by focusing particularly on narratives, experiences and struggles that have been muted in favour of formalized and elite-based engagements”.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Recommendation for further inquiry***

There is a dire need for far more research on global south contexts, more research on local perceptions of political violence and on P/CVE in diverse contexts. This study demonstrates from interviews that more research from a decolonial perspective, and that provides an intersection between peacebuilding and P/CVE are yet to be achieved. It is evident, for example, from the findings that designing P/CVE programmes in Kenya are often taken casually and considered to be secondary to human security, especially by state bureaucrats who believe mostly in the traditional security interventions. National structures have, in a way, failed, to invest adequately in activities for peace as a public good, except for enhancing security interventions. Due to this lethargy on attempts to finance activities for countering violent extremism, especially by the state, the scope by which the national structures can engage proactively is limited. It can be prudent arguing that many interventions only give superficial attention to “the needs, values and experience of the people in the intervention contexts and societies” (Bargués-Pedreny & Mathieu, 2018, p. 284). This study, therefore, makes the following recommendations for further research:

1. There is urgent need to explore the extent to which the state and the civil society, including the private sector, have abdicated their fundamental obligations to finance interventions for peace through P/CVE programming. As observed in the conceptualisation problem, the interventions are significantly impacted by the operational gaps from the missing subaltern voices in designing the immediate activities. The State agencies and NGOs do share

some common elements by failing to make concerted efforts towards financing varied activities for P/CVE. This gap leads to a major concern that they (local structures) are never entirely in charge of designing interventions (Mengistu, 2014). In a similar manner, they mostly set indicators to be achieved based on the expectations, not of the community, but on the desires of the funding interests. This explains some level of “ambivalence that underpins feminist engagement” (Cornwall et al., 2007, p. 3) by the state and local actors to accept domination by “global knowledge” in the local programming for P/CVE (Royster, 2017). The indecision brings into perspective a situation of comprador in the interventions (Alatas, 2000), technically, that leads to “official” [re]presentation of absolute bias in the relationship between actors from the Western and the local practitioners.

2. The State should explore a balance between financing security apparatus and civilian peace initiatives. Findings in chapter six shows that the Kenyan government is more likely to make provisions for security apparatus to keep law and order than to make similar provisions for the peace processes. This preference for financing security in the name of keeping peace relates to the global fear that many interventions by the state agencies are “potentially instrumentalising and securitising local peacebuilding initiatives” (UN Security Council, 2019, p. 20). Worse still, the State’s philosophy about security is limited to the problematic theories equating the meanings of security to the capacity of sovereign state to use violence in the maintenance of physical protection of citizens by use of bombs and bullets (MacFarlane & Weiss, 1994). It is by making such assumptions about human security that “the state [often] employs its monopoly of force and power to deny the rights of its citizens and to appropriate their resources in order to preserve itself” (MacFarlane & Weiss, 1994, p. 279), as a way of guaranteeing peace in its territory.
3. The international community, while working with both state and non-state agencies, needs adequate evidence based on local research to ensure that the P/CVE interventions mitigate the gendered power relations. The external donors, for instance, should ensure the effective participation of indigenous women in the administration of local peace committees, such as in the *nymba*

*kumi* initiatives, based on adequate evidence that indigenous women are not necessarily victims of violence but substantive producers and disseminators of knowledge for CVE. A gender balance considered at different levels makes it crucial that the local actors share adequate evidence to address the empowerment gaps required to deal with the challenge of hierarchies in the knowledge production systems (Last, 2018), especially in this context of undertaking P/CVE interventions. Quite often, many actors find themselves in the lower hierarchies as powerless knowledge receivers about P/CVE. Hence, the local actors assume any training in a range of areas and methodologies for intervention rather than taking initiatives to demonstrate their capacity as indigenous knowledge producers (Cloete & Auriacombe, 2019; Fairfax, 2017). While trainings and downward knowledge transfers have been beneficial to the common *mwananchi*, identifying and sharing indigenous knowledge also remains a crucial consideration to be made. The donor community and the local agencies should, therefore, reconsider the emphasis for evidence of actual perceptions and knowledge systems of the beneficiary communities (Mwambari, 2021).

### ***Policy Recommendations***

Given the problem faced in the conceptualisation of terrorism and violent extremism, it is necessary that both state and non-state interventions accommodate the subjective descriptions based on subaltern voices. Understanding the contextual meanings of violent extremism, based on indigenous knowledge, is more likely to inform the design of community-based activities that are recognised and owned by the community actors for realistic outcomes to be achieved. This recommendation takes into account the concern that “defining terrorism is a tall order [and] achieving a consensus concerning the definition of counterterrorism presents even greater difficulties” to the state and NGOs (Louis & Shor, 2019, p. 18). The implication of this predicament is the evidence that despite significant efforts made by the continental systems of governance and the commitments pledged by different state parties, a “disconnect between [the] formal and informal [interventions] remains both in policy and practice” (Ani & Matambo, 2016, p. 135).



According to Ani and Matambo, (2016), the formal interventions are classified based on their documentation (or recording) of the process. In many cases, the formal activities are structured according to existing legislations, and are often “institutionalised” through governmental and non-governmental systems of governance (Cannon & Iyekepolo, 2018, p. 371). The institutional entities are not necessarily indigenous to the areas of interventions (Abdulazeez & Oriola, 2018). This explains why programmes that are designed in the formal frameworks are more likely to be “recognised both in policy and practice circles at the detriment of the informal” local structures (Ani & Matambo, 2016, p. 135).

On the contrary, the informal activities, which comprises non-documented or unstructured aspects of interventions, are more likely to be embraced by the communities in championing the everyday conflict prevention, conflict transformation, and post-conflict reconstruction (Hull & Svensson, 2008). It is imperative therefore, that indigenous systems of knowledge must be adapted in the policy frameworks for the purposes of achieving meaningful and equal parameters for participation in tackling violent extremism. To enhance the space for African women, the state and NGOs may want to establish how women are proactively involved in the interventions whether their contributions are depicted as formal or informal in nature (Ani & Matambo, 2016).

Improving policies for tackling gender exclusion in the contemporary activities for P/CVE stands a better chance in African contexts if the international actors and local institutions can recognise the programmatic “under-reporting of women’s informal work” (Ani & Matambo, 2016, p. 137). It is also important to address the polarising binaries exhibited in the stereotypes and dichotomies between “formal and informal”, most of which are blurring the research initiatives on women’s inclusion, documentation and mainstreaming into P/CVE programming. Pearson et al. (2020, p. 281) emphasise that “above all language matters”. The implementing agencies, whether state or non-state have to take note that the way in which narratives are framed “impacts on the effectiveness of CVE and on the willingness and ability of people, including women, to engage in the field” (Pearson et al., 2020, pp. 281–283). It is important that inclusion of women in the interventions, is not

just a concern about women or men, but about power relations and the recognition of positionality of local (male and female) actors as knowledge producers in the intervention strategies.

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## APPENDICES

[Human Ethics Application 20/016]

[Date]



### **ENGENDERING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN KENYA: SPACE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN TACKLING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET**

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

#### **What is the Aim of the Project?**

The study aims at combining theory and practice in preventing and countering violent extremism, while addressing the issue of gender exclusion in Africa. It, therefore, explores developing a locally-appropriate and gender-inclusive approach that enhances the voice of women. I do not only question the dominant Western voices on the issues of conflict and peace in Africa, but also examine the role played by predominantly Western (donor) designed programmes on exclusion. This finally aims at drawing the possibility of modifying (the Eurocentric) Conflict Transformation Theory to consider the contextual issues in Africa, while focusing on Kenya as a case study.

#### **What Type of Participants are being sought?**

The study seeks participation from individuals who have been actors in the peacebuilding programmes and initiatives to counter violent extremism. Preferably those who have worked in different regions (of Kenya) are recruited as participants. This include those who work in state and non-state agencies that implement different programmes for countering violent extremism. Academic and researchers in different institutions will equally be included, based on their work or publications in peace and security initiatives, covering violent extremism. Indigenous volunteer peace actors at grass-root will also be considered where applicable. This implies that only adults aged 20 years and above will be included as participants. Those who might have encountered previous impact of violent extremist attacks are encouraged to share their experiences with the researcher in advance, for purposes of exclusion. This would be necessary for the protection of participants from any form of trauma. It is entirely for the safety of all participants.

### **How many participants?**

At least twenty (20) participants are targeted to take part in the interviews. This implies that at least five (5) participants will be interviewed in each region (study site). All participants will be purposively selected based on their previous work. In case anyone will be unwilling to answer some specific questions or to proceed for whatever reason, they will have the freedom to skip or stop at any level at which they are comfortable. The interview process will be done by telephone call, zoom, skype or filling an online form. Since all interviews will be need internet or airtime to be undertaken by phone call or online discussions, a token of NZ\$ 50, will be given to every participant to take care of their airtime and internet costs. All participants will have equal voucher issued after their engagement.

### **What will Participants be Asked to Do?**

Should a participant volunteer to take part in this study, they will be asked to make choice of how and when to participate. That implies that all participants selects whether to participate through a telephone call or online discussion by zoom and/or skype. The questions will cover some aspects of contextual understanding of programme interventions designed to prevent and counter violent extremism. This includes the consequent role played by African women in the process. The questions will also involve an examination of the local perspectives and challenges in the programmes for countering violent extremism. The results are expected to provide empirical evidence for recasting the Conflict Transformation Theory to produce a locally appropriate approach that would help in achieving social justice in Africa.

Since the interview schedule is in English, participants will have the freedom to choose their preferred language in the discussion. Should one be interested to participate, they should feel welcome and let the researcher to know of their interest. At the end of each process, a participant may be asked to help in identifying another person whom may be of interest given the questions asked. Participants are reminded to be aware that one may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage of any kind to oneself.

### **What Data or Information will be collected?**

Participant's opinion during the conversations will form the data as collected. This will be captured through audio recording and notes taken by the researcher. In situations where online forms are used the data sets will be in text form. The raw data will thus comprise of the voices of local actors (at different levels) about their knowledge of existing programmes, regarding the scope of their engagement, and explanations of their specific roles in the initiatives. The information will therefore provide insight on how different programmes can be improved to reflect contextual knowledge and indigenous practices. This will also clarify how such programmes can be made more gender-inclusive for the purposes of attaining social justice. The research findings are further expected outline some of the challenges in peacebuilding, especially in terms of the strategies to address violent extremism in the local context. It is important noting that the audio recorded conversations (or notes taken) will be or shared with the individual participants to confirm if it reflects what they wanted to say in the interview – for purposes of validation. All

the data will then be processed (through transcription and cleaning) before being analysed. However, no corrections will be made to any data sets after such information is published in a report or other outputs.

In order to capture the rich information necessary for drawing conclusions, guiding questions have been proposed in advance but more details of the discussions will emerge through the conversations. Generally questions will follow the schedule of the interview protocol (appendix IV), and the questioning process will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee will be aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview. While the Committee reviews the questions, it would be important that adequate provision is made to allow for flexibility in terms of the precise questions during the interviews. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that a participant feels hesitant or uncomfortable to answer, they will be reminded of their right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and the freedom to withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

### **What Use will be Made of the data?**

The analysed data will be securely stored in such a way that only the researcher and supervisors will be able to gain access to it. The supervisors will review the analysed data for purposes of quality assurance, in order to ascertain accuracy and reliability. All the data will then be retained for at least 5 years in secure storage. Any personal information held on the participants such as audio tapes, after they have been transcribed may be destroyed at the completion of the research even though the data derived from the research will, in most cases, be kept for much longer or possibly indefinitely. Again, for purposes of confidentiality, all data will be coded and anonymised right from the source to the reporting stage to only express the voice from participants. For participants' assurance, only the student researcher and supervisors, can access the data at this stage.

The information will be used/disseminated in academic fora such as conferences and symposia, besides developing the thesis. At any of those stages of dissemination, consideration will be made to develop a summarised and simplified version of the report, which can then be shared with participants. This should provide unlimited access to outcomes of the study to also inform daily peacebuilding initiatives. The research outcome will also be used in the development of reports, papers, articles, and thesis most of which will be shared online. Participants will not be identified personally in any report, and no personal information will be published.

The results of the study may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity. As already stated above, every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity. Any participant who may wish to have access to the information provided, or just to have access to the results of the study, can contact the researcher at [oansa726@student.otago.ac.nz](mailto:oansa726@student.otago.ac.nz).

In order to ensure utmost participant safety, there are consent forms to be signed by each participant. On the consent form participants will be given options

regarding anonymity. Every attempt will be made to preserve participant's anonymity. However, with specific consent, there are some responses may be attributed individual participants, especially where they are the authority. That can only be applicable where the contributions pose no safety risk to the participant. It is absolutely up to the participants to make choices on such options.

### **Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?**

Every participant may withdraw their consent of participation in the project at any time, or at any stage of the interview, during data collection session. There will be no disadvantage posed on the participant at all, based on their decisions to withdraw from the study. However, once the findings of the study have been published, the researcher will not be able to withdraw any content provided by the participants since they may not be traced back to individual contributors.

### **What if Participants have any Questions?**

If participants have any questions about this project, either now or in the future, they should feel free to contact either:-

Samwel Oando  
National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies  
+254 721 284 772 or 03 470 3592  
[oansa726@student.otago.ac.nz](mailto:oansa726@student.otago.ac.nz) .

or

Prof. Richard Jackson  
National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies  
03 470 3592  
[richard.jackson@otago.ac.nz](mailto:richard.jackson@otago.ac.nz)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email [gary.witte@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gary.witte@otago.ac.nz)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.



## **ENGENDERING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN KENYA: SPACE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN TACKLING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### ***Consent Statement:***

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and I do understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

1. My participation in the study is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project before its completion without any disadvantage;
3. No personal identifying information will be published. Any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning seeks one's opinion, contributions, challenges and any recommendations on initiative for countering violent extremism. Participants will thus be asked about their views as everyday peace builders, and what can help in preventing and countering violent extremism. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked will depend on the way in which the interview discussions develop. In the event the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the study without any disadvantage of any kind;
5. During the interviewing sessions, attention will be paid to avoiding any potential distress or discomfort to every participant. While a participant will not be specifically asked to recount traumatic experiences, should these come up, ones self-care will be prioritised above any further data collection. Where applicable the researcher will advise the participant to seek information for local support including counselling services. Participants can also be asked to stop participating in the interview.

6. This study exclusively relies on voluntary participation, and all measures will be taken to ensure participant's convenience. Since the interview will either be online or on phone call, a standard reimbursement of NZ\$ 50, will be made to cater for airtime and internet costs, being compensation for costs incurred by individual participants. The study has no budget for any other personal expenses like lunch, refreshments and travel reimbursements and so, participants' unqualified consent will be appreciated.
7. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve anonymity of all participants.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....

(Signature of participant)

(Date)

.....

(Printed Name)

.....

Name of person taking consent

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email [gary.witte@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gary.witte@otago.ac.nz)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.



Note to the Ethics Committee: This study will rely on purposive sampling and snowball procedure will be adopted to recruit the participants, hence, this advertisement may not be applicable.



## **ENGENDERING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN KENYA: SPACE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN TACKLING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

This study explores the local understanding of violent extremism as part of addressing different forms of exclusion. It considers enhancing the space for women in the peacebuilding initiatives for tackling violent extremism.

For this purpose, this research seeks for participants (aged at least 20 years) who live, or have lived in the region for more than 3 years or have worked on peacebuilding for at least six months. The following comprise of the different categories of possible participants:

- i. Peacebuilding actors in the institutional setting (employees) of state and non-state agencies (as **Key informants**);
- ii. [*Only where applicable*] Grass-root (community based) actors in peacebuilding (as **Indigenous practitioners**);
- iii. Local peacebuilding/CVE experts 'specialists' from the academia and other local institutions/organization (as **Conventional actors**).

All participants will be eligible to receive the summary report from this study for their continued peace interventions. Your convenience will be highly regarded since no reimbursement nor compensation will be made to participants during the study.

Each session of interview or FGD may take 60-90 minutes

Contact Details: Name, address, phone number and email address of principal investigator

**This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human  
Ethics**

**Committee. Reference: ###/####]**



## ENGENDERING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN KENYA: SPACE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN TACKLING VIOLENT EXTREMISM;

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Introduction

Thank you for accepting to take part in this interview. This study, which is undertaken at the **National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies - University of Otago**, aims to develop a locally-appropriate and gender-inclusive approach to countering violent extremism.

The central question explores how the prevailing dynamics of tackling violent extremism may have determined the peacebuilding space, with unequal gender participation in Kenya/Africa.

All information you provide remain confidential, so answer in your own words, and feel free to ask what you don't understand. In case you are unwilling to answer any question or to proceed, you are free to skip. This process may take 40-60 minutes of your time, *so you can save and continue later when you have time.*

Can we proceed? Yes I consent to participate [ ☐ ]; No, I decline to proceed [ ☐ ]

#### Preliminary Information

- i. State date and location of interviewee (at the time of interview)
- ii. Affiliation and Designation of participant [e.g Organization, government department or Institution]
- iii. The region (site) of (official jurisdiction) in Kenya [e.g international, national, counties]
- iv. Gender of participant

.....

#### Interview themes/guide

1. **Experience and opinion of the Actors (*kindly take note of the emphasis and probes*)**
  - a. Would you share briefly, your personal experience (and/or expertise) with initiatives [programmatic, academic or both] to counter terrorism or violent extremism (CVE)? [*Consider to capture the following in your response: what have you been doing, where, what is your view on the current outcomes of the CVE interventions*]
  - b. Based on your experience (or knowledge) in countering violent extremism (CVE) or peacebuilding, do you think it's possible to achieve a gender-

- inclusive approach in the CVE interventions? [*probe: kindly give explanations based on your response, including what can be done better*]
- c. What would be the benefit of having a gender inclusive or gender-sensitive intervention in CVE? What difference can inclusion of as many women as men bring to the programming and intervention outcomes?
  - d. How can programmes for [preventing](#) and [countering](#) violent extremism in Kenya influence/change/or fit within the peacebuilding space that guarantees equal gender participation? [*probe based on response given*].
  - e. What would you say about the intersection between [peacebuilding mechanisms](#) and [CVE interventions](#) based on your [experience](#) or [practice](#)? [Indicate whether you consider the two mechanisms as being different or similar, how and why]

*Kindly attach any sample of previous work or recommend a link here [ ]*

## **2. Contextual issues in terrorism and countering violent extremism**

***RQ 1: How do the (imported/foreign) Western constructions on the meaning of violent extremism impact on mainstream mechanisms for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in Kenya?***

- a. What are the dominant constructions on (or understanding of) violent extremism locally in Kenya? How can such understanding inform the interventions for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) mechanisms in Kenyan context?
- b. What, in your opinion, constitutes terrorism or violent extremism? [Probe: How would you state the meaning (give description) of terrorism or violent extremism in your local language or in **Kiswahili**?]
- c. Thinking about any previous initiatives (for countering violent extremism) which you can remember or that you have encountered, what meaning do you think has been assigned to violent extremism at community level? [*Probe: what are the equivalent local terminologies or meanings assigned in programming etc.*]
- d. What, in your opinion, would better describe violent extremism – taking into account the local context and dynamics of indigenous knowledge?
- e. Based on your experience in Kenya (or on general knowledge), how is violent extremism [different from](#) or [related](#) to: [*be very brief in each of these cases*]
  - i. Ordinary crime that includes murder, vigilantism, bandits etc.
  - ii. Elections related violence
  - iii. Citizens riots or violence against the state (like actions by MRC)
  - iv. Cross border warfare like guerrilla or insurgency
  - v. State violence e.g. extrajudicial killings
- f. How can we describe acts of terrorism, or violent extremism **without** implications to any al Shabaab activity in Kenya?

*Kindly attach any programme document if any that shows local CVE activities [ ]*

## **3. Programme design and intervention challenges**

***RQ 2: In what ways can programmes for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) generate structural barriers that undermine the space for African women?***

- a. In your opinion, how can **P/CVE mechanisms generate structural barriers** that pose gendered nuances undermining the space for African women?
- b. Would you share, if there exists, any aspects of exclusion especially of women in the academics, in government programmes or in the Non-State interventions for Countering Violent Extremism? [probe: *what are the reasons that obstruct the voices of African women*]
- c. What gaps, do you think, are the most dominant both in the CVE or Peacebuilding initiatives in Kenya/Africa?
- d. How could any of the gaps (above) affect the participation of women in peacebuilding and CVE interventions? [probe: *how can women's participation would make a difference to bridge the gaps*]
- e. How can the CVE or peacebuilding initiatives be improved to achieve some better outcomes for sustainable peace in Kenya? [by reducing/eliminating the challenge of terrorism]

*Attach any report with recommendations on gender inclusion and voices of Kenyan women in CVE*

**RQ 3: How can the space of women in be enhanced in P/CVE based on conflict transformation approach? (For researcher analysis only)**

- a. Explore on modalities (based on RQ2) to conceptualize a model for enhancing participation of women based on contextual factors.
- b. Using the model, generate theory to explain how indigenous perspectives in RQ1 may be incorporated in tackling violent extremism while enhancing space for women in local contexts.

END

*This is the end of our interview. Thank you so much for participating. Let me know if you may wish to be directly quoted (based on your response) in the final report or whether you want to remain strictly anonymous. Your identity will be fully protected in each case.*

.....

*Do you have any questions, comments or recommendations to the researcher?*

*Any other document you may want to attach can be placed here [ ]*

END