




INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL of KENYA

KOICA
Korea International
Cooperation Agency



FAITH-BASED APPROACHES TO PEACEBUILDING AND PCVE IN KENYA

CASE STUDY

2026



Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK)

Peacebuilding and Preventing Violent Extremism

Kilifi County - Congregational Alternative Narratives Model

People reached

120,000

Across Kilifi County

Radio talk shows

4

Local broadcast platforms

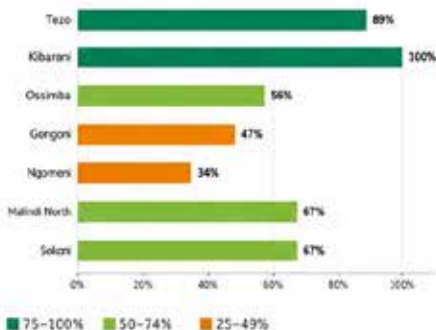
Congregations

7

Active towns & sub-counties

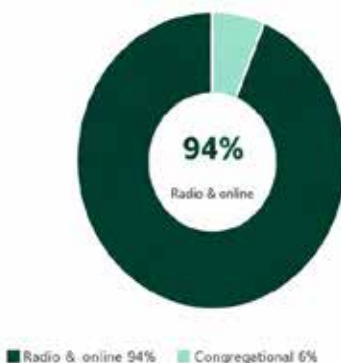
Congregation locations

% of sermons/khutbas integrating peace narratives



Reach: congregation vs amplified

Estimated persons reached by channel



Promotion of alternative narratives — congregational model

Faith leaders as messengers

Sermons & Khutbas embed peace messaging and challenge extremist narratives via scriptura

Shared values emphasis

Tolerance, coexistence and rejection of violence as community-wide principles

Youth-focused messaging

Consistent engagement building awareness of recruitment dangers among young people

Outcomes achieved



Amplification pathway

Congregations x 7 → 4 Radio talk shows → Online platforms → 120,000 reached



Table of Content

1. ABSTRACT.....	2
2. INTRODUCTION.....	3
3. PROGRAM APPROACH.....	4
4. CASE STUDY.....	6
5. KEY OUTCOMES.....	25
6. LESSONS LEARNT.....	26
7. RECOMMENDATION FOR UPSCALING AND REPLICATION.....	27

Abstract

The Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) has since April, 2025, through its county Inter-Faith Networks in Kisumu, Kilifi, and Marsabit, implemented a comprehensive set of community-based interventions aimed at strengthening the role of religious institutions in peacebuilding and the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism (PCVE). For more than one year, the programme engaged 187 faith leaders, reached an estimated 68,000 community members directly, and provided indirect reach to over 880,000 people through radio, social media channels and congregational platforms.

The programme combines faith-based messaging, youth economic empowerment, community dialogue, reintegration support, and government collaboration. Key results include:

- Some 1,240 at-risk and reformed youth have received economic and reintegration interventions support;
- Forty-two self-help groups have been formed;
- More than 280 youth have been assisted with national ID registration, and;
- There has been strengthened trust between communities and state institutions.

These efforts have contributed to measurable improvements in community resilience, reduced vulnerability to extremist recruitment, and enhanced socio-economic opportunities.

The initiative responds to context-specific drivers of extremism, which include youth unemployment, marginalisation, intergenerational tensions, land-related conflicts, interfaith mistrust, and cross-border dynamics. Through the strategic use of congregational platforms, media engagement, livelihood initiatives, and structured dialogue forums, the programme has contributed to enhanced community resilience, improved trust between citizens and state institutions, and increased socio-economic opportunities for at-risk populations. The findings, documented in this case study, underscore the critical role of faith-based actors in addressing both ideological and structural drivers of violent extremism, demonstrating the effectiveness of locally grounded, community-owned, and sustainable approaches to peacebuilding.

1. Introduction

Kenya continues to experience complex and evolving security challenges stemming from violent extremism, criminal networks, political mobilisation of youth, and persistent socio-economic inequalities. While certain regions, particularly coastal and northern areas, remain highly vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups, other parts of the country, including urban and peri-urban environments, are increasingly affected by youth disenfranchisement, social fragmentation, and limited economic opportunities. These dynamics highlight the need for preventive approaches that go beyond traditional security responses to address the underlying drivers of vulnerability at the community level.

The counties of Kilifi, Kisumu, and Marsabit present distinct yet interconnected contexts that shape the nature of risk and resilience. In Kilifi County, structural inequalities such as land insecurity, unemployment, and harmful cultural narratives, including age-based violence, have created an environment in which the youth are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation. Kisumu County, characterised by urban and peri-urban settlements, faces challenges related to youth marginalisation, reintegration of formerly imprisoned individuals, and strained relationships between communities and state authorities. In Marsabit County, the interplay of inter-communal conflict, cross-border dynamics, resource-based competition, and pastoralist livelihoods creates a fragile socio-political environment that can facilitate recruitment into violent or criminal networks.

In response to these challenges, the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya has implemented a national programme designed to strengthen the role of religious institutions in peacebuilding and PCVE. Faith-based organisations are uniquely positioned to lead such interventions due to their moral authority, credibility, and ability to convene diverse stakeholders across religious, ethnic, and generational lines. By equipping faith leaders with the knowledge, skills, and platforms to promote peace and counter-extremist narratives, while simultaneously addressing socio-economic and psychosocial vulnerabilities, the programme provides a holistic framework for building resilient communities.

2. Programme approach

The IRCK programme adopts a community-centred and integrative approach to preventing violent extremism, recognising that effective prevention requires simultaneous engagement with both ideological and structural drivers of vulnerability. At its core, the initiative is premised on the understanding that radicalisation is not solely driven by extremist ideologies, but is often rooted in socio-economic exclusion, identity crises, marginalisation, and weak relationships between communities and state institutions.

One of the central pillars of the programme is the dissemination of alternative narratives through faith-based platforms. A total of 187 religious' leaders across churches and mosques have systematically integrated peace messaging into at least 1,850 sermons, khutbas, fellowships, and community engagements, promoting values of tolerance, co-existence, and non-violence. These platforms provide consistent and credible channels through which communities are exposed to narratives that challenge extremist ideologies. In some contexts, such as Kilifi and Marsabit, these efforts have been further amplified through local radio programmes and other media platforms reaching about 120,000 residents per month.

Complementing ideological interventions, the programme places strong emphasis on youth economic empowerment as a critical strategy for reducing vulnerability to recruitment. Across the three counties, targeted initiatives have been implemented to equip at-risk and reformed youth with practical skills in entrepreneurship, business development, and income generation. A total of 1,240 youth (68% male, 32% female) participated in entrepreneurship, life skills, and business development training. Some 42 self-help groups were formed and linked to government opportunities (Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Kazi Majuu, National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement - NYOTA platform) across Kisumu, Kilifi and Marsabit. By addressing economic exclusion and providing viable livelihood alternatives, the programme enhances youth agency, restores dignity, and reduces susceptibility to extremist

recruitment.

In addition, the programme prioritises community outreach and dialogue as essential mechanisms for addressing social tensions and rebuilding trust. A total of 38 interfaith and intergenerational dialogue fora have been conducted, involving 2,850 participants. These gatherings and community engagement platforms have created safe spaces where sensitive issues such as mistrust, discrimination, and harmful cultural practices can be openly discussed. The assemblies foster mutual understanding, promote social cohesion, and enable communities to collectively identify and address local drivers of conflict and extremism.

.A further critical component is reintegration support for youth transitioning from incarceration or high-risk environments. Some 312 formerly marginalised individuals received mentorship, psychosocial support, and livelihood linkages, reducing recidivism and strengthening social inclusion.

In addition, the programme emphasises collaboration with government and institutional stakeholders as a means of enhancing coordination, trust, and sustainability. A total of 27 coordination meetings with critical partners such as the County Commissioners, Kenya Prisons Service, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC), and the Ministry of Health have been held, enabling a more coordinated and responsive approach to addressing both security and development challenges.

3. Case study

The implementation of the programme across Kisumu, Kilifi, and Marsabit counties illustrates how religious leaders, peace actors and government institutions are addressing drivers of vulnerability through a combination of peace messaging, economic empowerment, reintegration support, and institutional engagement.

3.1 Kisumu County

3.1.1 Faith leaders using the pulpit to promote peace and counter radicalisation

Religious leaders remain among the most trusted voices within Kenyan communities. Under the IRCK programme, faith leaders have been encouraged to integrate peace messaging and counter-radicalisation narratives into their sermons and religious teachings.

Two prominent examples are Sheikh Yusuf Matano and Pastor Jared Omollo, who together with 48 other trained faith leaders in Kisumu, integrated peace messaging into sermons reaching approximately 18,000 congregants to promote peace and discourage violent extremism.

Through sermons, youth discussions, and religious gatherings, both leaders emphasise themes of tolerance, respect for diversity, and the rejection of violence as a means of addressing grievances. They also use scriptural teachings to challenge narratives that justify violence or discrimination.



Figure 1: Sheikh Yusuf Matano of Kisumu Interfaith Network at a peace promotion session on alternative narratives with youths from Kajulu Madrasa.

3.1.2 Youth reintegration and economic empowerment through faith networks

Economic vulnerability remains one of the key factors that can make youth susceptible to recruitment into criminal or extremist networks. Recognising this challenge, faith leaders have supported initiatives aimed at providing practical economic alternatives for at-risk youth.

One notable initiative is led by the Kisumu Interfaith Network chairperson, Archbishop Betty Onyango, who, in her capacity as a mental health worker at the Jaramogi Odinga Teaching & Referral Hospital, has brought together 12 groups of 285 reformed youth drawn from informal settlements within Kisumu County, particularly Manyatta, Kondele and Nyalenda. The groups initially came together through the Medically Assisted Therapy Clinics and have since been engaged in faith-based mentorship and counselling sessions organised under the Kisumu Inter-Faith Network.



Figure 2: Archbishop Betty Onyango, the chairperson of the Kisumu Interfaith Network, takes ex-convicts and recovering addicts through a psychosocial support session

With guidance from the archbishop and community mentors, the youth have organised themselves into self-help groups and begun engaging in small-scale income-generating activities, including:

- i. Soap manufacturing and supplying to more than 4,200 households and businesses within the community.
- ii. Collection of used/waste plastic bottles for recycling and reuse as containers for detergents and liquid soaps, as well as creative artwork as flower vases, and for use in kitchen gardens.
- iii. Garbage collection through a reformed youth who was previously imprisoned and has opened a garbage collection enterprise that employs 47 youths newly released from prison.
- iv. Carpentry and woodwork through a furniture enterprise run by a former imprisoned youth to harness the skills of 18 other former inmates gained while in prison.

Since the self-help groups are formally registered, they can now easily access training opportunities, financial inclusion services, and potential support from county development initiatives.

Beyond the economic benefits, the initiative has significantly strengthened the youths' sense of identity, dignity, and belonging, hence reducing the likelihood of them returning to harmful activities. Many participants report that the programme has helped them rebuild relationships with their families and communities.

As one youth participant explained:

“Before joining this group, many of us had no direction. The mentorship from the faith leaders helped us realise we could change our lives. Now we are working together and supporting each other.”

3.1.3 Community reintegration support for youth leaving prison

Reintegration after incarceration presents a significant challenge for many young people, who often face stigma, discrimination and limited economic opportunities. Without support, some may return to criminal networks or become vulnerable to exploitation.

Mrs. Hawa Abdul, a community-based faith actor involved in the programme, has been working closely with the Kenya Prisons Service and the Kisumu local interfaith network to support the reintegration of 98 youths released from prison.



Figure 3: Youths under the patronage of Mrs. Hawa Abdul during a psychosocial support session and counter-narratives training.

Through her community outreach efforts, she has helped establish a community-based support network that provides a “soft landing” for youths and adults leaving prison. The initiative focuses on:

- i. Mentorship and counselling through the interfaith network.
- ii. Linking returning individuals to livelihood opportunities and self-help groups.
- iii. Promoting community acceptance, and reducing stigma and discrimination associated with former incarceration.

This collaboration with correctional institutions ensures that individuals leaving prison are not isolated but instead find welcoming community structures that support their transition back into society.

Additionally, an important component of her work involves engagement with Madrasa teachers by collaborating with them and other influential Muslim community leaders to mentor young people and provide guidance grounded in religious teachings that counter extremist Islamic narratives, emphasise compassion, personal responsibility, and peaceful coexistence. These Madrasa-based sessions provide safe spaces where youth can openly discuss their experiences and challenges while receiving moral and spiritual guidance that encourages positive behavioural change.

3.1.4 Building trust between youth and government authorities

A critical component of preventing violent extremism is strengthening trust between communities, particularly youth, and state institutions. Within the programme, structured dialogue sessions have been organised between youth groups and local government authorities, including the County Commissioner's office and representatives from his office.

At the beginning of the programme, many young people who had served jail terms lacked national identification cards, which limited their access to employment opportunities, government services, and participation in civic processes. The lack of identification documents also contributed to mistrust between youth and government authorities.

Through dialogue facilitated by the Kisumu IFN, the youth were able to openly raise these concerns with the County Commissioner and his assistants, who committed to support efforts to address the issue.

Following these engagements, the County Commissioner's office, in liaison with the National Registration Bureau, facilitated the registration of eligible youth within the community. As a result, a total of 142 young people have obtained their national identification cards as well as voter cards, significantly improving their access to employment opportunities and government services.



Figure 4: Assistant County Commissioner Tolbert Raphael addresses returnees, ex-convicts and reforming addicts on available government opportunities and services.

One youth participant, Peter Mbinda, reflected on the impact of this intervention:

“Before these meetings, many of us felt that the Government did not listen to us. When the County Commissioner gave us sufficient information on processing our IDs as well as access to their offices in case of any challenge, it showed that they were willing to support us.”

Assistant County Commissioner Tolbert Raphael emphasised the importance of partnership with community actors:

“Working with faith leaders and youth groups has helped us understand the challenges young people face. These partnerships make it easier for government to respond to community needs.”

These engagements have helped reduce mistrust while strengthening collaboration between youth, faith leaders, and government institutions in addressing local security and development concerns.

3.2 Kilifi County

3.2.1 Promotion of alternative narratives and peace messages through the congregational model

Faith leaders in Kilifi have under the IRCK programme blended peace messaging and alternative narratives into their sermons, Khutbas and religious teachings across congregations in Tezo, Kibarani, Chasimba, Gongoni, Ngomeni, Malindi Town and Sokoni.



Figure 5: Congregants at Swalihina Masjid in Malindi identifying extreme narratives and mapping peace messages in prevention of violent extremism.

Two prominent examples are Rev. Oketch and Sheikh Harun Musa, who together with 62 other faith leaders delivered peace messages through congregations and four radio programmes with a monthly reach of 120,000 people. Additional online amplification reached several thousands more youths.

Through sermons and religious gatherings, both leaders consistently emphasise themes of tolerance and the rejection of violence as a means of addressing community grievances. They draw on scriptural teachings to directly challenge narratives that seek to justify violence, division, or discrimination, offering their congregants faith-based alternative narratives rooted in peace and co-existence.



Figure 6: Rev. Mwanango sharing peace messages with his congregants at Kaireni Baptist Church in Tezo, Kilifi County in March, 2026.

The use of congregational platforms provides a multiplier effect that has allowed both leaders to reinforce positive narratives consistently and influence community attitudes at scale, particularly among youth. Their sustained engagement has contributed to stronger interfaith cooperation and heightened awareness among young people about the dangers and consequences of extremist recruitment.

Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK)

Peacebuilding and Preventing Violent Extremism

Kilifi County - Congregational Alternative Narratives Model

People reached

120,000

Across Kilifi County

Radio talk shows

4

Local broadcast platforms

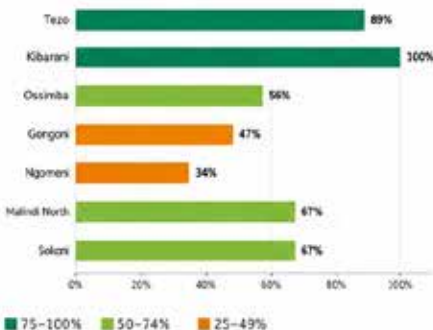
Congregations

7

Active towns & sub-counties

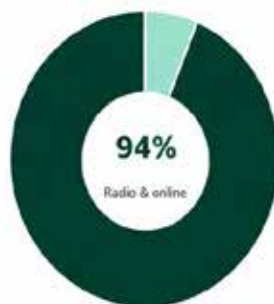
Congregation locations

% of sermons/khutbas integrating peace narratives



Reach: congregation vs amplified

Estimated persons reached by channel



Radio & online 94% Congregational 6%

Promotion of alternative narratives — congregational model

Faith leaders as messengers

Sermons & Khutbas embed peace messaging and challenge extremist narratives via scriptura

Shared values emphasis

Tolerance, coexistence and rejection of violence as community-wide principles

Youth-focused messaging

Consistent engagement building awareness of recruitment dangers among young people

Outcomes achieved



Amplification pathway

Congregations x 7 → 4 Radio talk shows → Online platforms → 120,000 reached

3.2.2 Youth livelihood and economic resilience initiatives

Local youth in Kilifi County remain vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment into violent extremism for lack of employment opportunities, idleness, and the breakdown of traditional sources of livelihood. Under the IRCK programme, targeted investments in youth economic resilience have sought to address these root causes by equipping 428 young people with practical skills, linking them to tangible opportunities and fostering a sense of purpose and belonging as protective factors against extremism.

One standout example is Ali Mohammed, who participated in IRCK's structured training sessions on economic resilience, job searching skills, business development, and entrepreneurship. These sessions integrated life skills, citizenship values and social cohesion, going beyond technical knowledge to build well-rounded, community-conscious young leaders.



Figure 7: Mr. Ali Mohammed taking youth in Kilifi County through the NYOTA application process and proposal development procedure in February, 2026.

Armed with new knowledge and skills, Ali has since become a peer champion, actively training 310 of his peers on how to leverage the NYOTA platform and access opportunities such as the Kazi Majuu programme and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund. Through this peer-to-peer mentorship model, Ali has created a powerful multiplier effect, extending the programme's reach well beyond its direct participants to the wider youth community in Kilifi.



Figure 8: Kilifi Interfaith Youth Network chairman Mohamed Ali engaging youth leaders during an economic empowerment session on the NYOTA platform opportunities in Kilifi North.

Importantly, Ali's story demonstrates that economic empowerment and the restoration of hope are among the most effective tools for preventing violent extremism. In turning skills into shields, the programme has strengthened individual livelihoods and also built community-level resilience, reduced vulnerability to extremist recruitment and established a replicable model of youth-led peacebuilding across Kilifi County.

3.2.3 Awareness creation through community outreach programmes

Communities in Kilifi County have grappled with extreme narratives rooted in ageism, where dangerous misconceptions have led to the deadly targeting of elderly community members branded as witches. Simultaneously, interfaith tensions in several areas threatened social cohesion and created fertile ground for divisive and extremist ideologies. Under the IRCK programme, community outreach and intergenerational dialogue were deployed as frontline tools to address these deeply rooted social fault lines.

Two intergenerational dialogues were organised to confront these harmful narratives head on, bringing together youth, elders, religious leaders, and community members in safe and inclusive spaces. These dialogues enabled open and honest conversations about the root causes and drivers of age-based violence, fostering mutual understanding and respect across generations. As reflected by Princess Tumaini, one of the participants: "The opportunity to sit together, the young and the old, and truly listened to each other. I left that meeting knowing my grandfather was not my enemy, but my protector." These engagements not only de-escalated tensions but empowered community members to become local advocates against age-based discrimination and extremist narratives.

Additionally, IRCK conducted eight community outreaches reaching 1,650 residents in conflict-prone areas across Kilifi County, creating platforms for meaningful interaction among diverse religious communities. These outreaches dismantled mistrust and reinforced a shared commitment to peaceful co-existence and resilience against divisive ideologies.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate that community-owned dialogue and sustained grassroots outreach are powerful and replicable models for addressing the social drivers of violent extremism in Kilifi County and beyond.

3.3 Marsabit County

3.3.1 Faith leaders using the pulpit to promote peace and counter radicalisation

Religious leaders in the county have embraced IRCK's call to integrate peace messaging and counter-radicalisation narratives into their sermons and religious teachings. Two prominent examples are Pastor Mwenda, Pastor Elema, Rev Mbuthia and Pastor Diba of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the one hand, and Sheikh Mohammed Noor of the Marsabit Jamia Mosque, on the other. The two groups of faith leaders have actively used their congregations as platforms for promoting peace and discouraging violent extremism.

Through sermons, youth discussions, and religious gatherings, the leaders emphasise themes of tolerance, respect for ethnic and religious diversity, and the rejection of violence as a means of addressing grievances. They also use scriptural teachings to challenge narratives that justify violence or discrimination, particularly those that exploit ethnic divisions or cross-border dynamics.



Figure 9: Participants during community outreach at the Lutheran Church where Pastor Joseph Mwenda of KAG urged the congregants to be tolerant of each other.

Importantly, these messages reach large audiences through weekly congregational gatherings and during major interfaith events, allowing faith leaders to consistently reinforce positive narratives and influence community attitudes over time. Their engagement has contributed to stronger interfaith cooperation, reduced inter-communal tensions, and increased awareness among youth about the dangers of extremist recruitment.



Figure 10: Madam Rahma Hirbo, member of Marsabit Women of Faith, creating awareness on violent extremism during the weekly women's madrasa Istighfar in Saku, Marsabit County.

3.3.2 Youth reintegration and economic empowerment through faith networks

To check economic vulnerability—a key driver of youth to recruitment into criminal or extremist networks, faith leaders have supported initiatives aimed at providing practical economic alternatives for at-risk youth.

One notable initiative led by the Marsabit Interfaith Network's economic empowerment committee, in partnership with local faith leaders and community mentors, is a youth mentorship and psychosocial support programme. Eighteen self-help groups of youth mentors drawn from informal settlements and nomadic pastoralist communities within Marsabit County, particularly Saku, have been engaged in faith-based mentorship and counselling sessions. With guidance from faith leaders and community mentors, the youth have organised themselves into anti-PCVE ambassadors.

Beyond the sensitisation, the initiative has significantly strengthened the youths' sense of identity, dignity, and belonging, hence reducing the likelihood of them getting lured into harmful activities. Many participants report that the programme has helped them rebuild relationships with their families and communities and has provided peaceful alternatives to resource-based conflicts. As Marsabit youth leader Abdiaziz Muchu explained: "Before joining this group, many of us had no direction and were easily drawn into conflict. The mentorship from the faith leaders helped us realise we could change our lives. Now we are working together and supporting each other across clans and communities."

3.3.3 Community reintegration support for youth leaving prison

Many young people returning to the community after incarceration often face stigma, discrimination and limited economic opportunities. Without support, some may return to criminal networks or become vulnerable to exploitation. Sheikh Bashir Somo, who is involved in the IRCK programme in Marsabit, has been working closely with the Kenya Prisons Service and the local interfaith network to support the reintegration of 116 youth returning from prison. Through his community outreach efforts, he has helped establish a community-based support network that provides a "soft landing" for youth and adults leaving prison. The initiative focuses on:

- i. Mentorship and counselling provided through the interfaith network.
- ii. Linking returning individuals to livelihood opportunities and self-help groups.
- iii. Promoting community acceptance and reducing stigma associated with imprisonment.
- iv. Engaging with clan elders and community leaders to ensure returning individuals are welcomed back into community structures.

This collaboration with correctional institutions ensures that individuals leaving prison are not isolated but instead find welcoming community structures that support their transition back into society.

Additionally, an important component of his work involves collaboration with Madrassa teachers and church youth leaders, and other influential religious community leaders to mentor young people and provide guidance grounded in religious teachings to counter extremist narratives, emphasise compassion, personal responsibility, and peaceful co-existence. These interfaith sessions provide safe spaces where youth can openly discuss their experiences and challenges while receiving moral and spiritual guidance that encourages positive behavioural change and cross-community solidarity.

3.3.4 Building trust between youth and government authorities

Trust between communities, particularly youth, and state institutions, is a critical component of preventing violent extremism. Within the programme, structured dialogue sessions between youth groups and local government authorities, including the County Commissioner's office and his representatives have taken place. At the beginning of the programme, many young people who had been involved in inter-communal conflicts or had served jail terms lacked national identification cards, which limited their access to employment opportunities, government services, participation in civic processes, and heightened mistrust between youth and government authorities, particularly in border areas where movement is heavily monitored. Through dialogue, facilitated by the Marsabit Inter Faith Network, youths were able to openly raise these concerns with the County Commissioner and his assistants, who committed to coordinate with the National Registration Bureau to facilitate mobile registration drives in remote areas and streamline the registration process for eligible youth within the community.

As a result, 138 young people have obtained their national identification cards as well as voter cards, significantly improving their access to employment opportunities, government services, and cross-border trade. One youth participant, Stephen Roba said: "Before these meetings, many of us felt that the Government did not listen to us, especially in remote areas. When the County Commissioner gave us sufficient information on processing our IDs as well as access to their offices in case of any challenge, it showed that they were willing to support us."

Mr Martin Buluma, an Assistant County Commissioner in Marsabit Central, emphasised the importance of partnership with community actors: "Working with faith leaders and youth groups has helped us understand the challenges young people face, including cross-border dynamics and resource-based tensions. These partnerships make it easier for government to respond to community needs." These engagements have helped reduce mistrust while strengthening collaboration between youth, faith leaders, and government institutions in addressing local security and development concerns.

4. Key outcomes

The implementation of the programme across the three counties has yielded a range of significant outcomes that reflect both immediate and long-term impacts. There has been a substantial expansion in the dissemination of peace messaging and alternative narratives through faith-based platforms and media engagement reaching over 68,000 community members directly and an additional 880,000 through radio, social media channels and congregational platforms. This has resulted in increased awareness and shifts in community attitudes. Community resilience against extremist ideologies, interfaith tensions, and harmful social norms has been strengthened through sustained dialogue and engagement.

Economic empowerment initiatives have provided 1,240 at-risk and reformed youths with viable livelihood opportunities, reducing their vulnerability to recruitment and enhancing their sense of agency and belonging. Reintegration support systems have improved, enabling smoother transitions for individuals returning after serving jail terms and reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Additionally, partnerships between faith leaders, communities, and government institutions have been strengthened, leading to improved trust, collaboration, and responsiveness to local challenges. The emergence of youth champions and peer mentors in Kisumu, Marsabit and Kilifi has further amplified the impact of the programme at the grassroots level.

5. Lessons learnt

The experiences from the implementation of the programme across Kisumu, Kilifi, and Marsabit counties provide several important insights. First, faith leaders are highly effective agents of change due to their credibility, influence, and consistent engagement with communities. Their ability to shape narratives and mobilise collective action makes them critical actors in preventing violent extremism.

Second, addressing economic vulnerability is essential in reducing youth liability to recruitment. Economic empowerment not only provides alternatives to harmful activities but also restores dignity and strengthens social inclusion. Additionally, reintegration support is a crucial component of prevention, as it addresses the needs of individuals transitioning from high-risk environments and reduces the likelihood of re-engagement in harmful behaviours.

Furthermore, structured dialogue between communities and government institutions plays a vital role in building trust, improving communication, and fostering collaborative approaches to security and development challenges. Finally, community-driven and context-specific approaches that integrate social, economic, and cultural dimensions are more sustainable and impactful in addressing the complex drivers of violent extremism.

6. Recommendations for upscaling and replication

Building on the successes and lessons of the programme, there is a need to scale up and institutionalise these interventions to ensure long-term sustainability and impact over the next 18 months. Expanding the use of media and digital platforms can significantly enhance the reach of peace messaging and counter-narratives. At the same time, increasing investment in youth economic empowerment initiatives will be critical in addressing persistent socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Strengthening reintegration support systems through formalised community-based programmes and deeper collaboration with correctional institutions will further enhance social inclusion and stability. Continued engagement and partnership with government agencies are essential to ensure alignment with policy frameworks and improve service delivery.

Institutionalising interfaith and community dialogue platforms will provide ongoing opportunities to address emerging tensions and strengthen social cohesion. Integrating programme outcomes into county-level action plans will enhance visibility, ownership, and sustainability. Additionally, targeted efforts should be made to extend interventions to remote and underserved areas, particularly in counties such as Marsabit.

Finally, there is a need to invest in robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems to track progress, measure impact, and inform future programming. By strengthening these areas, the programme can continue to provide a scalable and replicable model for faith-based peacebuilding and the prevention of violent extremism in Kenya and beyond.




INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL of KENYA

KOICA
Korea International
Cooperation Agency



FAITH-BASED APPROACHES TO PEACEBUILDING AND PCVE IN KENYA

CASE STUDY

2026