



SRIC: PILOT INTERVENTION LEARNING PAPER

PROJECT TITLE:

Understanding Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) within Hidden Conflict Contexts: An Integrated Approach

The Amaya Triangle where Baringo borders Samburu, Laikipia, Isiolo and West Pokot Counties provides a rich pilot site for exploring community safety and security programming in fragile, conflict and violence affected settings (FCVAS). Towards this end, the REINVENT Programme worked with African Women and Child Future Services (AWCFS) to undertake a pilot study to understand how socio-cultural norms and harmful practices, unequal power relations, and patriarchy make women and girls vulnerable to violence such as child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), girl-beading, and battering, and how these affect empowerment and enjoyment of human rights. The AWCFS led this work with Community Safety International (CSI), Security Research and Information Centre's (SRIC) and Baringo Peace Action Consortium (BPAC) as contributors. To acquire a deeper understanding of these issues, a case study was conducted to establish, first, the influence of gender norms on cattle rustling, a harmful cultural practice and major source of conflict and insecurity in Samburu, Laikipia and Baringo counties; and secondly, the

sources of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and how patriarchy normalises and enhances this form of violence.

This paper highlights lessons emerging from the pilot phase and how strategic interventions in FCVAS frame the role and agency of women and girls to address these triple challenges. One stark lesson emerging from this pilot intervention is in FCVAS women's collective action is an important aspect of conflict and power and thus shapes, political bases in both formal and informal structures, channels, movements, and actions.

The lessons emerging are important for the design of gender mainstreaming and VAWG interventions in these settings where power dynamics needs to take into consideration silence and concealment as social norms. The findings are relevant for the effective implementation of conflict management interventions and how to engage key influencers obtained from the Amaya triangle's database of women and girls who are involved in peace and security processes.

Design of Implementation



The design of the study acknowledged the interrelationship between tackling VAWG, policing and peacebuilding processes and the need for a holistic approach to address them. While the focus in the pilot intervention was on the REINVENT VAWG workstream, the design took into account that success in preventing, ensuring justice for survivors of, and reducing, VAWG is dependent on case management by police officers as well as addressing drivers of conflict and insecurity in the Amaya region. Three activities were executed during the pilot phase. These were:

- i) A case study to understand the influence of gender norms and patriarchy on the role of women and girls in the conflict cycle, especially cattle rustling in Baringo, Samburu, and Laikipia counties.
- ii) Production of a database of women and girls who are

actively involved in peace, safety and security processes in Laikipia, Samburu and Baringo counties. This forms the basis of inclusion and recognition of women and girl's agency in peace and security process.

Stakeholder meetings:

one with the Police (National Police Reservist and Police officers from the gender desk, child protection units, reporting desks and crimes unit); on application of the NPS Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on prevention and response to GBV/VAWG role of women in peace and security as well as their ability to monitor and document cases of VAWG. The second with reformed warriors; the third with male elders and opinion makers, and the fourth with women leaders; on the influence of Patriarchy on VAWG and role of women and girls in peace, safety, and security.

Emerging Lessons

1. Developing well gendered and strategic interventions requires in depth community insights:

Focus group discussions involving women, girls, elders, morans, security personnel, and non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the community, enabled us to establish that in FCVAS, norms of fear rooted in patriarchy and distrust of formal authorities due to years of marginalisation by the state and underdevelopment shape the spaces and nature of 'voice'. Many interventions assume that 'voice' develops when communities are aware of retrogressive cultural practices. We established that even with increased advocacy and awareness, the internalisation of fear plays a significant role in sustaining and concealing these cultural practices and creating a cycle of advocacy campaigns with little behaviour change.

Working with personnel of CSI who understood these local communities helped to identify very resourceful community members who provided greater insights to their problems and what they think need to be done to solve them.

Moving forward, the REINVENT tackling VAWG interventions will explore how to tackle the internationalisation of fear resulting from community sanctions and how educated and elite groups use the spiral of silence to sustain retrogressive cultural practices that endanger women and girls.

2. Contingency planning is crucial during implementation:

The deteriorating security in Baragoi on the eve of our travel to the area, meant re-planning, reaching out to security officers to advise us on the safety of the other locations we were proposing to visit. We worked closely with CSI's local networks with the Chiefs and other security apparatus who helped us assess the security situation, but, more importantly, offered us a secure environment as we undertook our work. Moving forward, partners should develop with contingency plans before setting out to the field.

3. Design interventions that address community covenants that become revolving doors for VAWG:

One of the assumptions we had was that the women and men interviewed would volunteer information on VAWG and conflict without significant effort. We found, however, that some of the issues we were interrogating were treated as community covenants that members do not speak about them freely to strangers. We had to constantly reassure them that information would remain confidential before respondents agreed to open up.

4. Integrating approaches by different partners enriches the delivery:

Planning joint activities with CSI and SRIC at the community level improved programme delivery and provided an integrated approach to solving community challenges. In

Samburu and Laikipia, we worked closely with CSI to agree the activities and issues we wanted to address; identification of participants; identification of implementation locations; and jointly ran dialogue meetings where CSI personnel doubled as resource person with in-depth knowledge of the socio-cultural beliefs and practices of the community.

CSI personnel, Milcah, helped with translation and recruited other from the community to do the same.

In Baringo, SRIC provided access to police stations and senior security officers to introduce the SOPs and peace and security issues we focused on. In Baringo, we worked with BPAC who helped to mobilise participants and provided feedback on the security situation as it evolved. This was helpful when we wanted to go to Loruk area where the situation was fluid. These collaborations ensured quick implementation of activities, working with strategic stakeholders at the community level, and more focused actions that met the objective of the exercise we were engaged in.

Moving forward, the REINVENT Programme will encourage joint interventions and collaboration between partners working in similar areas.

5. Integrating the young girl's agenda in broader women peace and security programming augments their voice and influence:

During interviews, we learnt that there were issues with the consolidation of girl's issues together with women's issues, as this obscures specific concerns girls face when it comes to their safety and security. This included issues such as addressing FGM, girlbeading, and even their utility before, during and after conflicts e.g. to act as local informants and hide arms. It was clear from the interviews that the approaches that included the voice of girls and women separately in peace and security issues in counties such as Samburu and Baringo, produced better results than when they are excluded.

Moving forward, the REINVENT Programme will consider designing projects that address the specific challenges that girls face within fragile, conflict and violence affected settings such as the Amaya triangle counties.

6. Designing interventions that build on both men and women's agency is strategic:

We found the use of gender specific and gender integrated interventions to address problems affecting women and girls had a positive reception from the community. Interviews with women and girls indicated that there were challenges they were able to surmount on their own, such as girl-beading issues, where women have greater

power in accepting or refusing their girls to be beaded. Here although women's agency exists, the broader cultural context that suppresses women voices makes it difficult for them to express their thoughts and actions. Hence, there is a need to explore ways of working with women and men in the community to amplify women's agency. From our interviews, the men, especially the elders and fathers, emerged as the final decision makers and custodians of the many harmful cultural practices that were troubling women and girls in these counties. Their pronouncements on these matters were final and rarely gave space to women and girls to speak. The same men have developed a narrative why practices such as FGM

and girl-beading are critical for the survival of the community. This indicates the strategic role men in these counties are going to play to end VAWG. Starting a conversation on the need for men to allow girls to air their views on FGM and girl-beading or seek their consent before circumcision will be key to addressing this practice. Such conversations will be led by respected men in the community. This is also the case with reformed morans that CSI helped identify. The morans are key beneficiaries of FGM and girl-beading, and hence using them as change agents is key to challenging these cultural practices.

Challenges experienced during the pilot phase and mitigation measures for each.

1. High illiteracy levels and language barrier among the respondents interviewed during the case study. Apart from Baringo, majority of participants in Samburu and Laikipia could only express themselves well in the local language. This meant significantly prolonged interviews; an interview that would normally take two hours could take up to four hours.

Mitigation: We used translators who were fluent in local language and in Kiswahili and English. Meetings were scheduled to start very early in the morning and end late in the evening to take care of the long nature of interviews.

2. The insecurity and the rough terrain that had to be covered to implement the activities made us revise our plans while on the ground. This was the case of the conflict in Baragoi that started a day before we were scheduled to travel to the location. The rough terrain and long distances that were covered increased the cost of logistics and the number of days required to do the interviews.

Mitigation: We had to revise our plans and select new and safe areas where interviews could be done. We also negotiated with respondents who were from very remote or conflict prone areas to congregate in venues that were safe and near accessible roads.

3. Challenging nature of the conversation, often led to emotional responses by participants as they narrated the

effect of conflict and VAWG on them and their families. This affected the mood of the workshops, leading to delays in the implementation of the programme of the day.

Mitigation: The participants who exhibited emotional breakdown were comforted and given time to compose themselves before the meeting continued. We had to come to a consensus with the participants the need to extend the hours of the meetings to recover the time lost.

What were the factors of success?

The following were some of the reasons why the pilot interventions was successful

- Working in a collaborative manner with other REINVENT partners who had networks and local knowledge of the areas that were very new to AWCFS.
- The commitment of the participants to agree to long hours of interviews and to share some of the sensitive information about their communities without holding back.
- Flexibility and quick turnarounds of the project teams on the ground to reorganise the work plan, especially when the security situation deteriorated in areas that were to be visited.
- General calmness in areas that usually suffer from insecurity and violent conflicts that in the past have made implementing of projects very difficult.

Conclusion

The role of women in activating and disrupting cycles of conflict in the Amaya Triangle is an underexplored area for study and programmatic interventions. This study sought to provide an exploratory view of the prevailing tensions between acceptable culture and the social norms that enable the persistence of VAWG and protected under community covenants of silence. The design of gender mainstreaming and tackling VAWG interventions in these settings needs to take into consideration silence and concealment and factor in the important role played by women in peace and security processes.

ABOUT US

Reducing Insecurity and Violent Extremism in the Northern and Coastal regions of Kenya (REINVENT) is a £20m 5-year programme that aims to enhance Kenyan capacity and capability to address inter-communal conflict, weak community-police relations, violence against women and girls (VAWG), violent extremism and election related violence. It will support the continued advancement of police reforms to improve the management, oversight and accountability of the police force. The programme is delivered by TetraTech International Development in partnership with the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) and the Danish Demining Group (DDG) builds on the experience of the Jamii Thabiti Programme (2014-19), also known as the Kenya Improving Community Security Programme (ICS), and expands DFID support across more counties. It supports new areas of work including conflict sensitivity, pastoral livelihoods and combating violent extremism.

Impact of the programme:

Improved community safety and security as measured by effect on inclusive and equitable development, investment and service delivery in Kenya

Envisaged outcome of the programme:

Improved state and non-state actors' collaboration in a mutually accountable and inclusive manner to respond effectively to root causes of violence.

Programme outputs:

- Increased practice of accountability to build police (and other security agencies) effectiveness when addressing community security, violent extremism and election security.
- Strengthened agency of women and girls in peace, safety and security
- Intra and inter institutional commitment to address the root causes and drivers of conflict
- Knowledge and evidence generated and utilised to enhance community and institutional learning and adaptation.

6 . Countering Violent Extremism: Based on RUSI's experience from the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) programme and other CVE interventions, REINVENT's approach to CVE envisions an effective CVE policy framework

1 . Police Reform: The police reform agenda in Kenya envisions quality policing services for a safe and secure Kenya through strengthened capacity among policing institutions to address institutional and people centered reforms.

5 . Conflict Sensitive Development in the Northern and Coastal Regions: Kenya's rapid but unequal pace of economic growth poses enormous political and social ramifications. REINVENT Programme approach to Conflict Sensitive Development (CSD) is to promote the practice of conflict sensitivity among state, development actors and private sector in their planning and implementation of development and large-scale infrastructure projects in the country

2 . Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls: The Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Gender Mainstreaming workstream supports national, county and community initiatives, discourses and activities that deliberately interrogate gender inequalities and increase the agency and voice of women and girls.

4 . Enhancing Election Security for a Peaceful General Election in 2022: Kenya's electoral narrative has often been characterized by systemic failings in implementing violence free electoral management processes. REINVENT Election Security work is closely intertwined with police reforms, tackling VAWG and peacebuilding

3 . Peacebuilding to address Inter-communal conflict: Understanding that there are multiple fault lines in Kenya where inter-communal conflict occurs, driven by failure to address structural, institutional, historical, cultural and legal factors, creating opportunities for VE groups and criminal gangs to take advantage of conflict and instability,

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