

# JOURNEY TO EXTREMISM IN AFRICA



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*



Copyright © 2017  
by the United Nations Development Programme  
Regional Bureau for Africa  
1 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10071, USA

For more information, visit  
[www.journey-to-extremism.undp.org](http://www.journey-to-extremism.undp.org)

**JOURNEY TO EXTREMISM IN AFRICA:  
DRIVERS, INCENTIVES AND  
THE TIPPING POINT FOR RECRUITMENT**



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*



---

‘I am convinced that the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, based on the full respect of human rights and with economic opportunities for all, represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism.’

António Guterres  
*United Nations Secretary-General*





## FOREWORD

# Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa

The expanding reach and destructive consequences of violent extremism are among the major challenges to peace faced in today's world. In Africa, 33,300 fatalities are estimated to have been caused by extremism between 2011 and 2016, with related displacement and economic devastation contributing to among the worst humanitarian catastrophes ever seen on the continent. Violent extremism is also posing a direct and manifest challenge to the gains enjoyed by many countries over recent years, and threatens to stunt development outcomes for generations to come if left unchecked. The steep rise in violent extremist activity in Africa represents a significant threat to global security and development overall.

Development actors are uniquely placed within the overall response architecture for tackling violent extremism, and have an integral role to play in averting the threats posed by preventing and transforming it. Development expertise and resourcing can be leveraged to address structural drivers; to support communities in implementing deradicalization initiatives; and to help ensure that former members of violent extremist organizations are socio-economically reintegrated, among many other critical areas, many of which are explored in this report.

Many partners are already taking up the challenge with new programmes and initiatives, and wide-ranging Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) interventions. However, the question remains open as to how to most effectively respond. Collective reflection is needed on lessons that emerge from past and present interventions – not only on the development side, but also across the mainstream of counter-terrorism. To date, overall success is mixed at best, as insecurity continues to deepen. The challenges also demand a closer nexus between the security and development arms of government, and more integrated ways of working than has yet been achieved.

UNDP is leveraging its own long-established presence, partnerships and expertise to contribute to preventing the threat of violent extremist expansion across Africa. In 2015, we developed a bold Africa-wide initiative, Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach, which works with national governments and stakeholders, regional institutions, faith-based institutions, civil society and many others to augment PVE interventions while also striving to contribute new understanding and knowledge. Through this programme, we are supporting national and regional partners to develop new strategic

responses that strike at the core of the conditions that are conducive to violent extremism. At the same time, we are working in other areas, such as in assisting religious leaders to develop curricula for the governance of religious institutions, and building bridges between security actors and communities to reduce distrust and mutual suspicion.

We know the drivers and enablers of violent extremism are multiple, complex and context-specific, while having religious, ideological, political, economic and historical dimensions. They defy easy analysis, and understanding of the phenomenon remains incomplete.

Undertaken as part of the UNDP Africa PVE programme, the *Journey to Extremism in Africa* study has been a complex two-year intervention explicitly designed to respond to knowledge and evidence gaps – building on our earlier work exploring perceptions on radicalization, violence and insecurity in the Sahel. Specifically, it aims to generate improved understanding about the incentives and drivers of violent extremism, as expressed by recruits to the continent’s deadliest groups themselves. Our team has travelled to remote areas of Africa to conduct the largest ever number of interviews with individuals who have been recruited by violent extremist groups.

Our intention has been to develop a picture of the typical ‘journey map’ to violent extremism: from childhood, through to the ‘tipping point’ for recruitment, and even on to demobilization. We have drawn on our expertise from across the organization to interpret the resulting dataset, and to identify where development actions can help build resilience.

We believe this study provides important findings about violent extremism in Africa with direct implications for policy and programming. The *Journey to Extremism* study assesses and suggests a reframing of some key aspects of existing responses, while confirming the relevance and need for deepening in other areas. I am delighted to invite you to read on, and to urge our collective focus and efforts to stem and transform violent extremism in Africa, towards sustainable development and peace.



Abdoulaye Mar Dieye  
Assistant Administrator and Director  
Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Journey to Extremism in Africa* team who collaborated in producing the research findings and the present aggregate report included: Ozonnia Ojielo, Mohamed Yahya, Jessica Banfield, Chinpihoi Kipgen, Anneli Botha, Ilwad Elman, Sandra Macharia, Simon Ridley, Njoya Tikum, Fauziya Abdi Ali, Andie Davis, Natalia Voronova, Duhitha Wijeyratne, Kristin Hagegård and Janneke van Hemmen.

The team expresses its sincere thanks to Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP, for his strategic vision and leadership, without which this research would not have been carried out. We are also deeply grateful for the financial support provided to this ambitious project and for the confidence shown in our work by the Government of Japan, the Government of the Netherlands and the Government of Sweden. We are furthermore grateful to the Government

of Cameroon, the Government of Kenya, the Government of Niger, the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Federal Government of Somalia, and the Government of Sudan for their support in enabling the interviews that formed the basis of this research; and to our partner organizations as well as individuals who led the field research: the Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre in Somalia, Building Resilience to Violent Extremism (BRAVE) in Kenya, Neem Foundation in Nigeria, Professor Issa Saibou in Cameroon, and Khalid Eltahir of UNDP in Sudan. The drafting of this report was greatly enriched by the expertise shared by a number of UNDP and other colleagues, who took the time to review and comment at different stages, and whom we also thank for their insights.

We thank Studio Mnemonic for expert graphics and design.



# CONTENTS

List of figures	2
Executive summary	4
Introduction	12
Demographic profile of research sample	22
Chapter 1: Family circumstances, childhood and education	32
Chapter 2: Religious ideologies	44
Chapter 3: Economic factors	54
Chapter 4: State and citizenship	62
Chapter 5: The ‘tipping point’ and recruitment process	72
<i>Journey to Extremism in Africa: Profile infographic</i>	82
Implications for policy and programming	84
Endnotes	94
References	98
Annex 1: Overview of the econometric analysis	100

## LIST OF FIGURES

	page		page
Figure 1	13	Figure 18	36
Figure 2	14	Figure 19	37
Figure 3	23	Figure 20	37
Figure 4	23	Figure 21	37
Figure 5	24	Figure 22	38
Figure 6	24	Figure 23	38
Figure 7	25	Figure 24	39
Figure 8	25	Figure 25	40
Figure 9	26	Figure 26	46
Figure 10	26	Figure 27	47
Figure 11	27	Figure 28	47
Figure 12	27	Figure 29	48
Figure 13	27	Figure 30	48
Figure 14	34	Figure 31	49
Figure 15	35	Figure 32	49
Figure 16	35		
Figure 17	35		

	page		page
Figure 33	50	Figure 47	66
READING COMPARED TO UNDERSTANDING OF THE QURAN <i>Voluntary group</i>		'DO YOU THINK ELECTIONS CAN BRING CHANGE?' <i>By category of respondent</i>	
Figure 34	56	Figure 48	67
MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI) <i>By region in Kenya (2014)</i>		'HOW PROUD ARE YOU OF YOUR COUNTRY?' <i>By category of respondent</i>	
Figure 35	56	Figure 49	67
MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI) <i>By state in Nigeria (2013)</i>		'RATE YOUR WILLINGNESS TO DIE FOR YOUR COUNTRY' <i>By category of respondent</i>	
Figure 36	57	Figure 50	74
'WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE YOU GOT INVOLVED WITH THE ORGANIZATION (OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW)?' <i>By category of respondent</i>		SPECIFIC INCIDENT THAT FINALLY MOTIVATED RESPONDENT TO JOIN THE ORGANIZATION <i>Voluntary group</i>	
Figure 37	57	Figure 51	74
PERIOD BETWEEN INTRODUCTION AND JOINING THE ORGANIZATION <i>Voluntary by type of employment</i>		EMOTION THAT BEST CAPTURES DECISION TO JOIN <i>Voluntary group</i>	
Figure 38	57	Figure 52	75
TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT (IF EMPLOYED) <i>By country of interview</i>		'WHO INTRODUCED YOU TO THE ORGANIZATION?' <i>Voluntary group</i>	
Figure 39	58	Figure 53	75
MOST IMMEDIATE NEED AT TIME OF JOINING THE ORGANIZATION (OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW) <i>By category of respondent</i>		PERIOD BETWEEN INTRODUCTION AND JOINING THE ORGANIZATION <i>Voluntary group by organization</i>	
Figure 40	59	Figure 54	76
RATING OF FRUSTRATION AT THE FOLLOWING <i>Voluntary group</i>		FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE <i>By category of respondent and country of interview</i>	
Figure 41	59	Figure 55	76
'WERE YOU PAID FOR BEING A MEMBER OF THE ORGANIZATION?' <i>Voluntary and forced groups</i>		'HAVE YOU EVER BEEN APPROACHED TO JOIN AN EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION?' <i>Reference group by country of interview</i>	
Figure 42	63	Figure 56	77
'DO YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT: THE GOVERNMENT ONLY LOOKS AFTER AND PROTECTS THE INTERESTS OF A FEW?' <i>By category of respondent</i>		RATING OF TOP REASONS FOR NOT JOINING EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION <i>Reference group</i>	
Figure 43	64	Figure 57	77
RATING OF GOVERNMENT SUCCESS IN PROVISION OF THE FOLLOWING <i>By category of respondent</i>		'WERE YOU AWARE OF ANY INITIATIVES TO PREVENT PEOPLE FROM JOINING?' <i>By category of respondent</i>	
Figure 44	64	Figure 58	78
'DID YOU EVER PAY A BRIBE?' <i>By category of respondent</i>		'WHAT PREVENTED YOU FROM CONSIDERING THESE INITIATIVES?' <i>Voluntary group by country of interview</i>	
Figure 45	65	Figure 59	78
RATING OF TRUST IN THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS <i>By category of respondent</i>		INFLUENCE OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS IF INDIVIDUAL SURRENDERED OR APPLIED FOR AMNESTY <i>Voluntary group</i>	
Figure 46	66	Figure 60	79
'HAVE YOU EVER VOTED IN ELECTIONS?' <i>By category of respondent</i>		'LOOKING BACK, WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU WANT TO MAKE?' <i>Voluntary group by status in organization</i>	
		Figure 61	89
		FRAMEWORK FOR CLARIFYING RELEVANCE OF ODA TO PVE	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violent extremism in Africa is setting in motion a dramatic reversal of development gains and threatening to stunt prospects of development for decades to come. From 2011 to 2016, it caused 33,300 fatalities as well as widespread displacement, creating situations of pronounced and critical humanitarian need. The 2015 United Nations Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism urges the global community of states to pay closer attention to the root causes and drivers of violent extremism, after decades of overconcentration on militarized approaches.

The *Journey to Extremism in Africa* report represents a major output of UNDP Africa's Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa programme, which has set out since 2015 to provide leadership and support to national and regional partners in delivering development-focused and effective responses to the expanding crises associated with violent extremism across the continent.

Just as violent extremism profoundly impacts the attainment of development goals, so the search for solutions must also place development approaches at its centre. Still, the evidence base concerning the causes, consequences and trajectories informing violent extremism – and what works in preventing it – remains weak globally. This is particularly true in Africa when compared to other regions.

The UNDP Africa *Journey to Extremism* study represents a unique contribution towards creating precisely such an evidence base concerning the drivers and incentives

for recruitment in Africa. This study is drawn from an unprecedented number of interviews with former recruits from multiple violent extremist groups spanning the continent.<sup>1</sup> The research process was developed with the objective of understanding the dynamics of the recruitment process, from its initial conditions and factors, through to the 'tipping point' that triggered particular individuals to take the step of joining a violent extremist group where others did not. Analysis of these findings yields new insights into pathways for more effective policy and programming responses.

### ***Journey to Extremism in Africa: Key findings***

Starting with the 'accident of geography' that is place of childhood, experiences related to living in highly peripheral regions of Africa – often borderlands and traditionally marginalized regions – begin to shape individuals' worldview and vulnerability. Long-standing realities of 'centre/periphery' divides have, if anything, been exacerbated by the recent economic growth enjoyed overall in Africa. The vulnerabilities of communities living in such areas (macro- and meso-level factors) were, in the journeys to extremism of the individuals interviewed, refracted through micro-level experiences of early childhood. These included a relative lack of exposure to people of other religions and ethnicities. Perception of childhood happiness was lower among those who went on to join violent extremist groups within the sample. The critical factor in explaining childhood unhappiness that correlates with future extremism is perceived lack of parental involvement in the child's life. Further, in environments where overall levels of

literacy and education are low, individuals who later join violent extremist groups are found in this research to be particularly deprived in educational terms. Their experience of civic engagement in childhood was also low.

The findings also clearly differentiate between perceptions about religion and its significance as a reason for joining violent extremist groups, and actual religious literacy. Fifty-one percent of respondents selected religion as a reason for joining. However, as many as 57 percent of the respondents also admitted to limited or no understanding of religious texts. Indeed, higher than average years of religious schooling appears to have been a source of resilience. These findings challenge rising Islamophobic rhetoric that has intensified in response to violent extremism globally, and demonstrate that fostering greater understanding of religion, through methods that enable students to question and engage critically with teachings, is a key resource for PVE. Further, feeling that ‘religion is under threat’ was found to be a common perspective among many respondents. This sounds a warning that recruitment by violent extremist groups in Africa, using religion as a touchstone for other context-based grievances, can readily expand.

---

### Just as violent extremism profoundly impacts the attainment of development goals, so the search for solutions must also place development approaches at its centre

The *Journey to Extremism* research unequivocally underscores the relevance of economic factors as drivers of recruitment. The grievances associated with growing up in contexts where multidimensional poverty is high and far deeper than national averages, with the lived reality of unemployment and underemployment, render ‘economic factors’ a major source of frustration identified by those who joined violent extremist groups. This is a key dimension of individuals’ vulnerability to narratives that invite them to channel such grievances and associated desperation into the cause of extremism. If an individual was studying or working, it emerged that that he or she would be less likely to become a member of an extremist organization. Employment is the single most frequently cited ‘immediate need’ faced at the time of joining. Individuals who joined but were studying or employed (not in vulnerable employment) at the time of joining the organization took longer to take the decision to join

than did counterparts either in vulnerable employment or unemployed. Respondents report uneven experiences in receiving salaries for being active members of violent extremist groups: some were paid above the local average, whereas at least 35 percent were not paid at all during their period of recruitment.

The research makes clear that a sense of grievance towards, and limited confidence in, government is widespread in the regions of Africa associated with the highest incidence of violent extremism. This may be an inevitable corollary of the life experience of growing up in the context of acute and relative multidimensional poverty, neglect and political marginalization affecting these areas. However, disaffection with government is highest by significant margins among the *Journey to Extremism* respondents who were recruited by violent extremist groups across several key indicators. These include: belief that government only looks after the interests of a few; low level of trust in government authorities; and experience, or willingness to report experience, of bribe-paying. Grievances against security actors, as well as politicians, are particularly marked, with an average of 78 percent rating low levels of trust in the police, politicians and military. Those most susceptible to recruitment express a significantly lower degree of confidence in the potential for democratic institutions to deliver progress or meaningful change. Meanwhile, positive experience of effective service provision is confirmed as a source of resilience: respondents who believed that governments’ provision of education was either ‘excellent’ or ‘improving’ were less likely to be a member of a violent extremist group, within the sample.

The research specifically set out to discover what pushed a handful of individuals to join violent extremist groups, when many others facing similar sets of circumstances did not. This specific moment or factor is referred to as the ‘tipping point’. The idea of a transformative trigger that pushes individuals decisively from the ‘at-risk’ category to actually taking the step of joining is substantiated by the *Journey to Extremism* data. A striking 71 percent pointed to ‘government action’, including ‘killing of a family member or friend’ or ‘arrest of a family member or friend’, as the incident that prompted them to join. These findings throw into stark relief the question of how counter-terrorism and wider security functions of governments in at-risk environments conduct themselves with regard to human rights and due process. State security-actor conduct is revealed as a prominent accelerator of recruitment, rather than the reverse.

Forty-eight percent of respondents joined in less than a month from first contact with the organization in question, and 80 percent in less than a year. This speed of recruitment shows the depth of the vulnerability faced. Emotions of ‘hope/excitement’ and ‘being part of something bigger’ were high among those who joined, indicating the ‘pull’ of opportunity for radical change and rebellion against the *status quo* of circumstances that is presented by violent extremism. Despite the highly personal aspects of the journey to extremism, local community social networks were also influential. Indeed, the journey to extremism in Africa appears to rely significantly less heavily than in other regions on the Internet as a venue for recruitment.

The highly localized nature of recruitment that is suggested by the findings has important implications for response strategies and the search for solutions that are tailored to Africa’s circumstances. The research found that respondents who were aware of initiatives to prevent people from joining slowed down the pace of recruitment. Forty-eight percent of those who joined violent extremist groups were aware of PVE initiatives, however identified distrust of those delivering these programmes as one of the primary reasons for not taking part.

### **Responding to violent extremism in Africa: Policy and programming implications**

Africa faces a unique vulnerability to violent extremism that is shaped by persistent underdevelopment and incomplete peacebuilding and state-building in key regions. There are immense challenges faced by governments: in delivering peace and stability, and in ensuring that the pace and benefits of growth keep up with the expansion of the most youthful population in the world. Narratives of radical upheaval and change, which appeal to the multifaceted sense of grievance that may envelop an individual whose horizons promise no path for advancement, will continue to be attractive as long as underlying circumstances remain unaddressed. Where there is injustice, deprivation and desperation, violent extremist ideologies present themselves as a challenge to the *status quo* and a form of escape. The message is tailored by recruiters to suit different contexts as well as different types of individuals. Still, low levels of education and a reliance on intermediaries to interpret religion allows largely imported ideologies to serve as a lightning conductor for the frustration and anger that is the inevitable consequence of generations of socio-economic and political marginalization.

Grievances against government and state security actors are particularly pronounced among those most vulnerable to recruitment, who also express deep-seated scepticism about the possibility of positive change. The speed with which recruitment has to date been shown to take place by this research illustrates the ‘ripeness’ for recruitment of those who do make the journey, and hence the depth of Africa’s vulnerability. Although recruitment is largely highly localized, steadily increasing connectivity across Africa will enable recruitment to expand over time, perhaps leading to larger numbers of African foreign fighters joining theatres of conflict outside of their immediate environments. Indeed, there is a very real prospect of an even greater spread of violent extremism in Africa than has been witnessed in recent years, with further associated devastation and backsliding in development terms. This warrants concerted efforts both to guard against and transform it. The window for sustained action to prevent and respond to violent extremism is now.

#### ***I. Policy implications***

##### **Delivering on global human rights commitments and rights-based approaches to militarized and state-centric counter-terrorism responses**

The *Journey to Extremism* research provides startling new evidence of just how directly counter-productive security-driven responses can be when conducted insensitively. These findings suggest that a dramatic reappraisal of state security-focused interventions is urgently required, including more effective oversight of human rights compliance, rule of law and state accountability. Going forward, it is essential to long-term outcomes that international commitments – such as those shared across United Nations member states – to human rights and rule of law, citizens’ participation and protection, and accountability of state security forces be actively upheld by all. It is also critical to ensure that there are no counter-productive results from counter-terrorism, particularly in regard to civic participation. In the absence of ‘state legitimacy’, in the eyes of citizens living in high-risk areas, initiatives that focus exclusively on state capacity-building run the risk of perpetuating malign power structures, which are overt drivers of violent extremist recruitment in Africa.

### **Reinvigorating state legitimacy through improved governance performance and accountability**

The importance of state legitimacy to delivering peacebuilding and state-building objectives is well-established globally. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 calls for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice for all, and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The research suggests that improved public policy and delivery of good governance by African governments confronted with violent extremism will ultimately represent a far more effective source of counter-terrorism and PVE than continued overconcentration on security-focused interventions. The *Journey to Extremism* findings call for a reinvigoration of commitment by states to upgrading the quality and accountability of institutions across service-delivery areas, at the national and sub-national levels, above all in at-risk areas. Deepening the democratic process and closely guarding its integrity, beyond the moment of elections, into a wider commitment to an inclusive social contract between government and citizens, as well as meaningful opportunities for civic engagement and participation in the national development agenda, are also highly relevant policy responses.

### **Connecting PVE with peacebuilding and sustainable development policy frameworks**

In addition to the critical importance of improved governance environments, the *Journey to Extremism* study underscores a spectrum of priorities and entry points along the journey of the individuals interviewed where different outcomes may have been achieved. These represent opportunities to directly influence and reduce further expansion of violent extremism in Africa. Indeed, accelerated implementation of the Transforming Our World: Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 that

includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in at-risk areas would provide an important foundation for long-term resilience.

Following a wider convergence between security and development over the past decade, and as signalled by the 2015 United Nations Plan of Action and other related policy frameworks, there is now increasing high-level recognition of the importance of development approaches in tackling the root causes, drivers and consequences of violent extremism as they variously play out in different settings. Challenges persist in integrating institutional perspectives across security, peacebuilding and development arms of government. Streamlining responses and drawing on all relevant departments and capacities, ensuring responses to violent extremism are embedded and coordinated, must intensify to ensure comprehensive strategies and lasting results.

At the same time, even as the development dimensions of violent extremism are gaining higher recognition, key development partner governments have already reduced or are considering reductions in official development assistance (ODA) expenditure. This sets the scenario of the range of resources invested in building peace and amplifying development gains shrinking, even as military expenditure continues to grow. Pulling back international support for accelerating development progress in areas at-risk of violent extremism in Africa would be unconstructive in the extreme. African states must themselves leverage ODA as well as domestic resources more effectively for prevention and response efforts. Military solutions alone will not deliver. Development budgets must be protected and smart, targeted PVE programming expanded by national and international actors alike if lasting results are to be achieved.

---

**Where there is injustice,  
deprivation and desperation,  
violent extremist ideologies  
present themselves as a  
challenge to the *status quo*  
and a form of escape**

## Clarifying tiers of relevance between ODA and PVE

At present, the global context in which international development budgets are facing shrinkage has created a significant inducement for development programming in at-risk African contexts to be rebranded as PVE-related. This brings its own challenges. Observers have raised concerns about the ‘securitization of aid’. They have also flagged the potential pitfalls that may arise through framing development interventions as PVE in highly charged political contexts.

Further, as yet there is limited consensus on precisely how different types of development programmes actually deliver PVE results. Development interventions that have the building of more peaceful and inclusive societies as core objectives are important. While *conducive* in a generalized sense to reducing the scope for violent extremism, confusion between these and more immediate PVE goals should be avoided. There is a clear argument for protecting development interventions in at-risk environments while at the same time expanding PVE-specific programming. In order to inform and shape more targeted programmatic responses, greater understanding of what this means for policy and programming needs to be articulated and internalized across relevant government institutions. (The full *Journey to Extremism* report includes such a framework.)

## Coordinating national, regional and global policy responses to violent extremism

Finally, it is necessary that policy responses be coordinated more effectively across the expanding plethora of actors engaged. This means appropriate roles and responsibilities defined and distributed; common understanding of drivers and entry points for prevention and transformation debated and established; and a shared commitment to mutual peer review and constant improvement. At present, the PVE space is crowded with players often working with contrasting understanding of priorities.

The 2015 United Nations Plan of Action calls on each member state to ‘consider developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and complements national counter-terrorism strategies where they already exist’. Such national planning processes should be inclusive, engaging a wide range of stakeholders. National plans provide a platform for convergence in understanding and prioritization, and efficient distribution of resources and capabilities across government agencies, international and civil society partners. Increasingly, there are also efforts to link national plans to the sub-regional level. This

responds to the invariably transboundary nature of violent extremist group activity, with some regional organizations beginning to develop their own strategies on PVE. In time, these can be linked again to the continent level and the African Union’s own related frameworks. International partners need to continue to work to find the most constructive mechanisms for supporting national and regional actors in this domain, taking care to coordinate among themselves.

## II. Programming implications

The *Journey to Extremism* research has shown that awareness of initiatives to prevent people from joining violent extremist groups does act as a factor influencing decision-making. However, a number of issues hampering the impact of some programmes can be observed and are hinted at in the research. These include issues of scale and resourcing, delivery modalities and the extent to which these prioritize implementers that are trusted locally, as well as responsiveness to actual incentives and drivers as experienced by affected individuals. Further, PVE programmes have tended to overlook gender dynamics and differences informing violent extremism at a number of levels.

Key programming entry points suggested by the research are as follows:

### Family circumstances, childhood happiness and education

- Supporting community-led outreach on good parenting, domestic violence and providing child-welfare services;
- Ensuring provision of education for all in at-risk areas (SDG 4), together with social protection interventions to ensure children’s sustained attendance at school;
- Upgrading school curricula and teaching quality, enabling the development of critical thinking, social cohesion, peace education and civic engagement values from childhood;
- Reducing the acute impoverishment, often relative in national terms, of areas such as those where the majority of the respondents grew up, with dedicated catch-up development programmes and commitments, and through accelerated and purposeful implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

## Religious ideologies

- Supporting and amplifying the voices of traditional religious leaders who challenge misinterpretations of Islam and preach religious tolerance and inter-faith cohesiveness;
- Providing opportunities for religious leaders to network and develop national and regional PVE strategies of their own;
- Investing in the development of community-led governance systems providing transparent and accountable leadership of religious affairs. Such systems should include mosque management, development and dissemination of curricula by religious preachers and *madrassas*, and engagement with parents on teaching content;
- Capitalizing on the important role that religious teaching can play as a source of resilience and supporting increased religious literacy among at-risk groups.

## Economic factors

- Investing in the economic regeneration of at-risk areas, upgrading infrastructure, access to markets and financial services, removing obstacles to entrepreneurship, and prioritizing job-creation opportunities;
- Providing immediate as well as long-term livelihood programmes and entrepreneurship training and schemes for at-risk youth, integrating citizenship values, life skills and social cohesion curricula into programme design;
- Working with demobilized former recruits to develop and communicate narratives designed to disincentivize at-risk groups regarding the economic opportunities of recruitment;
- Developing strategies that learn from the challenges of past disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes and successfully provide economic incentives and alternatives for violent extremist recruits – engaging wider communities so as to avoid being seen as ‘rewarding’ those recruited.

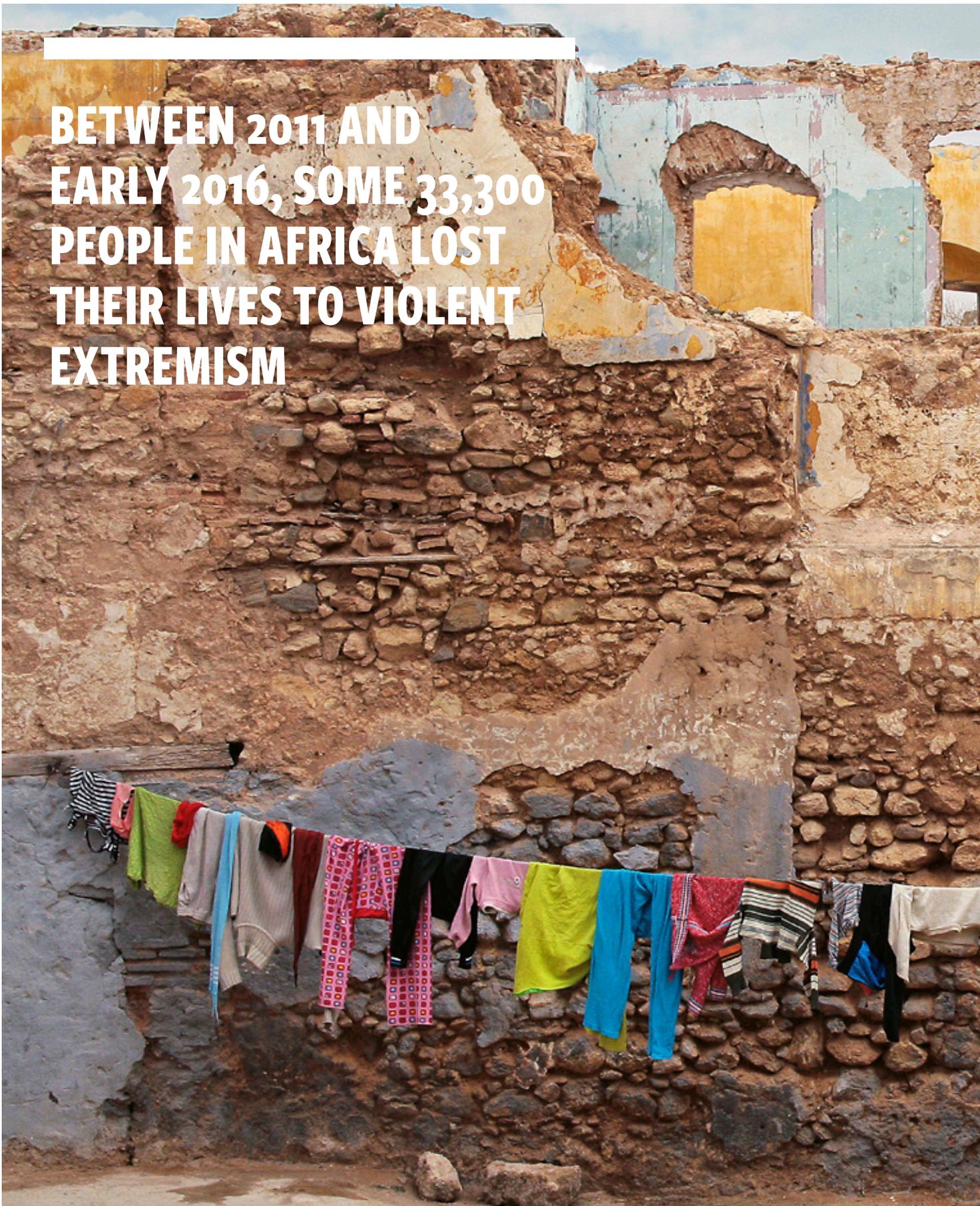
## State and citizenship

- Improving service delivery across the spectrum of security and other basic services provided by the state, integrating citizens’ oversight and engagement as part of delivery;
- Amplifying the effectiveness of anti-corruption campaigns with renewed emphasis on building state-citizen confidence and accountability, ending impunity for officials;
- Deepening democratic institutions and processes, and supporting related civic-education processes;
- Supporting initiatives to build national identities, social cohesion and citizenship.

## The ‘tipping point’

- Escalating the implementation of security-sector reform processes tailored to the specific challenges of violent extremism. These should be grounded in international humanitarian law, standards and rights-based approaches, integrating civic oversight and confidence-building mechanisms;
- Supporting community-led mentoring and trauma-counselling services;
- Implementing counter-messaging programmes that are highly contextualized in vernacular cultures, emphasizing peer-group factors and influences, and delivered through DVDs, SMS, radio and community centres, avoiding over-reliance on the Internet, and drawing on trusted local organizations as ‘messengers’;
- Scaling-up amnesty and other exit opportunities for disillusioned recruits, investing in comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration services;
- Leveraging the perspectives and voices of former recruits as conduits for counter-messaging.

**BETWEEN 2011 AND  
EARLY 2016, SOME 33,300  
PEOPLE IN AFRICA LOST  
THEIR LIVES TO VIOLENT  
EXTREMISM**





Blow-Up Image / Gallery Stock

# INTRODUCTION

The expanding reach and destructive consequences of violent extremism are among the major challenges to peace faced in today's world. Numbers of fatalities resulting from terrorist attacks perpetrated by violent extremist groups have risen steeply over the past two decades. A 10 percent reduction in overall fatalities during 2015 signified a hiatus following the 80 percent increase recorded in 2014. However, 2015 remained the second deadliest year on record, according to the *Global Terrorism Index*.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the human suffering implied, it is estimated that the global economic costs of violent extremism totalled approximately USD 89.6 billion in the same year.<sup>3</sup>

In 2015, four groups – the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Daesh), Boko Haram, the Taliban, and Al-Qaida – were responsible for 74 percent of all deaths from terrorism, with numerous countries across the world affected. As indicated in Figure 1 below, Sub-Saharan Africa has become the region reporting the second highest number of deaths after the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

FIGURE 1 NUMBER OF ATTACKS AND DEATHS FROM TERRORISM IN 2015 BY REGION

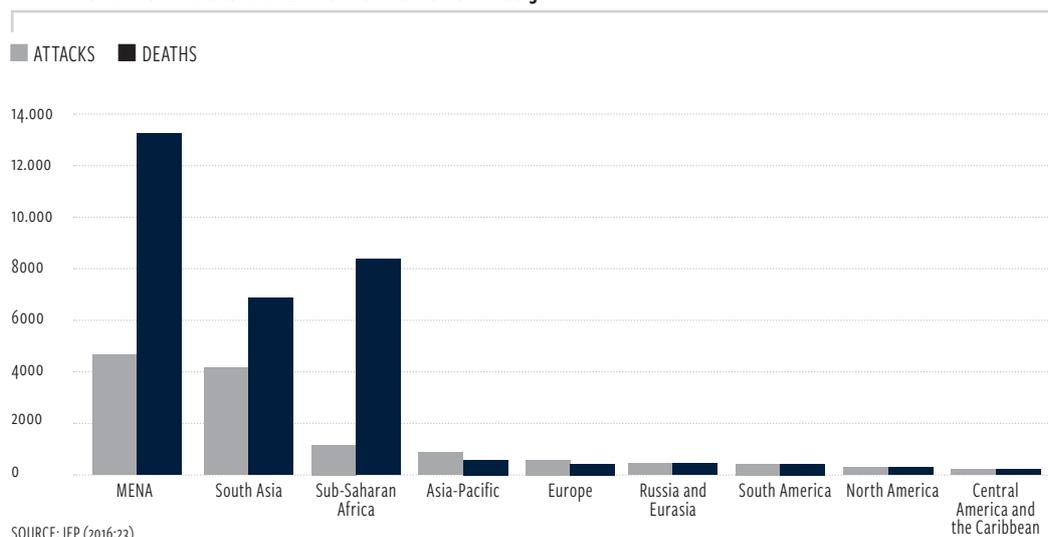
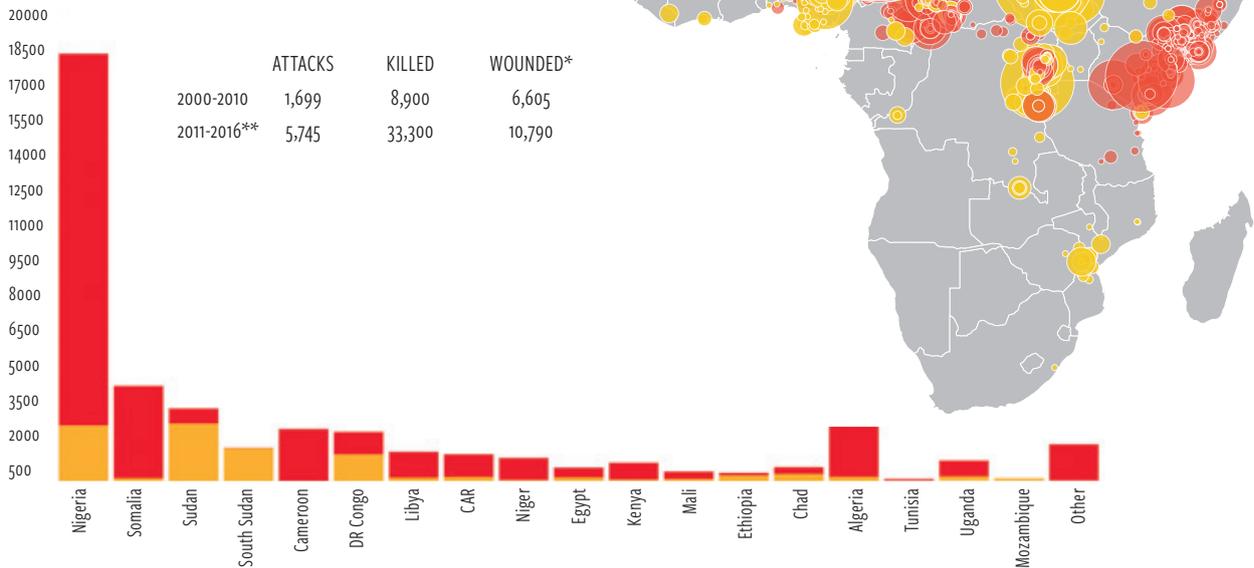


FIGURE 2 **FATALITIES FROM TERRORIST ATTACKS IN AFRICA** 2000-2016

Number of fatalities/location of attacks resulting in fatalities

- **ATTACKS CARRIED OUT BY GROUPS ASSOCIATED WITH RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES**
- **ATTACKS CARRIED OUT BY OTHER GROUPS**

Size of bubbles correspond to the number of fatalities in a single attack, with smaller sizes reflecting lower number of fatalities. The number of fatalities during the time period range from 1 to 400. The single attack with the highest number of fatalities took place in Nigeria in January 2015.



\*Number wounded in 2015 and 2016 not included \*\*Up to February 2016

Source: Global Terrorism Database (GTD), University of Maryland (2000 – 2014) and Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (2015 and 2016). Only confirmed cases of known perpetrators were used, classifying either as 'those associated with religious ideologies/fundamentalism' or 'other'. Bar graph only shows countries that experienced more than three fatalities over the time period. GTD dataset accessed in October 2015. ACLED database accessed in February 2016.

Figure 2 illustrates the growing number of countries in Africa that have been affected by expanding waves of destruction linked to violent extremism over the past decade.

Attacks have reached unprecedented levels: from 2011 to 2016, 33,300 fatalities are estimated to have been caused by extremism in Africa. Violence has also been accompanied by widespread displacement, within and across state borders, which has fed into pre-existing conflicts and dynamics, and created situations of pronounced and critical humanitarian need. Overall, violent extremism in Africa is setting in motion a dramatic reversal of gains and threatening to stunt development prospects for decades to come.

Tourism and foreign direct investment have been impacted in affected countries such as Kenya and Nigeria. Borders between countries such as Cameroon and Nigeria have been intermittently closed in response to insecurity, with further impacts on those whose livelihoods depend on cross-border informal trade. Attacks have targeted markets, transport hubs and places of worship, killing innocent people and instilling a sense of fear and insecurity, while also exacerbating inter-faith tensions. There has been an immeasurable impact on the lives and livelihoods of those who have lost family members, friends and colleagues in the multiple tragedies. As a result of increasing levels of violence and insecurity, many children and students are no longer able to attend school or university. The dramatic increase in security checks and controls in public places has transformed day-to-day life in many areas, with significant psychological impacts on populations. Violent extremism can be expected to increasingly act as a brake on Africa's development aspirations unless steps are taken now to address its drivers and enablers.

---

### Violent extremism can be expected to increasingly act as a brake on Africa's development aspirations unless steps are taken now to address its drivers and enablers

The terrain of violent extremist groups active in Africa is constantly evolving. Key groups include: Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); *Jama'at Tawhid Wal Jihad fi Garbi Afriqqiya* (Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa, MUJAO); *Jama'atul Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad* (Boko Haram) and *Ansaru* in Nigeria and Cameroon; *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen* (Al-Shabaab) in East Africa; and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Central Africa.<sup>4</sup> Smaller pockets of violent extremist-affiliated activity have emerged, with the activities of many groups spreading across state borders into neighbouring countries, spawning further groups and individuals pledging allegiance either to primary groups or related ideologies, for instance in Cameroon, Kenya, Mali and Niger, among others.<sup>5</sup> A number of 'foreign fighters' are known to have travelled from Sudan to Libya, Syria and Iraq, and, in a smaller number of cases, to Somalia and Nigeria, in support of violent extremist activity. Looking at the continent as a whole, security analysts are concerned with the prospect of cross-fertilization between Boko Haram, AQIM and other regional militant organizations as one high-risk scenario.<sup>6</sup>

## UNDP Africa's Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach, regional programme

In response to the growing threat of violent extremism in Africa, and in recognition of the profound consequences for development outcomes as well as the relevance of development approaches in the search for solutions, UNDP Africa has since 2015 been utilizing its long-established networks and partnerships with national governments, the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), civil society, faith-based groups and academia to implement an innovative and wide-ranging regional development programme. The goal of the Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism (PVE) in Africa: A Development Approach programme is to contribute to preventing and responding to the growth of violent extremism across the continent.

The programme is anchored, through its first pillar, in country support, working with a range of partners to assist 16 target countries to design and implement comprehensive and inclusive development-based responses to violent extremism, including enhancing effective governance and developing comprehensive PVE national action plans. The second pillar of the programme is framed to respond to the regional dimensions of violent extremism, which thrive on the porous nature of state borders in Africa. At the regional level, the initiative supports the AU and RECs in their work to respond to violent extremism through targeted policy and programming. Finally, the third pillar of the programme focuses on generating improved research, evidence and policy guidance in response to violent extremism, recognizing the many evidence gaps and the urgency of the search for more effective response strategies. The *Journey to Extremism in Africa* study represents a major output from the research and policy pillar of the UNDP programme, building on earlier research exploring perceptions on radicalization, violence and insecurity in the Sahel.<sup>7</sup> It has been designed as a foundational contribution both to inform UNDP Africa's own ongoing response work in this area, and the activities of other stakeholders and partners.

## The quest for explanatory frameworks

The phenomenon of violent extremism in different African states and its hybridized causality have been explored through the vantage point of different academic and policy-oriented disciplines.<sup>8</sup> Accounts invariably highlight the overall context of underdevelopment and marginalization experienced in areas where violent extremism has become prominent. Differences related to specific country contexts also shape the increasingly complex genealogy of violent extremism in Africa. Violent extremist groups' presence and 'success' is characterized by a fusion of such local-level drivers with increasingly globalized and distorted militant narratives.

The importance of understanding and addressing the range of causes and drivers at work is strongly emphasized by the United Nations. The 2015 United Nations Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism urges the global community of states to pay closer attention to root causes and drivers after decades of overconcentration on militarized approaches in tackling terrorism and violent extremism:

*Nothing can justify violent extremism, but we must also acknowledge that it does not arise in a vacuum. Narratives of grievance, actual or perceived injustice, promised empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where human rights are being violated, good governance is being ignored, and aspirations are being crushed.<sup>9</sup>*

The populations that experience such 'root causes' are large – and yet, typically, only a very small fraction of individuals will turn to violence. What then 'tips' this minority of individuals? The importance of human agency in creating opportunities to frame and channel grievances in violent directions also requires examination. In addition, individual experiences, whether of injustice or other factors, may have a decisive impact.<sup>10</sup>

Various frameworks categorizing and weighing different types of factors and drivers have emerged as part of the global response discourse. These help to distinguish between 'micro-', 'meso-' and 'macro-level' factors;<sup>11</sup> and/or 'push' and 'pull' factors.<sup>12</sup> Efforts to distinguish and cluster the different factors that influence and drive violent extremism are extremely helpful. However, policymakers, researchers and practitioners agree that further granularity is needed if governments, as well as non-state and international partners, are to achieve effective responses to the complex and multifaceted threat.

The paucity of evidence both about what shapes violent extremism and what works in responding to it is frequently cited as an obstacle to more effective response strategies globally: the largest share of available literature is conceptual as opposed to empirical.<sup>13</sup> And, in Africa's case, despite its increasing prominence in the ranking of affected regions, and the renewed policy and research interest this has attracted, overall far less is known about the causes, consequences and trajectories informing violent extremism here, when compared to other regions.<sup>14</sup> As violent extremism continues to expand across the African continent, national, regional and international actors are increasingly aligning security and development interventions around Counter-Terrorism and Countering or Preventing Violent Extremism (CT and CVE/PVE) objectives. Improved evidence on the spectrum of micro-, meso- and macro-level factors driving violent extremism in Africa and, crucially, *how* they influence different individuals is needed. The steadily growing sector of response intervention can only hope to be effective when grounded in such understanding.

---

**Far less is known about the causes, consequences and trajectories informing violent extremism in Africa, when compared to other regions**

## Approach and focus of the *Journey to Extremism in Africa* study

This study has been designed in response to these evidence gaps. Its purpose is to expand what is known about the range of factors and influences that lead individuals to join violent extremist groups in Africa. The study set out to empirically explore the biographic profiles and personal perspectives of Africans who have been both radicalized and recruited by violent extremist groups in order to shed further light on what shapes vulnerability to recruitment. In its scale, it is the only study of its kind in terms of range of questioning, number of respondents and, crucially, spread across multiple violent extremist groups that together span the continent. While acknowledging that no models are predictive and that there is ‘no way to determine whether an individual in certain circumstances, with a certain disposition, with certain relationships, and exposed to certain ideas will end up engaged in violence’,<sup>15</sup> the fundamental premise of the *Journey to Extremism* research has been that much more can be known than is known about the likelihood of this occurring. It is UNDP’s intention that by generating better understanding of the factors that shape the incentive structure of individuals drawn into violent extremism in Africa, it will contribute to the emergence of a more effective set of interventions that better respond to, and help to transform, the current vulnerability faced.

To facilitate understanding of the journey to extremism, the project was approached from a political socialization perspective, which in turn has grown from a combination of the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and psychology.<sup>16</sup> It is defined as:

*...the process by which children, born with an enormous potential for different types of behaviour, come to adopt the specific standards of their own society... [Therefore] political socialization is the developmental process through which the citizen matures politically. The citizen acquires a complex of beliefs, feelings and information which help him comprehend, evaluate and relate to the political world around him. His political views are a part of his more general social views...related to his religious, economic and cultural views.*

*Political socialization [is therefore] the process, mediated through various agencies of society, by which an individual learns political relevant attitudinal dispositions and behaviour patterns. These agencies include such environmental categories as the family, peer group, school, adult organizations, and the mass media.<sup>17</sup>*

Political socialization at the individual level can be described as a lifelong process through which a person develops a unique frame of reference or worldview that guides choices, including his or her views on politics, religion and ideology.<sup>18</sup> The approach of this project has thus been to draw on political socialization theory to unpack the individual’s journey into violent extremist movements within Africa, with the aim of creating a ‘journey map’ that identifies key enabling factors and triggers that lead to recruitment. It is based on a detailed structured questionnaire exploring the life histories and personal perspectives on a range of personal, cultural, socio-economic and political issues administered to a sample of 718 individuals. The largest part of the questionnaire consisted of closed questions which served to guide the conversations.

Of the total sample, the primary group included 495 individuals who voluntarily joined violent extremist groups and 78 individuals who were recruited by force; a secondary reference group included 145 individuals with no affiliation to violent extremist groups. Overall, respondents were located at the time of interview in Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan, with smaller numbers in Cameroon and Niger.<sup>19</sup> The majority of interviews conducted were with former members at different levels of rank in two of the continent's primary violent extremist groups, namely Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, as well as African recruits to ISIL. Interviews with individuals who joined other organizations, specifically Al-Mourabitoun, MUJAO as well as Al-Qaida were also included.

Given the sensitivity of the profile of the primary respondents, a non-random sampling method was necessary. The sample thus included individuals who were made accessible to the research team through local networks and with the support of the respective governments: most primary group interviews were conducted in detention or rehabilitation centres. Based on the demographics of the primary sample (including age, gender, education level and geographic area), the research teams then identified further individuals who were not associated with violent extremist groups but who matched these demographics. The resulting reference group served as a basis for comparison along the primary sample's journey to extremism, providing an opportunity to identify possible hypotheses distinguishing the perspectives and experiences of those who joined against those who did not, despite prevailing similarities of life circumstances.

Answers to the questionnaire were compiled into a database, which was then subjected to descriptive analysis across questions as well as econometric analysis. The latter used five logistic models exploring different variables selected for their pertinence to the journey to extremism narrative. Models 1.1 and 1.2 aimed to understand systematic differences between those in the voluntary and reference groups; Models 2.1 and 2.2 explored the path of voluntary group members towards extremism; and Model 3 studied the path towards demobilization. Annex 1 provides further detail on the overall econometric approach and findings.

This report on aggregate findings from the project draws primarily on the descriptive analysis, supplemented by reference to highlights from the econometric analysis. It is also interspersed with quotes and photographic portraits gathered during the research process. Given the sampling method used, it must be noted at the outset that all results are applicable only to the *Journey to Extremism* sample and

not to the larger population. However, findings have been interpreted for their potential implications for policy and programming throughout.

The research process was developed with the objective of understanding the dynamics of the recruitment process, from its initial conditions and factors through to the 'tipping point' that triggered particular individuals to take the step of joining a violent extremist group, where others did not. It thus sought to examine in closer detail why a small number of individuals facing common challenges with others in their communities chose to become violent extremists. To this end, it focused on recruitment as opposed to radicalization alone. Further, it explored motivations for demobilizing, where this had occurred.

## Structure of report

Following this Introduction, the report discusses key characteristics of the demographic profile of respondents in further detail as well as some of the constraints and caveats that need to be taken into account concerning the dataset and findings, including in its presentation as an 'aggregate' African story. It then proceeds to unpack and explore a series of specific themes that together converge to characterize aspects and milestones of the journey to extremism. These are as follows:

- (i) *Family circumstances, childhood and education;*
- (ii) *Religious ideologies;*
- (iii) *Economic factors;*
- (iv) *State and citizenship;*
- (v) *The 'tipping point' and recruitment process.*

The final section opens with a summary profile, in infographic form, of the journey to extremism as might be undertaken by an individual most at risk of recruitment by a violent extremist group in Africa based on the sample and key findings presented. It then draws together implications of the *Journey to Extremism* dataset for national and international policy and programming responses.

## Note on terminology

**Violent Extremism:** Universally accepted definitions of violent extremism are elusive. The 2015 United Nations Plan for of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism states:

*The present Plan of Action [...] considers and addresses violent extremism as, and when, conducive to terrorism. Violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. Nevertheless, in recent years, terrorist groups such as ISIL, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate on how to address this threat. These groups' message of intolerance – religious, cultural, social – has had drastic consequences for many regions of the world.<sup>i</sup>*

**Radicalization:** The concept of radicalization is increasingly recognized as unsatisfactory in its explanatory power regarding violent extremism, given that a large number of individuals may hold 'radical' views without moving from there to perpetrate violent acts. This study focuses on recruitment (defined in its broadest sense to include informal and even self-initiated processes), rather than radicalization, noting that while the latter is often a pre-condition for the former, this may not always be the case.

**Terrorism:** As with violent extremism, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. At the political level, this reflects the difficulty in agreeing on a basis for determining when the use of violence (directed at whom, by whom and for what ends) is legitimate. Further, acts of terrorism are often a tactic committed as part of a larger agenda (military or geopolitical). The United Nations describes terrorism as: 'Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public.'<sup>ii</sup>

**Counter-Terrorism (CT):** This is used to refer to military operations as well as the adoption of legislative and policing frameworks to control, repress and track terrorist activities; training, equipping and reorganizing national security forces and intelligence services; and enhancing border surveillance and checkpoints.<sup>iii</sup>

**Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE):** The CT agenda has evolved over the past decade into a broader strategic approach that incorporates non-military responses aimed at disrupting the activities of violent extremist groups and preventing their expansion, while also addressing the enabling environments in which violent extremism flourishes. Some degree of definitional ambiguity is again commonly accepted. Multilateral, regional and national CVE and PVE initiatives have emerged, often including strategic communications, media, education and community policing activities, but with different approaches apparent across agencies.<sup>iv</sup> A distinction can usefully be drawn between CVE, which is focused on countering the activities of existing violent extremists, and PVE, which is focused on preventing the further spread of violent extremism. However, in practice, initiatives will frequently work on both aspects, with a combined approach. Given the overall priority of limiting the further spread of violent extremism through prevention, UNDP Africa's organizational focus is on PVE, noting that CVE-type objectives may be incorporated within overall prevention-focused programming.

<sup>i</sup> UN (2015).

<sup>ii</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 49/60 (1994), 'Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism'.

<sup>iii</sup> Mahmoud (2016).

<sup>iv</sup> Fink and Bhulai (2016).

---

# NOTHING CAN JUSTIFY VIOLENT EXTREMISM, BUT WE MUST ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT DOES NOT ARISE IN A VACUUM

2015 United Nations Plan of Action on  
Preventing Violent Extremism



# DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESEARCH SAMPLE

The UNDP *Journey to Extremism* dataset consists of responses to the questionnaire provided through interviews with 718 people, 495 of whom were individuals who used to be, or in a handful of cases still were at the time of the interviews, members of extremist organizations, which they had voluntarily joined.<sup>20</sup> These are referred to in the presentation of the data as ‘voluntary group’. Seventy-eight individuals reported being forced to join one of the organizations and are referred to as ‘forced group’. Finally, 145 were individuals who are not, and never have been, members of similar organizations – they are referred to as ‘reference group’. The interviews were unevenly spread across Cameroon, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan, with a significantly larger share of interviews taking place in Somalia. Figures 3 and 4 show the percentages of all interviews per country as well as the categorization of respondents.<sup>21</sup>

FIGURE 3 DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWS BY COUNTRY

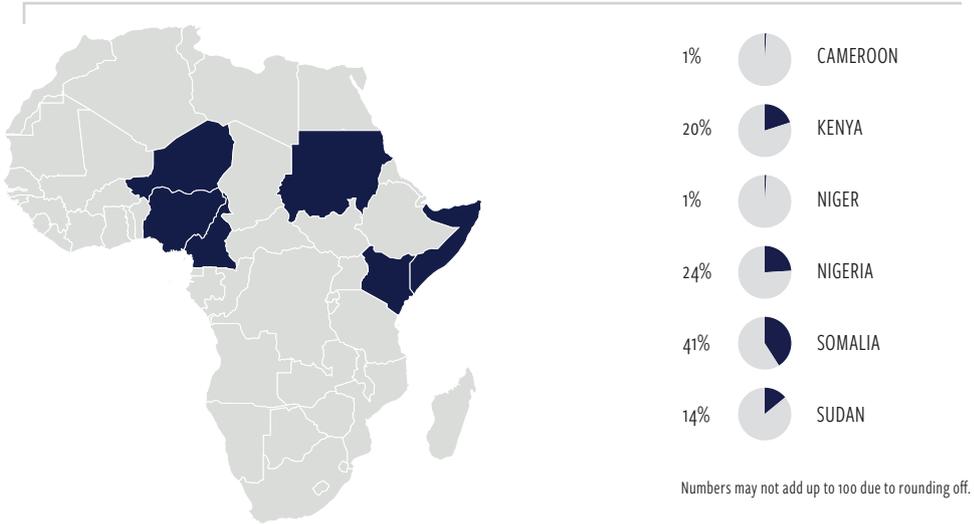
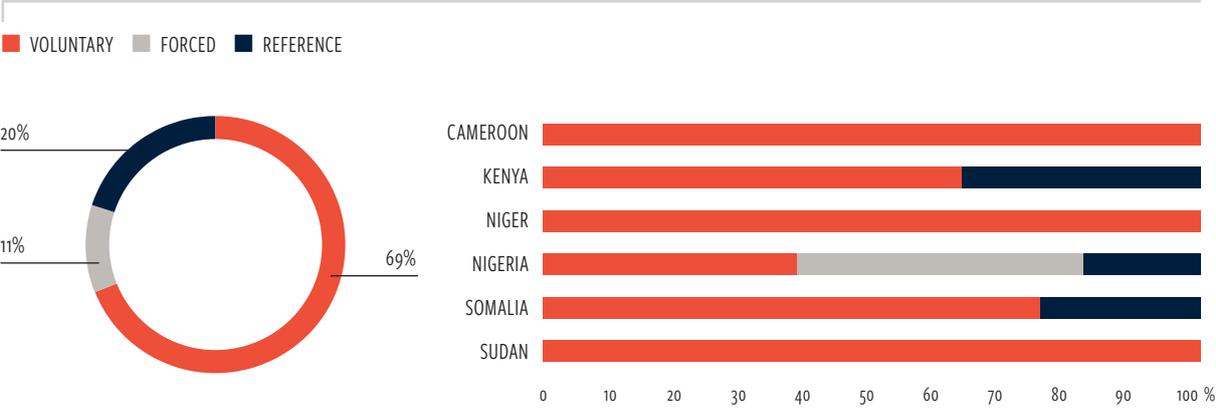


FIGURE 4 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY CATEGORY AND COUNTRY OF INTERVIEW



Biases based on the uneven spread of interviews per country, as well as the different operating practices of groups, are highly evident in the data. Figures 5, 6 and 7 provide a breakdown of the voluntary and forced groups by organization; status at time of the interviews; and gender. As shown in Figure 5, individuals associated with Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram make up the majority of the sample, at 52 percent and 27 percent, respectively.

The majority of interviews took place in prisons and other state detention facilities. Figure 6 shows that a total of 55 percent of the voluntary group respondents were actively involved in a formal reintegration process at the time of interview, referred to in their answers to the questionnaire as either ‘amnesty programme’; ‘rehabilitation programme’; ‘surrendered’; or ‘other’. Forty-one percent were not part of/awaiting formal process and described their status as ‘arrested’ or ‘in detention’. The remaining 4 percent were ‘current members’ of violent extremist groups, introduced to the research team as the research process unfolded, and interviewed outside of state detention facilities.

FIGURE 5 DISTRIBUTION OF PRIMARY RESPONDENTS BY ORGANIZATION AND COUNTRY

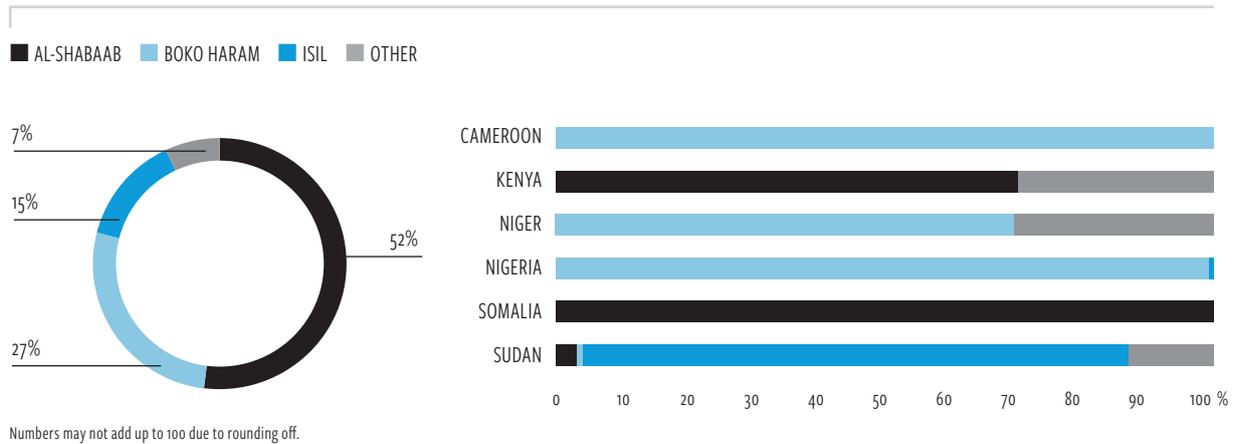
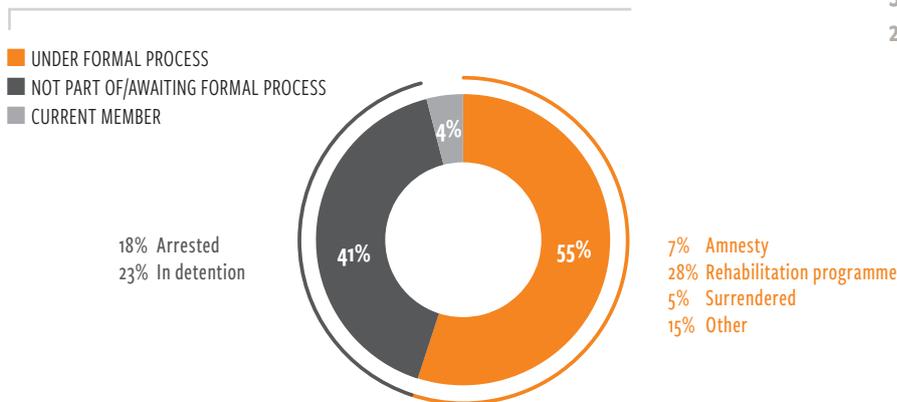


FIGURE 6 DISTRIBUTION OF PRIMARY RESPONDENTS BY CURRENT STATUS IN ORGANIZATION



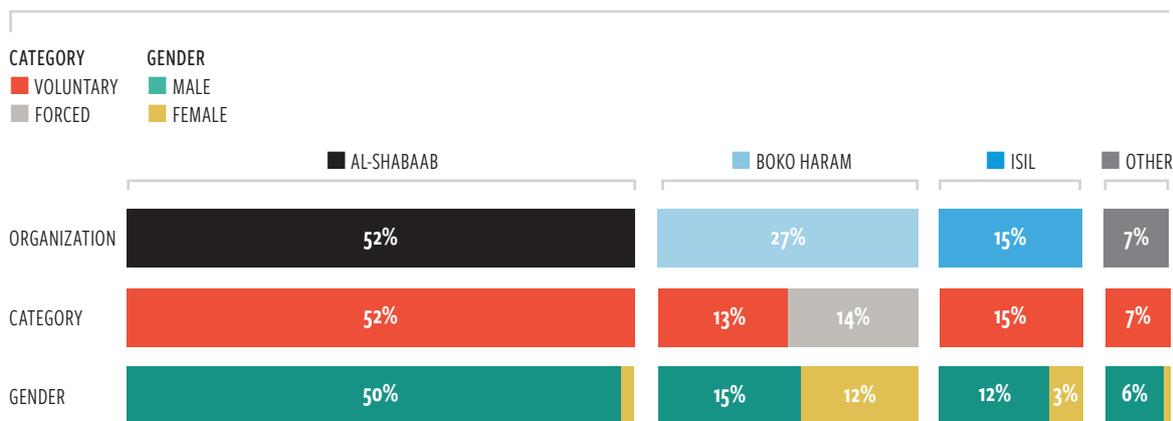
INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH AL-SHABAAB AND BOKO HARAM MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF THE SAMPLE, AT 52 PERCENT AND 27 PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY

As indicated in Figure 7, 27 percent of the primary respondents were associated with Boko Haram and comprised 15 percent and 12 percent of the total male and female respondents in the primary sample, respectively. The Boko Haram sample is relatively balanced between male and female respondents, and it represents the majority of the female respondents overall within the sample, which can be inferred from Figure 7 to be 70 percent. The figure also shows that all respondents who defined themselves as forced to join the violent extremist group, which made up 14 percent of the total primary sample, were members of Boko Haram.<sup>22</sup> Figure 7 further

shows that all ISIL and Al-Shabaab respondents are in the voluntary group. Sixteen percent of female respondents were associated with ISIL (mainly from Sudan), with the remaining small percentages scattered across other groups.

Figure 8 shows a breakdown of individuals in each of the voluntary and forced groups by the position they described themselves to hold in the violent extremist group. It shows that the largest share of respondents identified themselves as fighters, followed by a spectrum of other functions. Only 4 percent identified themselves as commanders.

FIGURE 7 DISTRIBUTION OF PRIMARY RESPONDENTS BY ORGANIZATION, CATEGORY AND GENDER



Shown as a percent of total primary respondents.  
Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

FIGURE 8 DISTRIBUTION OF PRIMARY RESPONDENTS BY POSITION IN ORGANIZATION



Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of respondents and category of respondents by gender. The total sample is made up of 81 percent male and 19 percent female. This gender imbalance reflects the reality that there are significantly more male than female members of violent extremist groups – a fact that was compounded by access issues encountered by the research team in some instances. The forced group consisted of 53 percent women and girls, while in the reference and voluntary groups females made up 25 percent and 12 percent of their respective categories.

Figure 10 illustrates the distribution of age group at the time of the research by category and by gender. Almost 68 percent of the reference group were 15 to 25 years old, compared to 44 percent in both voluntary and forced groups. A significant majority (at least 73 percent) in all groups were less than or equal to 30 years old. Around 39 percent of the female population were less than 20 years old, compared to 32 percent in the male population, likely reflecting the peculiarity of the dataset where the majority of females were Boko Haram abductees. In terms of age when recruited, 53 percent were between 17 and 26 years

old (Figure 11). Seventy percent of respondents stayed with the group in question for between six months and four years (not shown).

Figure 12 shows the marital status and number of children at the time of joining the organization (or answering the questionnaire) by category of respondent. A large share of respondents in each category were single: 68 percent, 64 percent and 44 percent in the reference, voluntary and forced groups, respectively. Voluntary group respondents had only two children on average when they joined, as opposed to four on average within the reference group at time of interview.

Regarding religious affiliation, most of the countries under review have significant, and in the case of Somalia, majority Muslim populations. Kenya and Nigeria also have significant Christian populations. Figure 13 shows how the individuals in the dataset are divided along faith lines. Overall, 92 percent of respondents to the *Journey to Extremism* questionnaire grew up in a Muslim household and only 8 percent in a Christian household.

FIGURE 9 CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

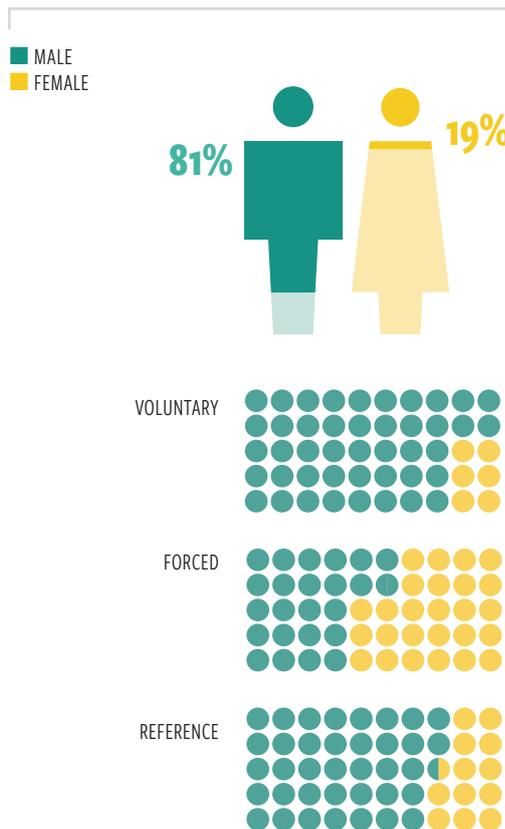


FIGURE 10 DISTRIBUTION OF AGE GROUP AT TIME OF INTERVIEW BY GENDER AND CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

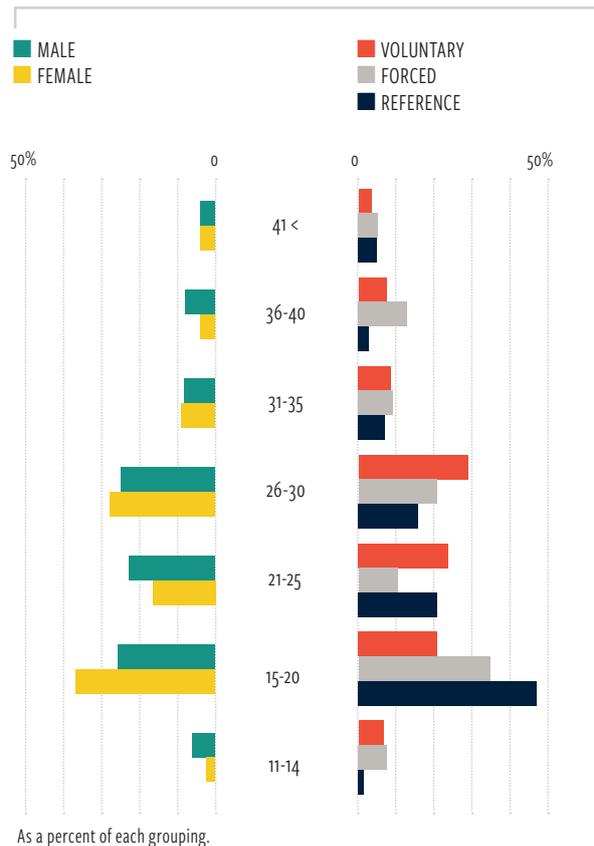
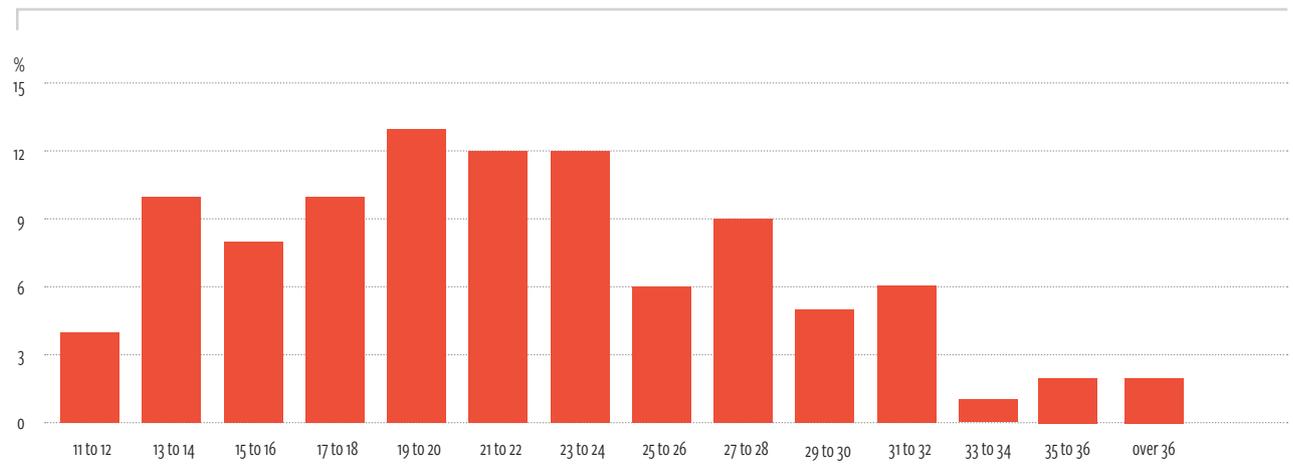
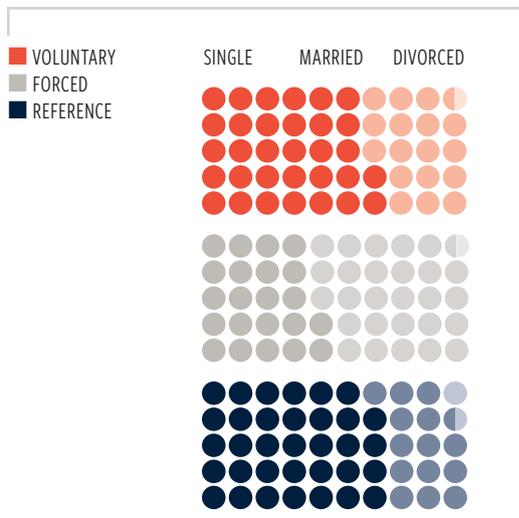


FIGURE 11 DISTRIBUTION OF AGE WHEN RECRUITED VOLUNTARY GROUP

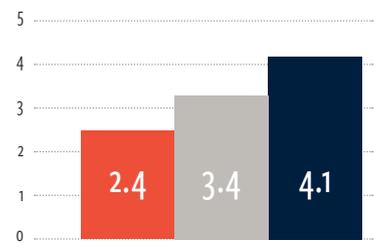


**IN TERMS OF AGE WHEN RECRUITED, 53 PERCENT WERE BETWEEN 17 AND 26 YEARS OLD**

FIGURE 12 MARITAL STATUS AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

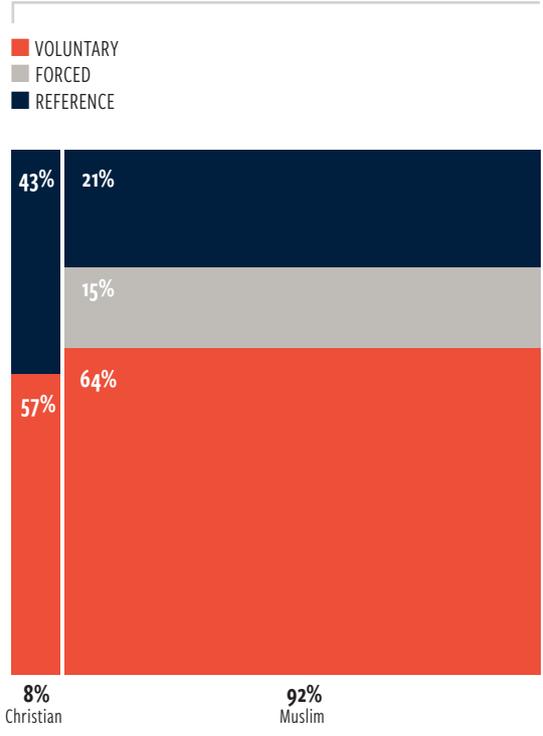


AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN



Indicates Sudan missing. Symbol used throughout report to indicate Sudan excluded from findings due to no data.

FIGURE 13 DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGION WHILE GROWING UP BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



## Building an aggregate story from the dataset

The effort to build an aggregate African story may face inevitable limitations given that the trajectories of violent extremism are innately localized. Indeed, a major impetus behind this research has been to advance greater understanding of the specificities of violent extremism in different locations. In addition to this aggregate report, the UNDP *Journey to Extremism in Africa* project as a whole will generate a series of country-specific analyses that delve further into the country-specific findings generated, providing deeper contextualization and reflection on implications than is included in this aggregate summary of findings. Still, UNDP Africa believes that the value in teasing out evidence from the multi-country sample, despite its imperfections, remains strong in the context of a dearth of empirical data on violent extremism in Africa as a region.

The country and group-specific variations highlighted above are reflective of the uneven access across different African countries under review, of the different characteristics of those countries and of the phenomenon of violent extremism therein. In some cases, ‘batches’ of questionnaires were incomplete in relation to some areas of questioning. These imbalances naturally pose challenges to the development of an aggregate perspective. As far as possible, caution has been exercised in drawing overly generalized conclusions, and country variations highlighted. In addition, the data analysis process deliberately and methodically introduced balancing to the econometric analysis in order to allow for the disparities in testing key variables, and to facilitate identification of general patterns. Coarsened exact matching was first conducted on the sample to improve the balance on the distribution of variables, hence the various iterations of each model described in the Introduction. Fixed effects were also used in the econometric analysis to control for country and organization-specific characteristics that might affect the dependent variable. Due to non-responses to a large number of questions from the Sudan sample, these were dropped from the econometric analysis as well as in several sections of the descriptive statistics. The approach is explained in detail in Annex 1.

Answers in some areas of the questionnaire may have been influenced by the fact that most of the interviews took place in prisons and detention centres, with many

individuals awaiting formal disengagement processes. Other issues of sensitivity and unfamiliarity in areas of questioning will have influenced responses to the interviews. Such ‘flaws’ are an inevitable aspect of primary research of this nature and were both mitigated against during interviews and taken into account through the analysis process to the greatest extent possible.

Features of the journey to extremism described in the interviews with the 495 individuals who had undertaken it (and who make up the voluntary group of respondents) are contrasted with the experience of reference and forced group members where these seem to yield insights. Without overstating the representativeness of the sample overall, and taking into account the issues highlighted above, UNDP Africa nonetheless believes this research points to important implications for CT and PVE interventions in Africa going forward, which are drawn out in the concluding section of this report.

The fact that fewer females than males were accessed during the research, and that the majority of females represented were associated with particular violent extremist groups and forms of recruitment (whether forced to join Boko Haram in Nigeria or, in a smaller number of cases, voluntary recruits to ISIL from Sudan), poses further challenges. These features of the female sample were compounded by a high degree of non-response rates to several of the questions. The spectrum of issues related to the different roles that women and girls can play in relation to violent extremism; the gendered impact of CT and PVE strategies; as well as the wider function of gendered ideologies that influence violent extremism are among some of the cogent and widening areas of interest in this field.<sup>23</sup> The policy community concerned with combatting violent extremism in today’s world is increasingly attentive to these issues, as signalled by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015), among others.<sup>24</sup> Continuation of the UNDP *Journey to Extremism in Africa* project will further explore gender dynamics in relation to violent extremism in Africa going forward, including as part of the country-specific analyses and with a dedicated thematic study. For the present report, the impact of gender is not studied in the econometric analysis, but the discussion has sought to draw out gender differences and issues using descriptive statistics across key response areas wherever possible.

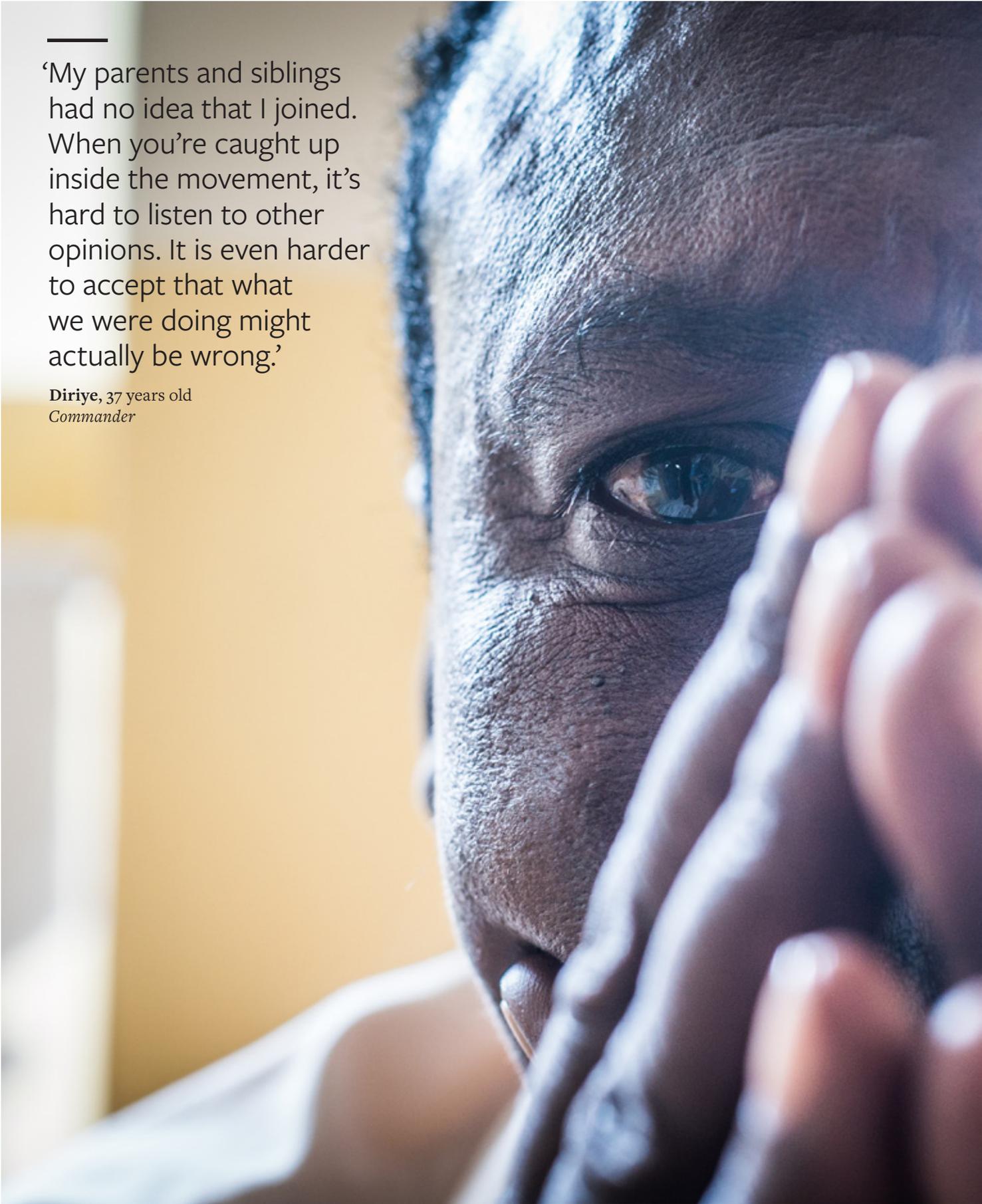
---

Features of the journey to extremism described in the interviews with the 495 individuals who have undertaken it are contrasted with the experience of reference and forced group members where these seem to yield insights

---

‘My parents and siblings had no idea that I joined. When you’re caught up inside the movement, it’s hard to listen to other opinions. It is even harder to accept that what we were doing might actually be wrong.’

**Diriye**, 37 years old  
*Commander*





**CHAPTER 1:  
FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES,  
CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION**

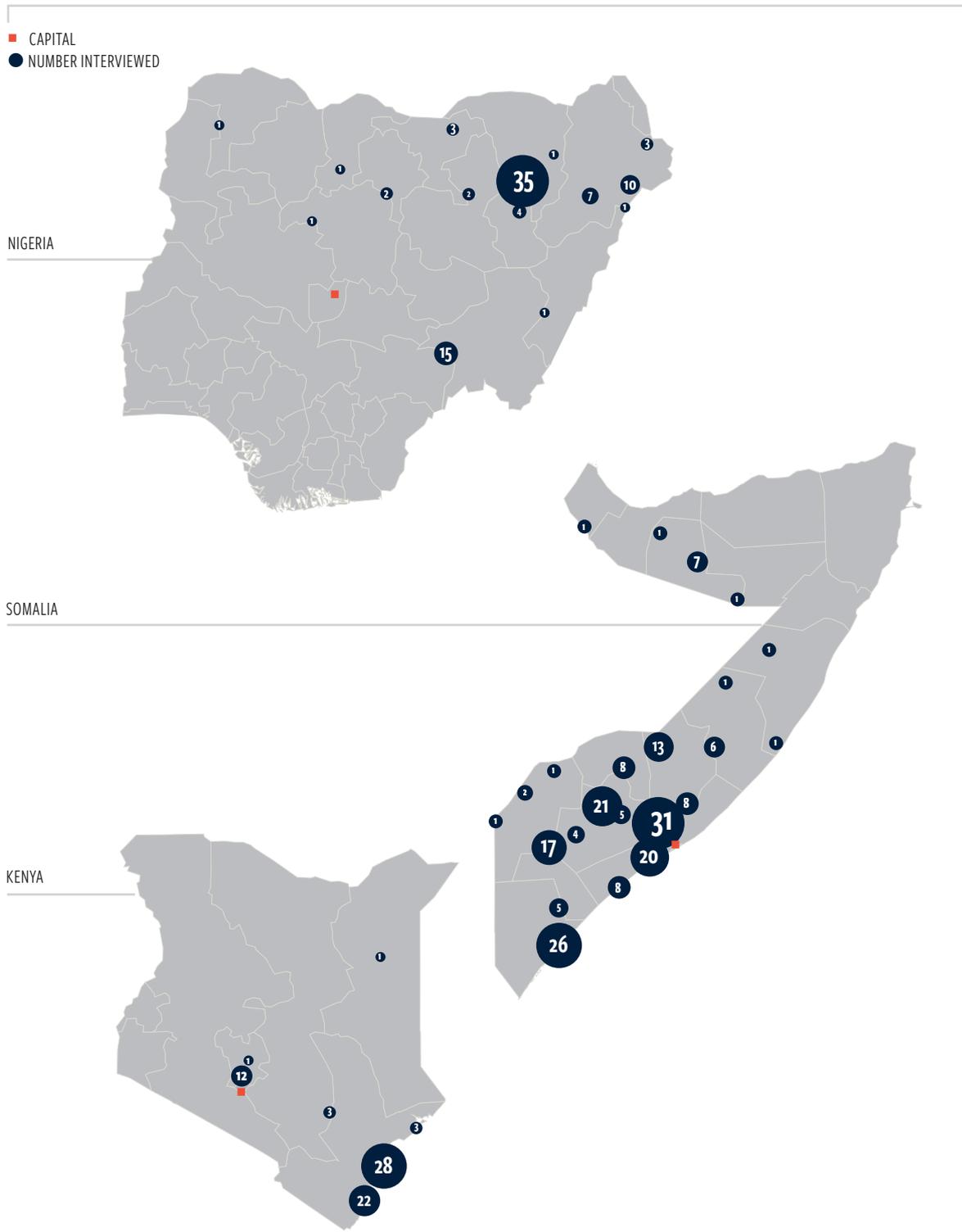
A number of different aspects of family circumstances and childhood experience were investigated through the UNDP Africa *Journey to Extremism* questionnaire and subsequent data analysis in order to explore potential intersections between a person's early childhood development, when identity and perception formation occur, and a later susceptibility to recruitment. Findings from this area of questioning are included below under the headings: *Peripheries and exposure to others*; *Family structure and childhood happiness*; **and** *Level of education and civic engagement*. The specific aspect of religious education is covered further below, in Chapter 2.

### 1.1 Peripheries and exposure to others

While it is attacks on cities that make headlines, the areas where violent extremism have taken root are typically remote areas, peripheral in development terms, often 'borderlands' connecting two or more states, that have experienced generations of neglect and marginalization across political, social and economic spheres. This is confirmed in the UNDP map of Africa indicating violent extremism 'hotspots' (Figure 2, above). Examples include northern Mali, north-eastern Nigeria and the Kenyan coastal region. Many of the factors related to insecurity and underdevelopment that have been established as conducive to violent extremism are most pronounced at the geographic fringes of these countries. While violent extremist groups may logistically exploit relatively 'ungoverned' terrain, they have also developed compelling narratives that speak to the grievances of communities living in neglected circumstances.

The *Journey to Extremism* dataset unequivocally confirms the acute vulnerability of such periphery regions. A majority of respondents in the voluntary group stated their place of childhood as one or other of the most remote areas of these regions, as shown in Figure 14.<sup>25</sup> This asserts the direct relevance in general terms of underdevelopment in such regions to the spread of violent extremism. Specific aspects of the underdevelopment found in such regions and its impact on people's lives and potential future journey to extremism (level of education, access to services and livelihood opportunities, personal safety and security, trust in authorities, and so on) are explored separately later in this report. It is well-recognized in development terms that place of birth significantly influences individual life prospects, with a child's access to critical basic services and opportunities acutely impacted by 'accident of geography'.<sup>26</sup>

FIGURE 14 WHERE RESPONDENT SPENT HIS/HER CHILDHOOD (UNTIL 15TH BIRTHDAY)  
RESPONDENTS FROM KENYA, NIGERIA AND SOMALIA



The dataset suggests that further aspects of geography are also relevant. In particular, the degree of mobility and exposure to other ethnicities and religions when growing up are variables that may influence future readiness to join violent extremist groups. A significant percentage of all groups had never been outside their country, although there was some increased exposure for those in the reference group. As shown in Figure 15, 33 percent of the voluntary group reported having never visited cities as a child, compared to 21 percent of the reference group (and 71 percent of the forced group, likely reflecting the particular status of many of the forced group within the sample as young girls from north-eastern Nigeria).

Despite country variations in terms of overall exposure to others, observable differences between groups of respondents were recorded in answer to the question, ‘Growing up, did you attend school with children belonging to other ethnic groups?’ with individuals in the forced and voluntary groups reporting less mixing at school than their reference group counterparts, as illustrated in Figure 16. A further finding from the dataset is that those in the voluntary group were more likely to feel that their ethnic group was under threat, compared to reference group counterparts, by about 15 percent (Figure 17). This suggests the possibility of a mindset of heightened threat perception forming in childhood among those who eventually joined violent extremist groups. It also implies that, in some instances, a higher level of mobility and exposure to others may generate a greater confidence in others, and resilience to future radicalization.

FIGURE 15 MOVEMENT DURING CHILDHOOD (UNTIL 15TH BIRTHDAY) BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

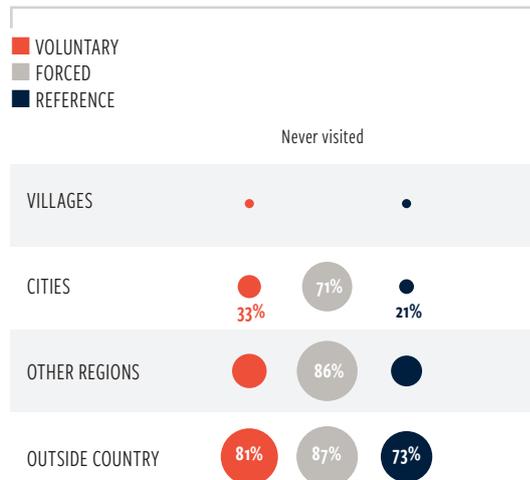


FIGURE 16 ‘GROWING UP, DID YOU ATTEND SCHOOL WITH CHILDREN BELONGING TO OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

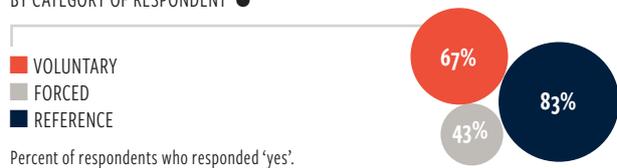


FIGURE 17 ‘DID YOU CONSIDER YOUR ETHNIC GROUP TO BE UNDER THREAT?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



## 1.2 Family structure and childhood happiness

There is a decades-old interest in the psychology of individuals who perpetrate terrorist acts, focused on the identification of internal vulnerabilities, emphasizing how atypical such behaviour is in human society, and exploring the ‘roots of the terrorist mindset’, or which personalities may be more susceptible.<sup>27</sup> Psychological research emphasizes how identity formation and the search for identity can become ‘maladaptive’, and whether certain cognitive ‘propensities’ can combine to create such at-risk mindsets.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the vastly different types of relevant socio-cultural settings, violent extremist group ideologies, behaviours, structures, and ranking and roles of individuals within particular groups suggest the need for such analyses to avoid overly simplifying such processes, anticipating that ‘any effort to uncover the “terrorist mind” will more likely result in uncovering a spectrum of terrorist minds’.<sup>29</sup> While this avenue of exploration is growing, drawing on and testing different psychoanalytic and non-psychoanalytic theories and approaches, it remains underpopulated in terms of concrete findings.

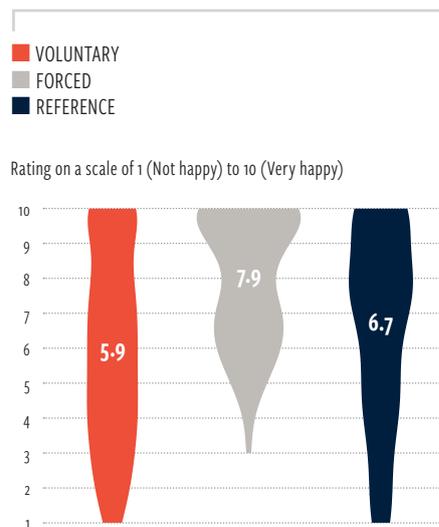
Moreover, the more accessible details of family life and early experiences such as may contribute to such ‘mindsets’, of different individual violent extremists in different armed group and country settings, have been largely unexplored. From a research perspective working with

individuals’ memories of childhood is notoriously complex in terms of its empirical value. Nonetheless: ‘family is a crucial part of a person’s socialization process. A person’s relationship with his or her family can be the catalyst for a search for identity and belonging beyond the family, such as a larger, collective identity, and this search could result in that person’s radicalization’.<sup>30</sup>

The *Journey to Extremism* dataset suggests that childhood unhappiness may be a critical element of the foundational steps towards a journey to extremism. Childhood happiness levels were found to vary across groups and nationalities. When categorized by type of respondent (Figure 18), it emerges that forced members reported the highest levels of happiness as a child. This may relate to the imbalance in the sample whereby the majority of those in the forced category were geographically concentrated in Nigeria, which was the country reporting the highest level of childhood happiness overall. Significantly, however, those in the voluntary group reported a lesser sense of happiness in childhood among groups. Figure 18 shows that for both forced and reference groups, the density of happiness ratings is concentrated at the higher ends of the scale. Model 1.1 confirms childhood happiness to be a robust and significant predictor, including when used as a treatment, of the likelihood of joining an extremist organization. Individuals rating 7 or higher in childhood happiness were between 9 and 28 percent less likely to be found in the voluntary group.<sup>31</sup>

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN A CHILD’S LIFE EMERGES AS A FUNDAMENTAL FACTOR IN DETERMINING HOW HAPPY RESPONDENTS REPORT THEIR CHILDHOOD TO HAVE BEEN

FIGURE 18 RATING OF CHILDHOOD HAPPINESS BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



Further, parental involvement in a child’s life emerged as a fundamental factor in determining how happy respondents reported their childhood to have been. Figure 19 shows a strong positive correlation between rating of happiness as a child and parent’s interest in their lives, while the following Figure 20 indicates that those in the voluntary group reported the lowest rating of parent involvement/interest in their lives.

Questions on whether the respondent’s father had more than one wife, whether he was present or absent, whether or not the respondent was the firstborn, and how many siblings were present overall while growing up did not point conclusively to any variations between the groups. Most respondents’ mothers were present when growing up, including in polygamous settings, although only by a small margin. Nonetheless, individuals in the voluntary group reported a slightly increased experience of mothers being absent (Figure 21).

However, a majority in each group had both parents present. Yet, in the voluntary group, just 34 percent of respondents who had both parents present while growing up rated parent involvement/interest in their lives as high, compared to 48 percent and 61 percent in the reference and forced groups, respectively. Thus, the majority of the voluntary group reported a sense of reduced parental involvement in their lives despite parent presence (Figure 22).

The questionnaire also included a number of questions exploring the use of punishment in the home, in order to establish how far this may correlate to the overall childhood experience and later susceptibility to recruitment. Just as the voluntary group respondents reported the least happy childhoods overall, so they also recorded the highest experience of both physical and emotional punishment as a child (Figure 23) – although only by a small margin.

FIGURE 19 RATING OF CHILDHOOD HAPPINESS AGAINST PARENT INVOLVEMENT/INTEREST WHILE GROWING UP

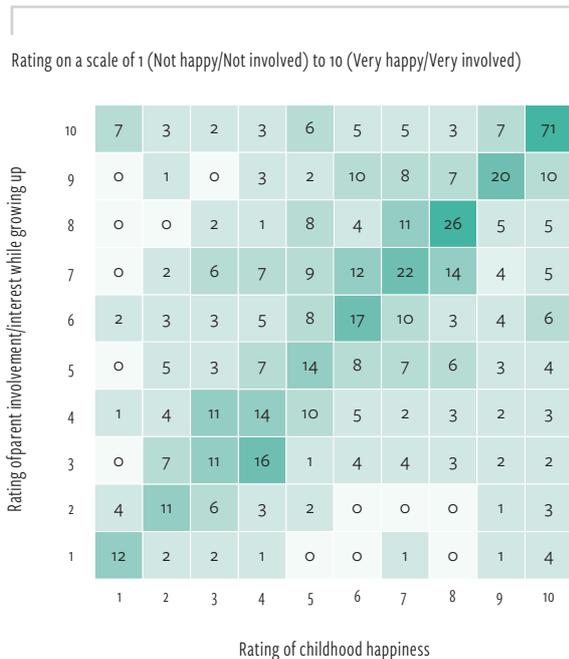


FIGURE 20 RATING OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT/INTEREST IN RESPONDENT’S LIFE BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

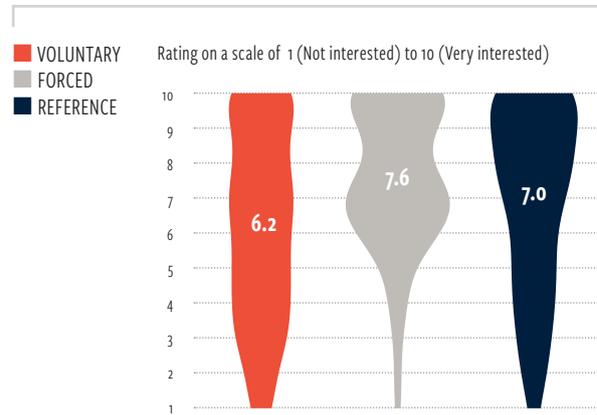
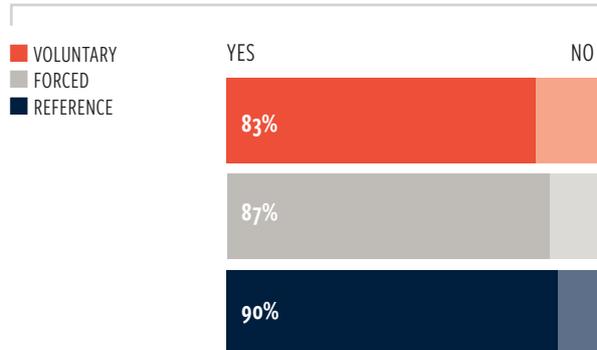
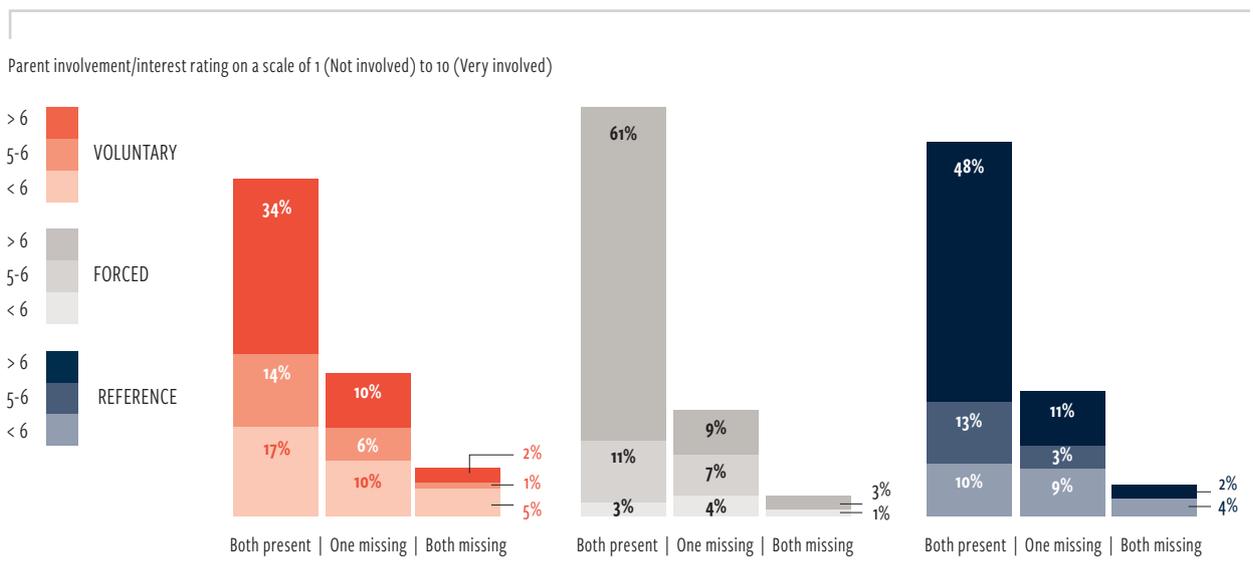


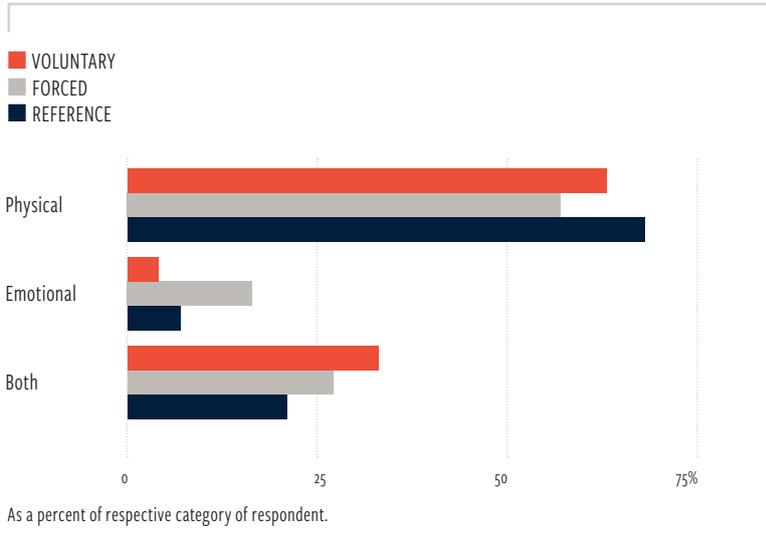
FIGURE 21 ‘WAS YOUR MOTHER PRESENT GROWING UP?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



**FIGURE 22 PARENT PRESENCE AND RATING OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT/INTEREST IN RESPONDENT'S LIFE WHILE GROWING UP BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT**



**FIGURE 23 IF PUNISHED AS A CHILD, TYPE OF PUNISHMENT RECEIVED BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT**



### 1.3 Level of education and civic engagement

There is growing interest in the ambivalent relationship between education and violent extremism, whereby it can be used both to radicalize and to counter violent extremist narratives. The interest of PVE practitioners in education has been further inspired by the frequency of symbolic – and highly destructive – violent extremist attacks on educational facilities. Between 2008 and 2013, there were 92 terrorist attacks on educational institutions in Nigeria alone, perpetrated by Boko Haram (or affiliated groups).<sup>32</sup>

Despite country variations regarding years of secular education among the respondents, the research finds that a significantly larger percentage of those in the voluntary group reported the lowest levels of secular schooling, when compared to the reference group. Sixteen percent reported less than or equal to 2 years of education, compared to 7 percent of the reference group; 39 percent reported 5 to 10 years of education, as compared to 56 percent of the reference group (Figure 24).

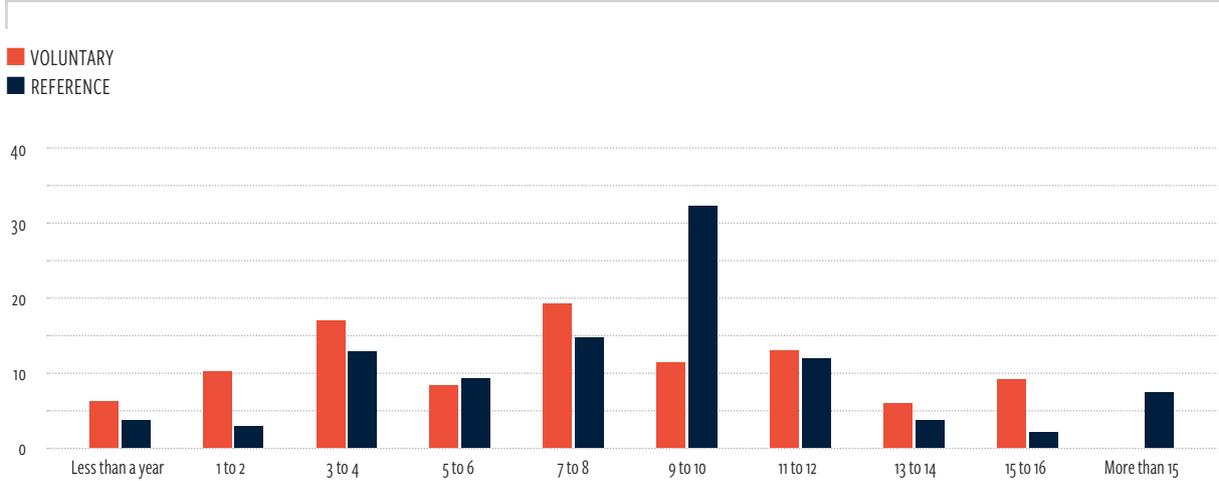
There is a great deal more research on the relationship between education and violent extremism than on the overall happiness and stability of childhood.<sup>33</sup> Such wider evidence is seen to point to mixed conclusions. Numerous studies highlight that violent extremist attacks have often been perpetrated by individuals from ‘middle-

class’, relatively affluent and educated backgrounds, which distorts a more generalized perspective that lack of education may be a factor increasing vulnerability to recruitment. However, reflecting the wider geographic imbalances in the literature noted above, it is notable that very few of these studies focus on Africa, where access to tertiary education is lower than in Europe. The *Journey to Extremism* data instead suggests that susceptibility to future recruitment may be significantly influenced by lack of even basic education.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, Figure 40 included in Chapter 3 on respondents’ ‘most immediate need’ at the time of recruitment suggests a high level of aspiration and perceived want in regard to education against other factors.

PVE practitioners and researchers stress that a good education is in and of itself not sufficient to prevent violent extremist recruitment, and that education-sector interventions are thus not to be conflated with PVE. Nonetheless, it is recognized that quality education can help build individuals’ resilience to recruitment through provision of life alternatives.<sup>35</sup> The value of education as a source of resilience extends further to include the aspect of socialization that is provided through schooling. It is also informed by the quality of curricula and teaching methods. To successfully prevent violent extremism, it must as far as possible instil critical thinking, respect for diversity and citizenship values.

**FUTURE RECRUITMENT MAY BE SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCED BY LACK OF EVEN BASIC EDUCATION**

FIGURE 24 NUMBER OF YEARS OF SECULAR EDUCATION VOLUNTARY AND REFERENCE GROUPS



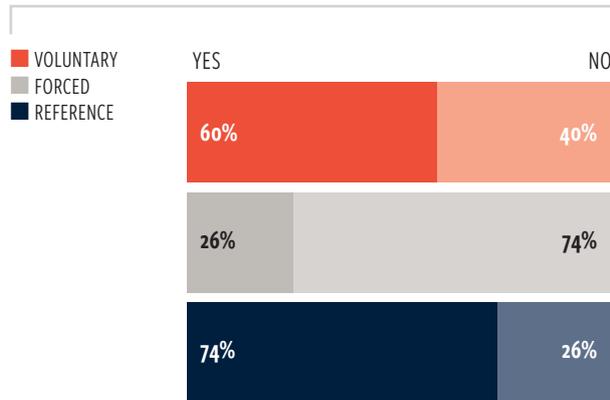
Shown as percent of individual category. Forced group not shown due to high rate of missing data.

Indeed, the notion of civic engagement and participation emerges as a final aspect of childhood whereby a correlation between early experience and later recruitment is suggested through the *Journey to Extremism* findings.

A contrast between the voluntary and reference group respondents is apparent in answers given to the question as to whether they sang the national anthem as a child, with a difference of about 14 percent, as shown in Figure 25. Models 1.1 and 1.2 find the national anthem variable to be statistically significant at the 95 percent significance level or higher, even when used as treatment. Accordingly, all else constant, someone who sang the national anthem as a child is between 4 percent and 36 percent less likely to be found in the voluntary group.

While this area of questioning may seem tangential or improbable, efforts to interpret it suggest that perhaps a greater experience of civic participation in the types of events and settings where national anthems are sung can contribute to resilience to extremism. This may be a further correlation with level of education (noting that the national anthem is often sung, if at all, in school). It hints at a higher personal investment in the cultural meaning signified by singing the national anthem, including self-identification with the nation-state, among those who were not recruited.

FIGURE 25 'DID YOU SING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AS A CHILD?' BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



## Key findings

Chapter 1 has shown that childhood experiences significantly correlate with future susceptibility to violent extremist recruitment. Starting with the ‘accident of geography’, i.e. place of childhood, experiences related to living in highly peripheral regions of Africa begin to shape individuals’ worldview and vulnerability. This should by no means be interpreted to stigmatize communities from these regions – the overwhelming majority of individuals manifestly do not join violent extremist groups. There are many areas that fall into the ‘peripheral’ category where there is no violent extremism. And clearly, there are other violent extremists at large in Africa, including within the sample, who may have started life in a big and metropolitan city. Still, the findings suggest that successful CT and PVE must start with meaningful efforts to generate peace and development in borderlands and traditionally marginalized regions. These efforts should include the accelerated and purposeful implementation of the Transforming Our World: Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, which speaks directly to the sources of grievance highlighted in the *Journey to Extremism* research.

The overall experience of communities living in such areas (macro- and meso-level factors) were, in the journeys of the individuals interviewed, refracted through particular micro-level aspects of early childhood. These include a relative lack of exposure to people of other ethnicities, when comparing voluntary and reference groups, and what may be an emerging outlook of threat perception concerning one’s own identity. Further, the research highlights that perception of childhood happiness was lower among those who went on to join violent extremist groups. A small fraction more of those in the voluntary group reported an absent mother, as well as increased

physical and emotional punishment. However, the strongest finding from the data is that, among the sample, a perceived low level of parental involvement in the child’s life plays a critical role in shaping future susceptibility to recruitment.

This has important implications for PVE programming. Overall, these ‘micro’ experiences in the home may combine with the socio-political and economic marginalization experienced by the wider community to lay the foundations of future risk.<sup>36</sup>

The research also asserts the pertinence of ‘number of years of education’ to building resilience to future recruitment. In environments where overall levels of literacy and education are low, those voluntarily recruited are particularly deprived in educational terms. In addition, the findings appear to confirm emerging hypotheses concerning the quality of education required to build resilience, which emphasize citizenship values as key. More of those who were relatively inactive in terms of civic engagement in childhood were found in the voluntary group when compared to the reference group, using singing national anthem during childhood as an indicator.

The path that is more common for those who went on to voluntarily join violent extremist groups in the sample is that of a child neglected both by the state and its educational facilities, and overlooked (at least) at home. Such a child may emerge from childhood without a sense of direction or future opportunity, and may have a mindset of heightened threat perception already formed.

---

**EXPERIENCES RELATED TO LIVING  
IN HIGHLY PERIPHERAL REGIONS OF  
AFRICA BEGIN TO SHAPE INDIVIDUALS’  
WORLDVIEW AND VULNERABILITY. THIS  
SHOULD BY NO MEANS BE INTERPRETED  
TO STIGMATIZE COMMUNITIES FROM  
THESE REGIONS**

---

‘When I became an adult, I married one of the *mujahidin* men, and I used to help them. Some of my tasks were to keep weapons safe after fighting.’

**Maymuun**, 30 years old  
*Weapons and people-trafficker/marriage-broker*



## **CHAPTER 2: RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES**

Violent extremist groups currently active in Africa largely define themselves in religious terms, invoking distorted interpretations of Islam, much as their roots and the drivers that facilitate their expansion can be traced to a cluster of other factors. Despite similarities based on affinity with globalized discourse, such religious ideologies remain varied. This compounds the heterogeneity that is derived from the different country contexts where they operate. Seeking to understand in more detail how religious ideologies may have influenced the susceptibility of those interviewed through this research to join violent extremist groups, the *Journey to Extremism* questionnaire included a number of questions about respondents' religious experiences and perspectives. Findings are clustered in the following discussion under the headings: *Perspectives on own and other religions* and *Religious education*.

The relationship between religion and radicalization is largely established as deriving from the fact that religion can serve as a powerful expression of individual and group identity, particularly in contexts where religious identities compete with loyalty to the state; and/ or where charismatic leaders and individuals are present and able to exploit these dynamics.<sup>37</sup> With regard to recruitment, there is consensus in much of the analysis of violent extremism that religion serves as a catalyst, often exploited by militant groups to legitimize the use of violence as a response to a wide array of grievances. While only a small fraction of individuals within predominantly Muslim societies are mobilized by such narratives, ideological appeal is nonetheless compelling to those susceptible.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.1 Perspectives on own and other religions

The power of religious ideas as a first response in explaining recruitment emerged strongly in the *Journey to Extremism* study. Provided with a multiple-answer format question about their reasons for joining extremist groups, 'religious ideas' was the answer that attracted the largest number of voluntary respondents at 40 percent; 'believed in a religious leader' attracted 13 percent. Overall, 51 percent of those in the voluntary group chose either one or both of the two mentioned reasons, indicating the significance of religious ideology in one way or another as a determining factor informing decision to join. The range of answers given to this critical question is shown in Figure 26.

FIGURE 26 REASONS FOR JOINING THE ORGANIZATION  
VOLUNTARY GROUP

Multiple-answer question. Shows percent of individuals who selected reason.



**THE POWER OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS AS A FIRST RESPONSE IN EXPLAINING RECRUITMENT EMERGED STRONGLY IN THE *JOURNEY TO EXTREMISM* STUDY**

Viewed from a different perspective, it is also notable that the remaining 49 percent of respondents in the voluntary group *did not* state religious ideas or the influence of a religious leader as being the major factor informing the decision to join – itself striking given the ideological emphasis on religious-based agendas of each of the groups under review. This finding supports the conclusions drawn elsewhere, which assert that individuals who join violent extremist groups have a range of priorities, perspectives and needs that motivate them, in which religion may or may not play a considerable part, yet possibly even becoming a focal point or vehicle for expression for a number of other issues.

Unpacking religious ideologies further, and notwithstanding country variations, the journey to extremism undertaken by those interviewed involved a hardening of attitudes towards others, which was first noted in responses on childhood discussed above in Chapter 1. By adulthood, in many cases this appears to have expanded into a discernible preference among voluntary group respondents that people of different religions be treated unequally, as shown in Figure 27.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, female respondents exhibited a significantly higher belief in equality among religions than males. This may be

reflective of the nationality of most female respondents; it may also reflect different attitudes by gender and a more socially cohesive tendency among women, even among those recruited.<sup>40</sup>

Model 1.1 strongly highlights the variation between those in the voluntary group and others on this variable, where thinking that religions should be treated the same is a robust predictor of the likelihood of not joining an extremist organization. The model indicates that, all else constant, respondents who believed that they should be treated the same were between 12 and 26 percent less likely to be members of extremist organizations, within the sample. These findings suggest that higher levels of religious tolerance may serve as a significant source of resilience to recruitment.<sup>41</sup>

When asked whether, on joining, respondents felt that their religion was under threat, a majority (63 percent) of those in the voluntary group answered in the affirmative (Figure 28). However, when reference group members were asked the related question for comparison as to whether they, at the time of the interview, felt their religion to be under threat, an even greater majority, by a further 7 percent, said ‘yes’.

FIGURE 27 ‘DO YOU THINK PEOPLE BELONGING TO DIFFERENT RELIGIONS SHOULD BE TREATED EQUALLY?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT AND GENDER

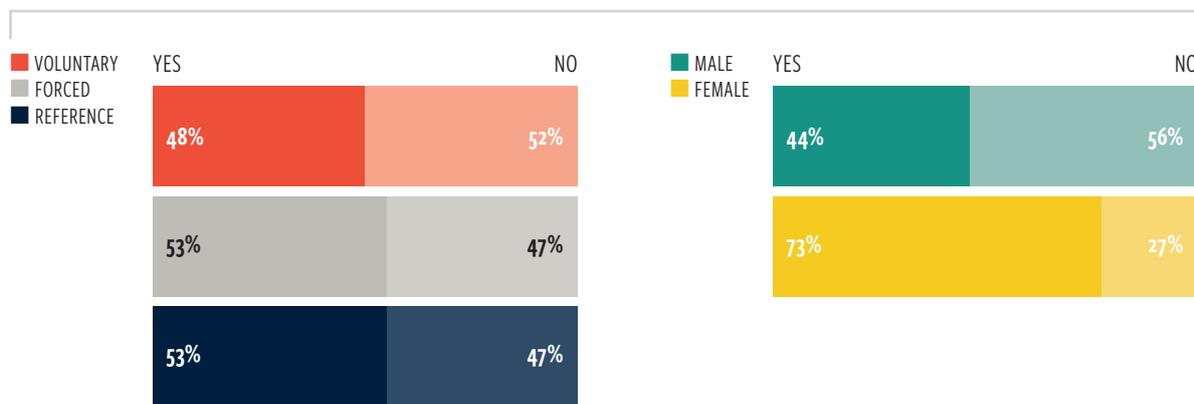
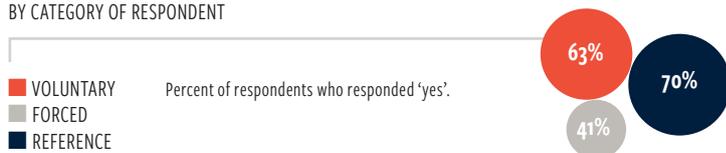


FIGURE 28 ‘DID YOU CONSIDER YOUR RELIGION TO BE UNDER THREAT?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



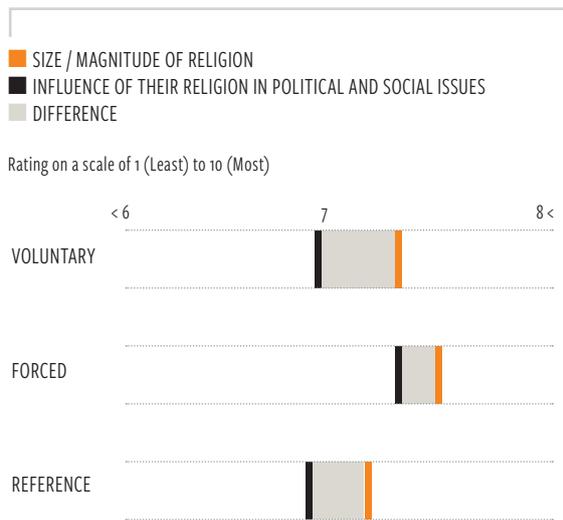
Similarly, the difference between perceptions of the size of their religion and influence of their religion between the voluntary and reference populations was minimal (Figure 29).

A sense of threat towards, or marginalization of, religion does not therefore appear to substantially differentiate the outlooks of those in the voluntary and reference groups. Indeed, the widespread feeling of religion being under threat may be a wider source of future risk with regard to the potential for violent extremism to expand further across the countries surveyed. Globally mounting Islamophobic narratives only serve to further inflame such perceptions.

Differences do emerge between the groups when comparing ‘willingness to die for your religion’ – the ultimate existential level of commitment. Here, those in the voluntary group take their personal investment in religious ideology further than others sharing otherwise similar views about their religion being both under threat and insufficiently influential in society.

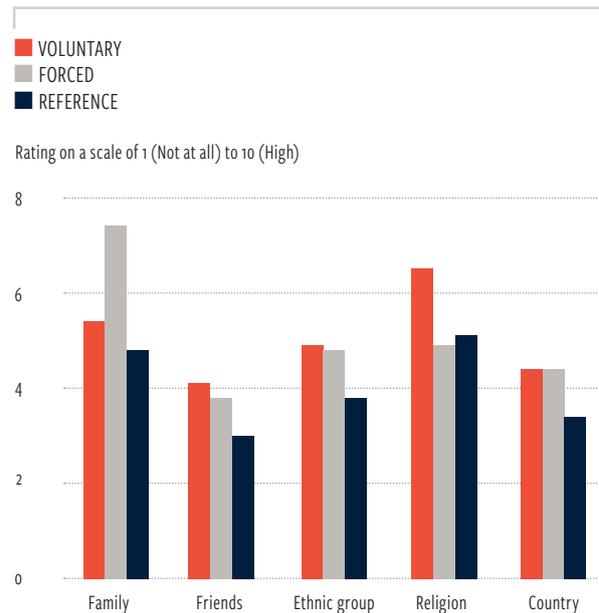
Thus, while ‘willingness to die for your religion’ ranks the highest when compared with other causes that people were invited to rank their willingness to die for among the voluntary and reference groups alike (Figure 30), it is discernibly higher among those who had made the journey to extremism. Forced recruits placed ‘family’ above all other causes and showed the highest readiness to die for any cause in that respect among all respondents – possibly a reflection of the trauma of separation linked to the circumstances of their recruitment.

FIGURE 29 RATING OF SIZE/MAGNITUDE AND INFLUENCE OF RELIGION IN COUNTRY BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



**HIGHER LEVELS OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE MAY SERVE AS A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF RESILIENCE TO RECRUITMENT**

FIGURE 30 RATING OF WILLINGNESS TO DIE FOR THE FOLLOWING BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



## 2.2 Religious education

When measuring years of religious education, both voluntary and forced recruits appear to have on average received fewer years than those in the reference group, as indicated in Figure 31. However, the data clearly shows that both voluntary and forced recruits had also on average memorized a significantly larger number of chapters of the Quran than reference group counterparts by as many as 10 and six chapters, respectively, as shown in Figure 32. This is possibly a function of their time spent with the violent group in question. Figure 32 also shows that the distribution of chapters of the Quran memorized for all groups is heavily concentrated at the bottom (around one to 10 chapters).

In both Models 1.1 and 1.2, having received at least six years of religious schooling is a powerful reducer of the likelihood of being found in the voluntary group, within the sample.<sup>42</sup> The models predict that a person who received at least six years of religious schooling is less likely to join an extremist organization by as much as 32 percent. In fact, this variable is also robust and statistically significant in Models 2.1 and 2.2, which focus on the path to recruitment.

Model 1.2 includes three additional variables related to religion: knowledge of at least one-third of the chapters of the Quran; having studied the Tafsir (the interpretation of the Quran); and an interaction between the two. The results indicate that memorization of at least one-third of the Quran is statistically significant and positively related to joining an extremist organization *only* when the individual has not studied the Tafsir and vice versa. However, the interaction between the two variables, memorizing at least one-third of the Quran *and* having studied the Tafsir, is negatively related to the likelihood of joining an extremist organization in all models, although the interaction term is not statistically significant.

Figure 33 develops these findings further by showing the distinct gap between *reading* and *understanding* of the Quran among voluntary group respondents, with as many as 57 percent admitting either to not reading at all or understanding what they read ‘less often’ to not at all.

FIGURE 31 NUMBER OF YEARS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RECEIVED BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

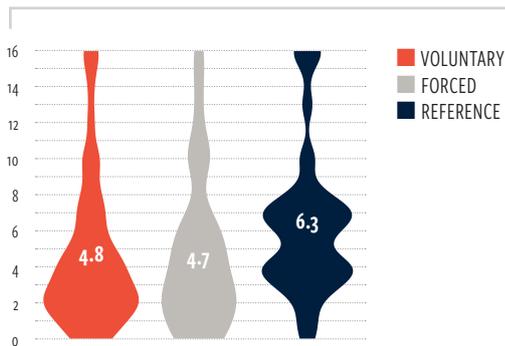
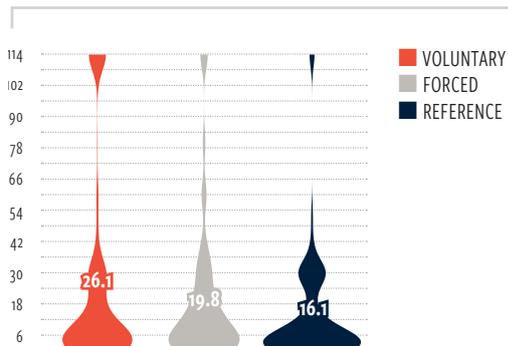


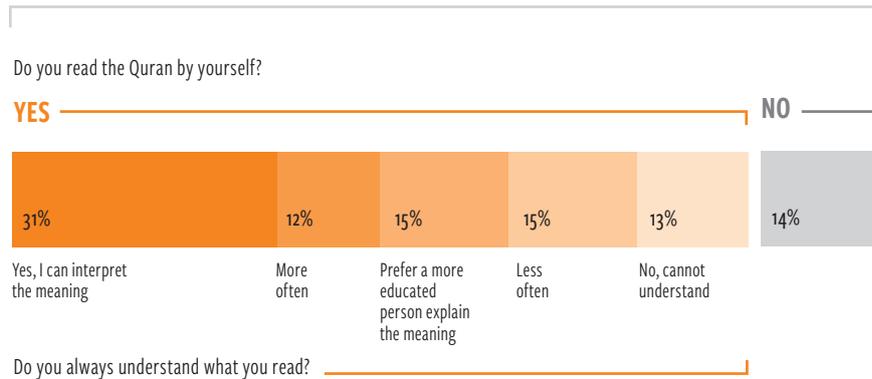
FIGURE 32 NUMBER OF CHAPTERS OF THE QURAN MEMORIZED BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



The *Journey to Extremism* findings highlight the way in which dogma and indoctrination, rather than more in-depth religious study, influence susceptibility to recruitment within the sample. Interpretation of these findings is premised on the recognition that within the contexts, with the Quran usually available only in classical Arabic, people with limited grasp of the language are often highly dependent on intermediaries as conduits for religious learning. The more substantive their own knowledge of the religion is, the readier they may be to question and engage with militant interpretations.

These findings are particularly important in the prevailing international and national contexts where perspectives on violent extremism are frequently conflated with negative perceptions about Islam itself. This is often expressed through a commonly accepted perspective on *madrassa*-based radicalization. Instead, it emerges that *quality* religious education served as a source of resilience to recruitment on the part of those interviewed.<sup>43</sup> Certainly, utilization of educational platforms by recruiters takes place and is well documented, including in Africa; however, other research has begun to suggest that religious training can be a protective factor, a notion that is supported by this data.<sup>44</sup>

FIGURE 33 **READING COMPARED TO UNDERSTANDING OF THE QURAN**  
VOLUNTARY GROUP



Do you always understand what you read? \_\_\_\_\_

THESE FINDINGS ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN THE PREVAILING INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS WHERE PERSPECTIVES ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM ARE FREQUENTLY CONFLATED WITH NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM ITSELF

## Key findings

Chapter 2 has shown that while religious ideologies are often expressed as a primary reason for making the journey to extremism, representing the most frequently selected response within the sample, a number of other factors are also influential. This confirms the importance of finding appropriate strategies to engage with religious ideologies constructively as part of CT and PVE interventions. It also supports the notion that religion is exploited by extremist groups to justify the resort to violence, becoming a focal point for a number of other grievances and issues.

At the same time, it is clear that although religion may feature prominently in the factors that pull people to join violent extremist groups, the level of religious literacy is low among those most vulnerable to recruitment. Therefore, understanding the actual meaning of religious texts is also low. Higher than average years of religious schooling appears to have been a source of resilience within the sample. Meanwhile, not reading or not understanding religious texts is at 57 percent among voluntary group respondents. These findings challenge rising Islamophobic rhetoric that has intensified in the search for effective responses to violent extremism globally and demonstrate that fostering greater understanding of religion, through methods that enable students to question and engage critically with teachings, may be a key resource for PVE initiatives.

It follows that the question of how, when and which *madrassas* intersect with violent extremism requires close scrutiny in light of these findings, with negative stereotyping of faith-based education likely to be highly counter-productive. It also suggests the relevance of improved local governance systems drawing communities together in overseeing religious affairs.

The journey to extremism involves a hardening of attitudes towards others, and a discernible preference among those in the voluntary group that people of different religions be treated *unequally*, when compared to other respondents. Feeling that your religion is under threat was a common perspective among all respondents, which sounds a warning that the potential threat of further recruitment by violent extremist groups using religion as a touchstone for other context-based grievances is very real across the African countries under review. Moreover, those in the voluntary group are more likely to express a willingness to die for religion over other causes (while those who have been forced to join put family first).

---

‘And, after all these years, there was no real victory, or progress that had been made. Too many civilians and Muslims have died already. This doesn’t seem like anything that has an end to it. And it is for these reasons that I decided to just give up – all of it.’

Ali, 53 years old  
*Recruiter*



## **CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC FACTORS**

A further area of personal experience informing individuals' journey to extremism as explored through the questionnaire relates to the economic situation of respondents at the time of recruitment, their rating of the pertinence of economic factors to their decision to join the violent extremist group, as well as the extent to which they were remunerated once recruited. Findings are clustered in the following discussion under the headings: *Employment status; Rating of economic factors as drivers of recruitment; and Remuneration.*

In the regions of Africa that are most affected by violent extremism, stark levels of unemployment and economic need are apparent. Often these are well below national averages. For instance, youth unemployment in Kenya's coastal and north-eastern counties is between 40 and 50 percent higher than the national average.<sup>45</sup> In a country where 100 million live in poverty, similar regional variations distort the livelihood prospects of north-eastern Nigerians.<sup>46</sup> In Kenya, recent data from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Index (OPHI) on multidimensional poverty illustrates this trend: populations living in northern and, to a lesser extent, coastal regions where violent extremism is more prominent experience significantly higher levels of multidimensional poverty than those in Nairobi and central regions (Figure 34). In Nigeria, similar evidence of the relative impoverishment of the key states where Boko Haram has emerged and gained influence, as against the national average, is illustrated in Figure 35. Across Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and the Lake Chad region where the majority of the interviews took place, the effects of climate change on already fragile economies are also in evidence.<sup>47</sup>

The notion that poverty and unemployment are important factors driving violent conflict has a long-standing place in conflict theory and policy discourse. It found fresh impetus from the late-1990s in part due to the work of Paul Collier, whose empirical approach to the economic dimensions of civil wars argued that a preponderance of young men in society with few licit earning opportunities was strongly correlated with the likelihood of civil war,

particularly in contexts with a high availability of 'lootable' primary commodities.<sup>48</sup> However, others have long sounded a warning note cautioning against an overly deterministic understanding of the relationship between poverty, unemployment and violence.

Together with education, the evidence on the relationship between employment, poverty and violent extremism is mixed. While media and politicians' commentary often underlines assumed links between lack of economic opportunity and violent extremism, much of the literature has challenged generalized assumptions about this relationship. Multiple studies highlight the often relatively affluent profile of violent extremists, pushing attention to other motivational factors. However, it is again significant that much of this literature is focused on regions other than Africa.

There is agreement that poverty alone is not a sufficient explanation for violent extremism in Africa. Still, it is accepted that violent extremist groups exploit perceptions of disproportionate economic hardship or exclusion due to religious or ethnic identity, while failure to generate high and sustainable levels of growth and job creation are also critically linked. Economic factors can thus best be described as one among several sets of issues driving recruitment of individuals by violent extremist groups. The wider setting of underdevelopment found in Africa clearly correlates with a cluster of conditions that have been shown to be conducive to its expansion.

FIGURE 34 **MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI)**  
BY REGION IN KENYA (2014)

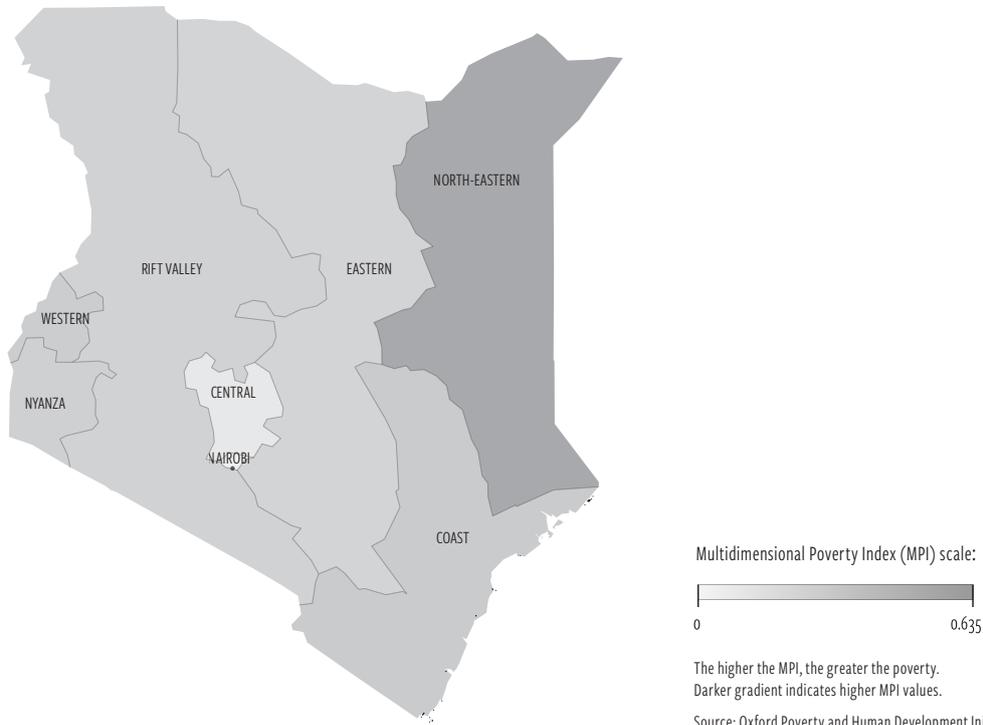
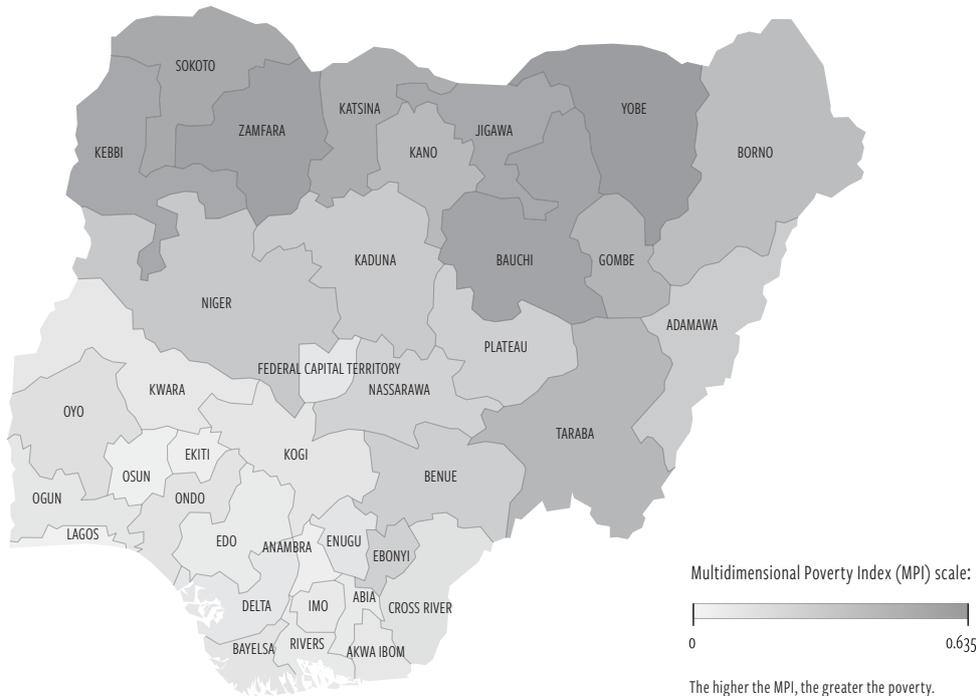


FIGURE 35 **MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI)**  
BY STATE IN NIGERIA (2013)



### 3.1 Employment status

Just 7 percent of voluntary group respondents identified ‘lost my job’ in answer to questioning about the ‘*Specific incident that finally motivated you to join the organization*’ (this relates to the ‘tipping point’, see Figure 50 in Chapter 5). However, this may as much be a reflection of not having had a job at the time of recruitment as any deprioritization of economic factors. Indeed, a larger percentage of those in the voluntary group were unemployed at the time of recruitment than reference group counterparts, by 16 percent, as shown in Figure 36.

Models 1.1 and 1.2 underline the pertinence of employment status to vulnerability to recruitment. The analysis shows that an individual working or studying was between 3 and 27 percent less likely to be found in the voluntary group. The variable is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence interval or higher in 8 of the 11 model iterations, including when

used as a treatment. The variable is also found to have explanatory power in Model 2.2, which explores the recruitment process.

A larger number of those either studying or employed (not in vulnerable employment) also took significantly longer to decide to join a violent extremist group in the instances when they did end up joining, compared to those in either vulnerable employment or unemployed, as shown in Figure 37.

The spread of types of employment in which all respondents were engaged is shown by country in Figure 38, confirming that the majority of those employed were in the informal sector, largely unskilled or semi-skilled. This finding challenges the widespread notion that violent extremists tend to hail from more professional employment backgrounds, at least in the African context, just as Chapter 1 posed challenges to hypotheses that assume higher levels of education.

FIGURE 36 ‘WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE YOU GOT INVOLVED WITH THE ORGANIZATION (OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW)?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

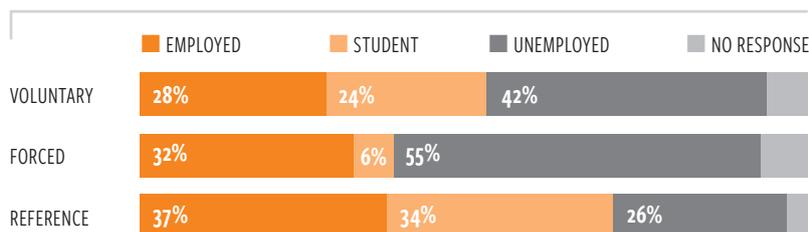
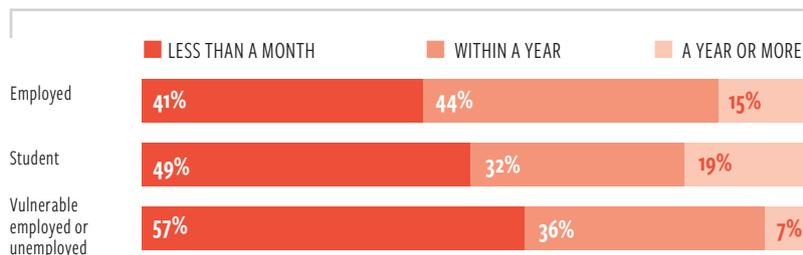
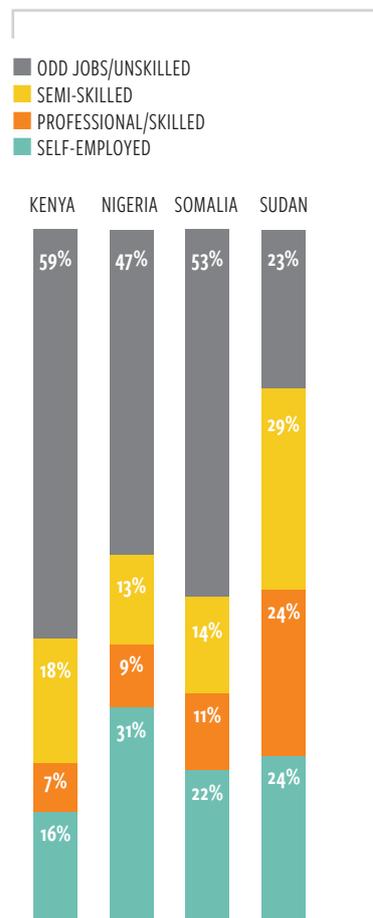


FIGURE 37 PERIOD BETWEEN INTRODUCTION AND JOINING THE ORGANIZATION VOLUNTARY BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT



**INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE STUDYING OR EMPLOYED AT THE TIME OF JOINING THE ORGANIZATION TOOK LONGER TO TAKE THE DECISION TO JOIN**

FIGURE 38 TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT (IF EMPLOYED) BY COUNTRY OF INTERVIEW



### 3.2 Rating of economic factors as drivers of recruitment

Unsurprisingly, given the overall context of relative deprivation and underemployment that emerges, economic incentives appear to have been an important element of decision-making within the sample when it comes to joining a violent extremist group. As indicated in Figure 26 in Chapter 2, 13 percent of respondents in the voluntary group selected the answer ‘employment opportunities’ in explaining why they joined the violent extremist group in question. This represents the third most frequent response after ‘being part of something bigger’ and ‘religious ideas’, which, however, attracted more than double the number of answers, as discussed in Chapter 2.

However, in answer to the question ‘At the time you joined the organization, what was your most immediate need?’, ‘employment’ appears as the most frequently selected answer by voluntary group members, at 34 percent, followed by ‘security’, at 25 percent (Figure 39). It is noteworthy that ‘employment’ was also an important answer for reference group respondents, underlining the overall vulnerability at large. Gender variations were also apparent, although not shown in Figure 39. While both male and female respondents prioritized security – with at least 25 percent of the individuals in each group identifying it as an immediate need – at least 20 percent of female respondents selected ‘access to water/electricity’, compared to just 4 percent of males.

Respondents in the voluntary group reported a high level of frustration with economic conditions, although less than the level of frustration felt towards various state agencies and security forces (discussed in the following chapter), as shown in Figure 40.

### 3.3 Remuneration

Finally, respondents were asked whether they were paid salaries for being in the violent extremist group. Forty-two percent stated that they were, with some of these reporting anecdotally that they received monthly wages that were substantially higher than local averages. However, a significant number were not paid at all. Even allowing for the high rate of ‘no answers’ to this question, which may skew the overall result in either direction, the fact that at least 35 percent of those in the voluntary group did not receive any pay for their time with violent extremist groups is striking.<sup>49</sup> Further, very few forced recruits report receiving any remuneration (Figure 41).

The apparently high incidence of non-payment, even of individuals voluntarily recruited, is intriguing, and presents interesting opportunities for PVE programming. These include considering working together with former members to raise awareness among those at-risk who may be incentivized by the prospect of income-generation that indeed this income may not always be forthcoming. In addition, in light of the overall relevance of economic factors, livelihood aspects of reintegration as well as economic incentives can usefully be prioritized as part of amnesty and other reintegration programmes.

FIGURE 39 MOST IMMEDIATE NEED AT TIME OF JOINING THE ORGANIZATION (OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW) BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

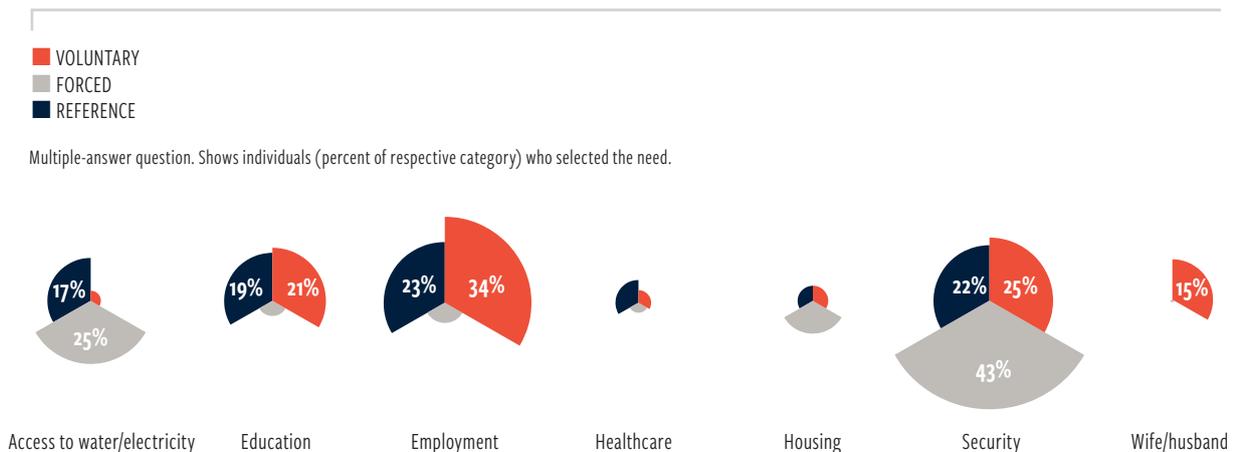


FIGURE 40 RATING OF FRUSTRATION AT THE FOLLOWING VOLUNTARY GROUP

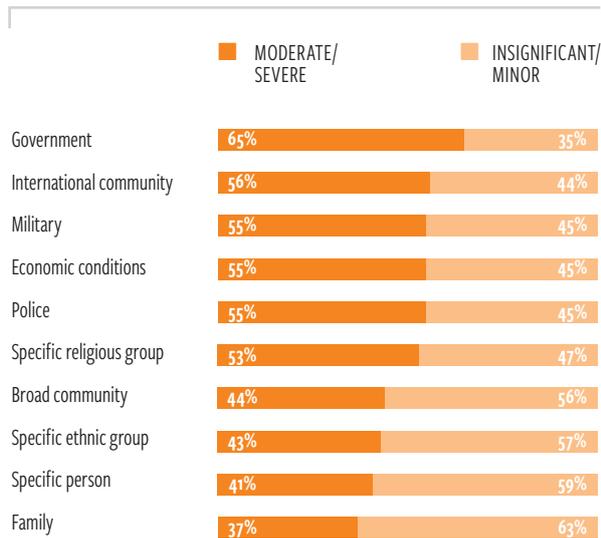
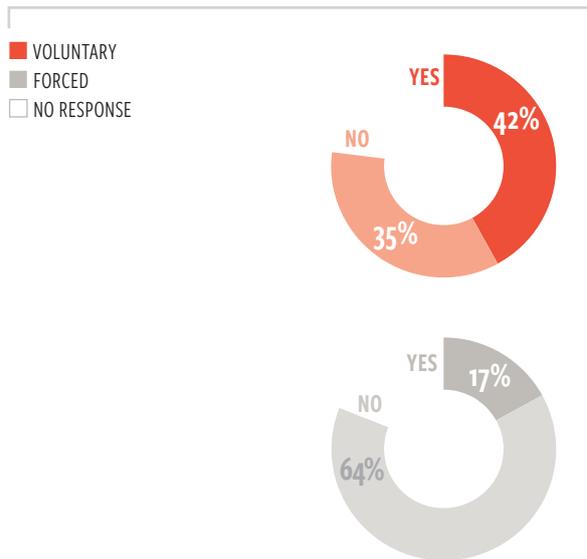


FIGURE 41 'WERE YOU PAID FOR BEING A MEMBER OF THE ORGANIZATION?' VOLUNTARY AND FORCED GROUPS



### Key findings

The profile of many violent extremists in parts of the world other than Africa and in leadership positions may well be one of relative privilege, as highlighted in much of the global literature on violent extremism. This should not be interpreted to negate the relevance of poverty and underemployment as a driver of recruitment in Africa. To the contrary, if an individual was studying or working, it was found to be less likely within the *Journey to Extremism* sample that he or she be a member of an extremist organization by anywhere between 3 percent and 27 percent. Employment is the single most frequently cited ‘immediate need’ at the time of joining. Employment opportunities represent an important component of the overall ‘reason for joining’, with 13 percent stating it as a priority. And individuals who joined, but were studying or employed (and not in vulnerable employment) at the time of joining, took longer to make the decision to join, from first introduction to the group in question, than counterparts who were either in vulnerable employment or unemployed.

The findings shown in Chapter 3 thus confirm that economic factors are likely to be a critical component of the overall incentives and drivers leading to recruitment in many cases, although at the same time are also unlikely to be the sole factor.

The grievances associated with growing up in contexts where multidimensional poverty is high and far deeper than national averages, with the lived reality of unemployment and underemployment, render ‘economic factors’ a major source of frustration identified by those in the voluntary group. This manifestly adds to individuals’ vulnerability to narratives that invite them to channel such grievances and associated desperation into the cause (or the ‘bigger picture’) of violent extremist groups. The economic injustices and relative deprivation faced provide fertile ground for recruitment. The fact that employment was highlighted as an important issue by reference group respondents indicates the threat of future violent extremist expansion in Africa.

The findings highlight uneven experiences regarding remuneration by violent extremist groups in Africa. Some reported incomes above the local average, but at least 35 percent of those in the voluntary group were reportedly not paid at all during their period of recruitment. This hints at possible avenues for PVE counter-narrative interventions, as well as the importance of livelihood dimensions to reintegration and amnesty processes.

---

‘I was ordered to be a suicide bomber. I was assigned to detonate in either State House or the airport.’

**Sadiq**, 19 years old  
*Fighter*



## **CHAPTER 4: STATE AND CITIZENSHIP**

Questions concerning respondents' perspectives on, and grievances against, different organs of the state represented a significant component of the *Journey to Extremism* questionnaire and subsequent data analysis, as were specific issues regarding democratic participation. This area of research has produced striking findings on the relationship between the state, citizenship and violent extremism, which are included below under the headings: *Confidence in government; Grievances with security actors; Democratic participation; and Self-identification with the nation-state.*

The importance of a state's strength as well as its character have been emphasized by researchers and policymakers as highly pertinent to understanding violent extremism. Quantitative studies have positively correlated state instability and the frequency of terrorist attacks.<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, it has been shown that out of 23 countries in conflict, 17 experience violent extremism, and 88 percent of all terrorist attacks have occurred in countries involved in violent conflict.<sup>51</sup> The process of transitioning between political systems has also been found to create conditions that are particularly conducive to the spread of violent extremist activity.<sup>52</sup> Many of the countries under review fall into such categories. Delving further into why such political environments may give rise to violent extremism, the nature of governance emerges as key. The quality of state-citizenship relationships across a range of indicators is increasingly recognized as an important factor driving the spread of violent extremism.

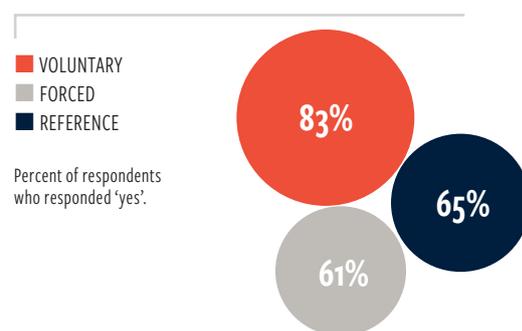
#### 4.1 Confidence in government

As this research has established, the journey to extremism in Africa frequently starts in peripheral geographic regions where multidimensional poverty is above national averages. Individuals in the *Journey to Extremism* voluntary group are likely to be those who are from among the poorest communities within the national contexts, and to have the lowest levels of education and most marginal livelihood opportunities. These factors appear to have combined with family circumstances at home, as well as relatively limited exposure to other groups, to contribute to overall vulnerability.

A sense of grievance towards, and limited confidence in, government is perhaps an unsurprising corollary to this pattern of life experience, both for the relatively few that will ultimately be recruited by violent extremist groups as well as the wider community. Political marginalization is a further critical dimension of the overall macro-level environment conducive to violent extremism.

The research found that affirmative answers to the question 'Do you agree with the statement: the government only looks after the interests of a few?' were at over 50 percent for all groups surveyed (including the reference group members), indicating a pervasive scepticism about government's commitment to the population at large within the societies in question. The affirmative is highest among those in the voluntary group, at 18 percent higher than for the reference group, as shown in Figure 42. Indeed, 83 percent of the voluntary group agreed with the statement.

FIGURE 42 'DO YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT: THE GOVERNMENT ONLY LOOKS AFTER AND PROTECTS THE INTERESTS OF A FEW?' BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



The issue of how successful governments are perceived to be in providing key services to the population again underscores people’s low confidence. This is particularly acute among those in the voluntary group, for whom the percentage of those who consistently rate the government’s success in the provision of services as ‘not at all/poor’ is significantly higher than reference group counterparts, as illustrated in Figure 43.<sup>53</sup>

Figure 39 in Chapter 3 indicates that significant percentages of individuals in both voluntary and reference groups chose education as one of their most immediate needs. In Figure 43, both groups also rated the provision of education to be ‘not at all/poor’ at 67 percent and

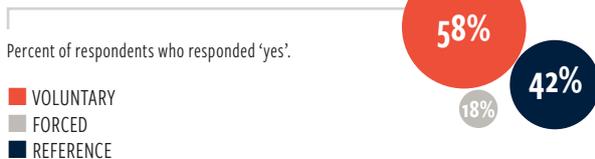
41 percent respectively. While the need for education and its weak provision are expressed by both groups, all else equal, Models 1.1 and 1.2 show that individuals who believed government provision of education was ‘improving/excellent’ were less likely to be found in the voluntary group by 16 percent to 26 percent.

Identification of corruption as a specific obstacle to satisfactory government performance was explored with a series of questions about paying bribes. Respondents in the voluntary group either had more experience of paying bribes, or were more willing to answer that they did pay bribes, by 16 percent, as shown in Figure 44.

FIGURE 43 RATING OF GOVERNMENT SUCCESS IN PROVISION OF THE FOLLOWING BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



FIGURE 44 ‘DID YOU EVER PAY A BRIBE?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



## 4.2 Grievances with security actors

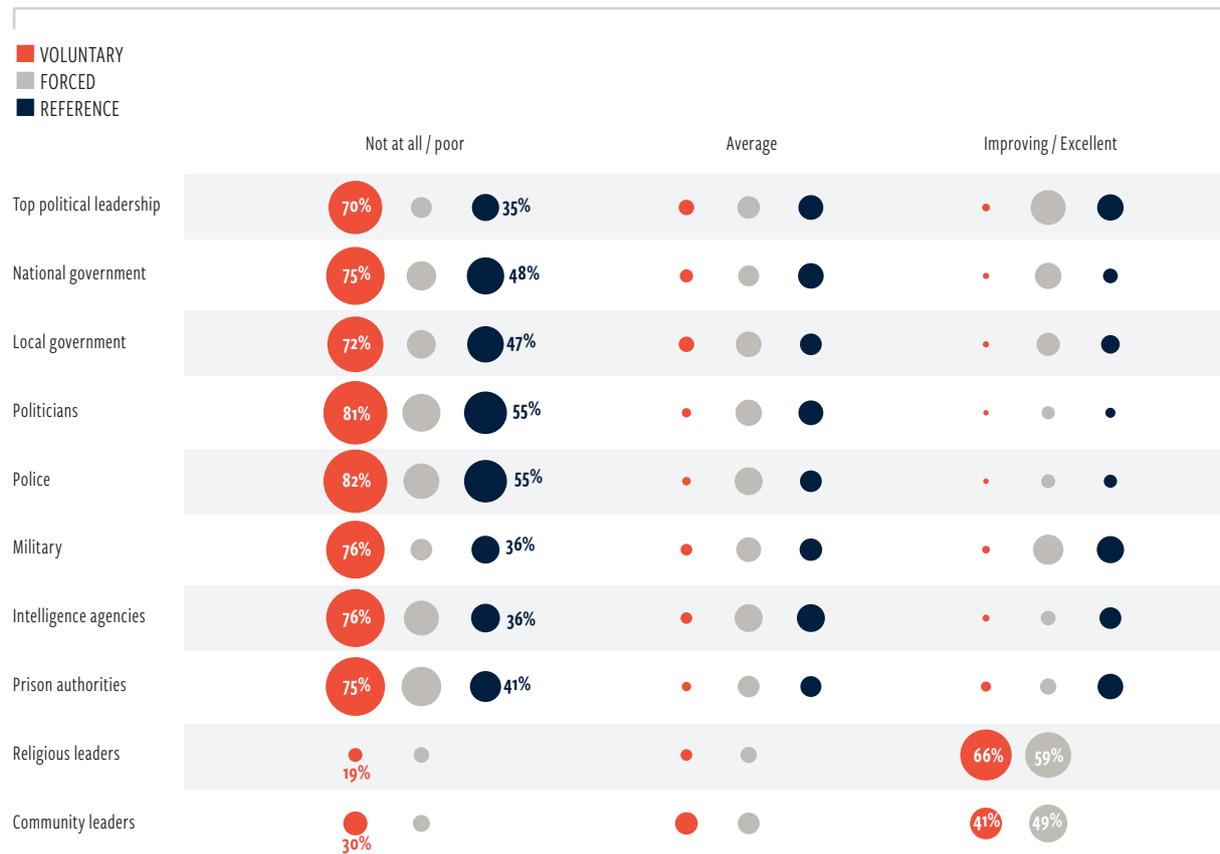
A further common feature of weak governance in peripheral regions that are marginal in development terms may be the presence, however occasional, of repressive and corrupt security agencies who exacerbate the experience of overall state neglect, presenting a hostile face of government that is inimical to local citizens. Indeed, confidence in security agencies, or lack thereof, has been established as a crucial factor influencing the spread of violent extremism. Militarized responses to violent extremism have only served to deepen long-standing mistrust and alienation, with governments' CT strategies often explicitly identified as a source of grievance. In many countries, there is clear and growing evidence of the way in which governments have instrumentalized CT and PVE agendas in order to limit the space for political opposition and non-state actors, including civil society and the media.<sup>54</sup> Yet experts urge the importance of working with local civil society actors as key champions in PVE, if interventions are to be effective.<sup>55</sup>

Lack of due process in operations targeting specific violent extremist groups has been associated with large-scale human rights abuses among civilians in affected areas, with the result that communities are often more afraid of

state security forces than of violent extremist groups.<sup>56</sup> The 2017 *Global Peace Index* finds that 'state-sponsored violence' declined in all regions of the world during 2016 except for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa region, where it increased.<sup>57</sup> According to one expert: 'Confronting Islamist extremism with heavy-handed or extrajudicial law enforcement is likely to backfire by inflaming real or perceived socio-economic cleavages and exclusionist narratives used by violent extremist groups.'<sup>58</sup>

The *Journey to Extremism* research unequivocally underscores this paradox as it is playing out today in Africa. Respondents to the questionnaire were invited to rate their level of trust held in different authorities. It emerges in Figure 45 that trust in police and politicians and the military is extremely low, closely followed by intelligence agencies, prison authorities, then national and local government. Again, while trust levels are low overall, trust on the part of those in the voluntary group was significantly lower than among reference group counterparts, averaging 78 percent rating 'not at all/poor' level of trust in the police, politicians and military. However, community and religious leaders are held in relatively high regard.<sup>59</sup>

FIGURE 45 RATING OF TRUST IN THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



The lack of trust in evidence in Figure 45 thus confirms the high level of frustration towards the police and military reflected in the rating of different sources of frustration shown in Figure 40 (Chapter 3). Further evidence of this crucial experience-based and attitudinal aspect of the journey to extremism – particularly as it relates to the ‘tipping point’ for recruitment – is included in Chapter 5.

### 4.3 Democratic participation

The issue of whether respondents had any experience of voting in elections, and whether they had confidence that to do so would lead to positive change in their lives, was also explored. Unsurprisingly, given the different degrees of democratic institution-building and systems across the different countries, strong country variations were apparent. However, comparing those in the voluntary group with those in the reference group reveals no discernible overall variation in experience of having voted (Figure 46).

This similarity in actual experience of having voted between groups is all the more striking when compared to their respective levels of confidence as to whether or not ‘elections can bring change’. As shown in Figure 47, those in the voluntary group are likely to have a significantly lower degree of such confidence, by 29 percentage points.

Model 1.1 confirms confidence in elections – taken in the research as a proxy for confidence in the system of

democratic participation as a whole – as a significant predictor in the likelihood of belonging to the voluntary group. The model indicates that those who believe in the power of elections to bring change despite not having ever voted were between 17 and 27 percent less likely to be found in the voluntary group, within the sample. This indicates a striking difference between those who joined violent extremist groups and those who did not in terms of confidence in democratic processes and the possibility of positive change. It thereby suggests that the mindset of heightened threat perception and mistrust of others, found to be more common within the voluntary group dating back to childhood, may have matured in adulthood to a deep-seated and wider pessimism.

### 4.4 Self-identification with the nation-state

Reflecting the disparities found among categories of respondents in answer to the question ‘*Did you sing the national anthem in childhood?*’, there are further variations in how proud different respondents are of their country in adulthood. Those in the voluntary group were on average less proud, as shown in Figure 48. However, the margin of difference is slight – and as such is equally indicative of a more widespread feeling of alienation from the nation-state. Average ratings for ‘willingness to die for your country’ are low for all groups, however they appear to be slightly higher among both voluntary and forced group members than among the reference group – an interesting contrast possibly informed by their experience of heightened insecurity associated with combat (Figure 49).

FIGURE 46 ‘HAVE YOU EVER VOTED IN ELECTIONS?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

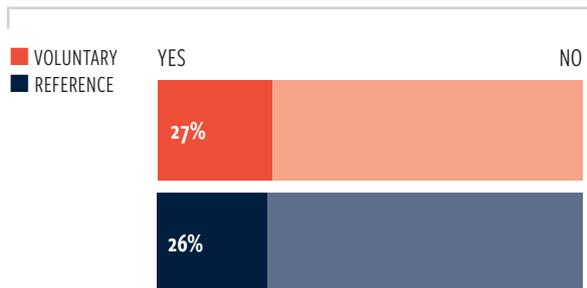


FIGURE 47 ‘DO YOU THINK ELECTIONS CAN BRING CHANGE?’ BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

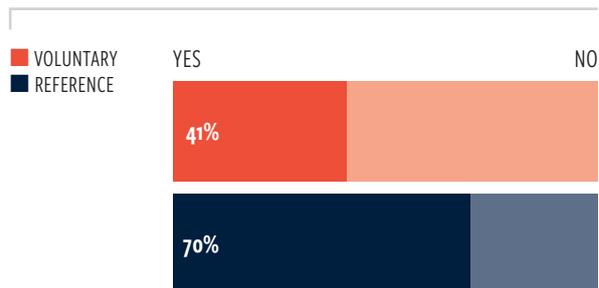


FIGURE 48 'HOW PROUD ARE YOU OF YOUR COUNTRY?' BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

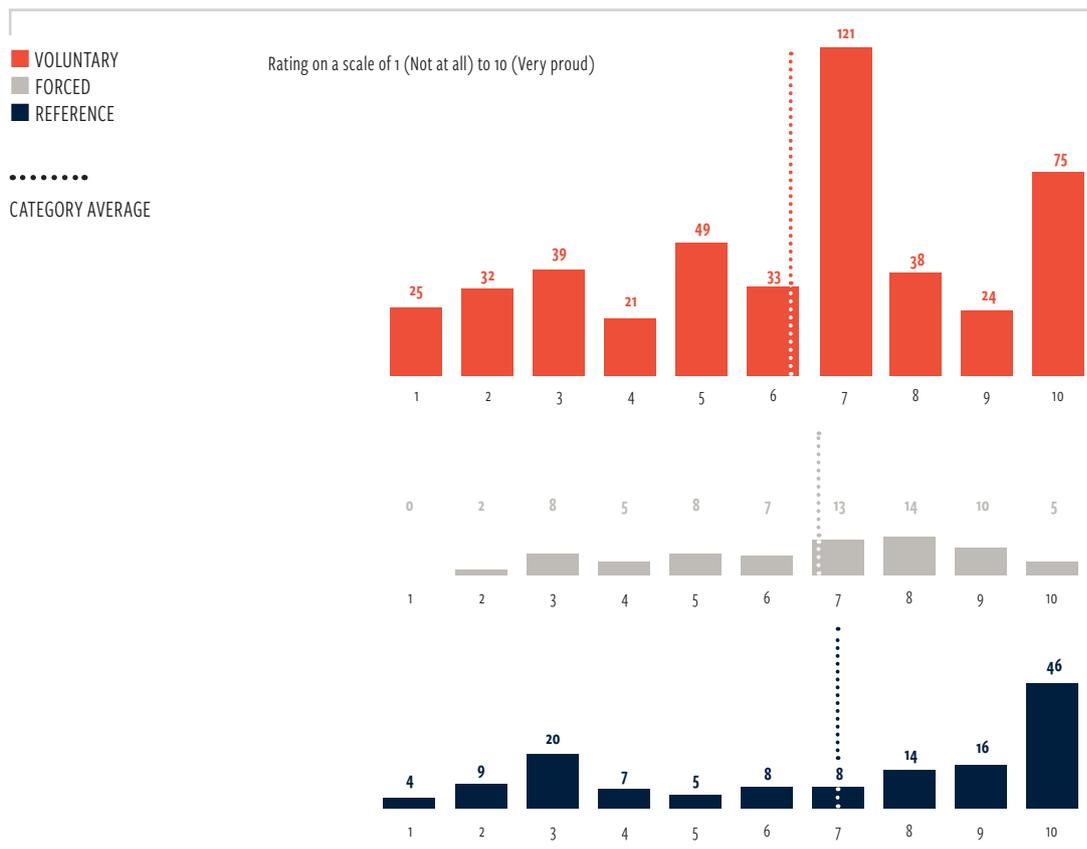
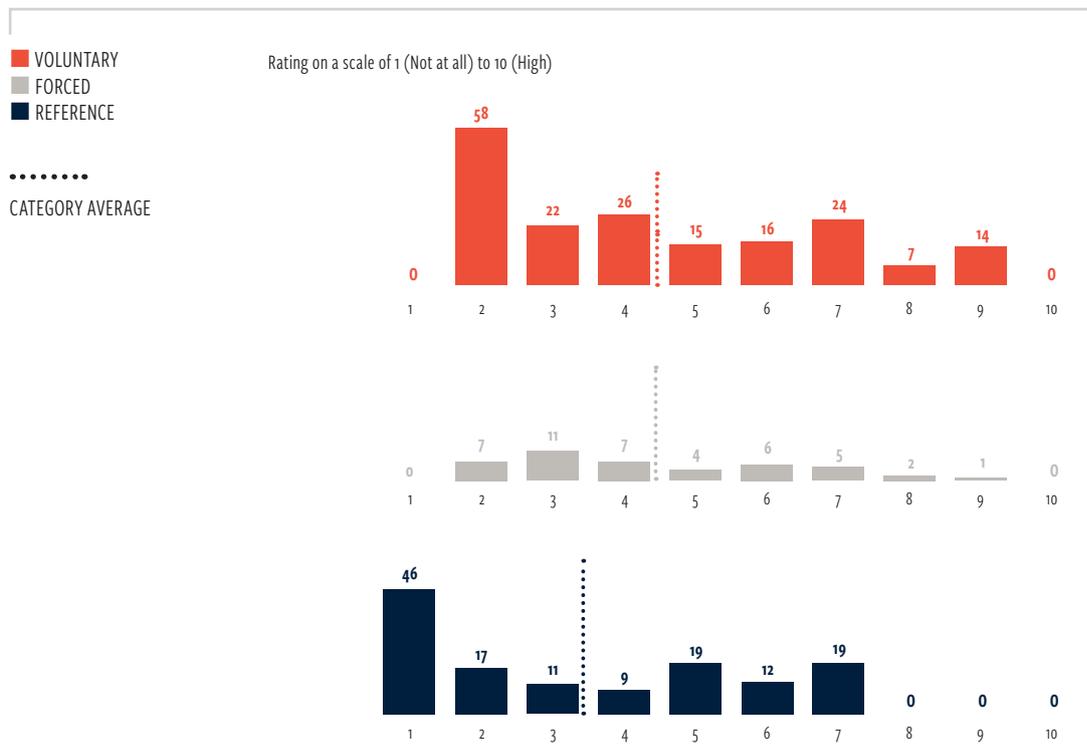


FIGURE 49 'RATE YOUR WILLINGNESS TO DIE FOR YOUR COUNTRY' BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



## Key findings

A sense of grievance towards, and limited confidence in, government is seemingly widespread in the regions of Africa associated with the highest incidence of recruitment to violent extremism – possibly an inevitable corollary of the life experience of growing up in the context of acute and relative multidimensional poverty, neglect and political marginalization affecting these areas. Disaffection with government is markedly higher, even against this high average, among the *Journey to Extremism* voluntary group across several key indicators: belief that government only looks after the interests of a few; level of trust in government authorities; and experience, or willingness to report experience, of bribe-paying. Grievances against security actors are particularly marked, with lack of trust in the military and police – as well as politicians – substantially high across groups and, again, significantly higher within the voluntary group, with an average of 78 percent rating their level of trust as ‘not at all’ or ‘poor’.

All else constant, positive experience of effective service provision is confirmed as a promising source of resilience, with respondents who think that governments’ provision of education is either ‘excellent’ or ‘improving’ between 16 and 26 percent less likely to be a member of the voluntary group.

Those most susceptible to recruitment demonstrate a significantly lower degree of confidence in the potential for democratic institutions to deliver progress or positive change, even in instances where they have never voted. If someone believes in the power of elections to bring about change, but has not voted, she or he was between 17 and 27 percent less likely to be a member of the voluntary group. This attitude is indicative of a deep-seated pessimism that has matured since childhood.

Those in the voluntary group express less pride in their country than their reference group counterparts – although not by a great margin, suggesting alienation from the nation-state may be widespread. They, together with those who have been forcibly recruited, are more willing to die for their country, which may be an indication of a heightened exposure to combat risk and trauma.

It emerges strongly that the journey to extremism is significantly marked by a fractured relationship between the state and citizens. The findings suggest that, beyond simply holding elections, wider commitment to building an inclusive social contract between government and citizens is a critical means of establishing resilience to violent extremism in Africa.

---

It emerges strongly that the journey to extremism is significantly marked by a fractured relationship between the state and citizens. The findings suggest that beyond simply holding elections, wider commitment to building an inclusive social contract between government and citizens is a critical means of establishing resilience to violent extremism in Africa

---

‘My brain went crazy  
at one point. All I could  
ever think about was  
the government is full  
of infidels, apostates  
and hypocrites.’

**Mohamed**, 28 years old  
*Tax collector*



## **CHAPTER 5: THE 'TIPPING POINT' AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

The *Journey to Extremism* questionnaire was structured in such a way as to hone in on decisive factors representing the ‘tipping point’ of individuals’ decision-making about recruitment to violent extremist groups. It also explored the process of recruitment itself, its duration and who was involved, as well as respondents’ accounts of decisions either to leave or not join. Findings are included below under the headings: *The ‘tipping point’*; *The recruitment process*; and *Drivers of non-recruitment, and demobilization*.

As outlined in the Introduction to this report, the methodological approach to the *Journey to Extremism* research is derived from political socialization theory, which states: ‘Becoming involved in acts of terrorism does not occur overnight [...] it entails a gradual process that includes a multitude of occurrences, experiences, perceptions and role-players.’<sup>60</sup> It is rarely the result of a single decision, but the end result of a ‘dialectical process’ that gradually pushes an individual towards violence over time.<sup>61</sup>

Political socialization theory is one variant of a number of conceptual approaches that are dynamic, individualist and process-focused, drawing on psychology as much as political science.<sup>62</sup> Other related approaches that frame radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism as a highly individualistic ‘pathway’ are also available. According to one study, violent extremists travel up to the ‘apex of a pyramid’, from a larger base of sympathizers and advocates, or people with similar views.<sup>63</sup> A similar metaphor depicting this journey as a narrowing staircase has been put forward.<sup>64</sup> Transformative learning theory suggests a series of cognitive, emotional and personal shifts occur in radicalizing individuals, leading to a gradual reconstruction of previously held conceptions, beliefs and identities alongside associated behaviours.<sup>65</sup>

### 5.1 The ‘tipping point’

A complex interplay of macro, meso and micro factors, including internal emotional responses and psychology, motivate specific individuals to shift from generalized radicalization to a new status of violent extremist ready to perpetrate terrorist acts. In this shift, the smaller number

of individuals who voluntarily join violent extremist groups become starkly differentiated from a majority who may live in similar circumstances but will never find themselves moved to take such a step. This ultimately highly personal aspect of the journey to extremism highlights the difficulties faced by policymakers and others engaged in CT and PVE – arguably unable to reach such a level of detail and impact in their programmes and initiatives. Still, better understanding of the final part of the journey and its ‘tipping point’ is likely to help in the search for effective response strategies.

Scholars exploring the relevance of transformative learning theory in explaining the final shift to violent extremism highlight two kinds of events in which transformations can occur. This might be a ‘transformative trigger or crisis’ that causes instant disorientation in belief and knowledge systems, prompting the individual to search for new certainties; or it might be a steadier process of incremental shifts. This understanding resonates with the findings of the *Journey to Extremism* research, in which a stark majority of the respondents in the voluntary group pointed to traumatic event(s) as having triggered their eventual decision to join the violent extremist group in question.

Figure 50 provides critical insights to the ‘tipping point’ for recruitment. In answer to the question ‘*What specific thing happened that finally motivated you to join the organization?*’, 71 percent identified ‘government action’, including ‘killing of a family member or friend’ and ‘arrest of a family member or friend’. This large percentage illustrates that in a majority of cases, paradoxically, state action appears to be the primary factor finally pushing individuals into violent extremism in Africa.

Nevertheless, 'hope/excitement' is recorded as the most common 'emotion when joining', at 35 percent among male respondents, followed closely by 'anger' at 34 percent, then 'vengeance' at 14 percent and 'fear' at 11 percent (Figure 51). Among females, a significantly larger share reported fear as their primary emotion at the point of joining, at 44 percent, providing clear insight into the degree of trauma experienced, given that the majority of the females in the sample were Boko Haram abductees. The prevalence of emotions of hope and excitement perhaps reflects the urge to transform otherwise impoverished and frustrating circumstances, which is projected in the decision to be recruited.

### 5.2 The recruitment process

Despite the highly personalized aspect of the journey to extremism, whereby macro, meso and micro factors are subjectively experienced, research into the processes of radicalization and recruitment has emphasized the frequently sociable nature of these processes, with peer groups playing an important role.

In three iterations of Model 2.2, the killing of a family member or other government action as the reason that finally motivated them to join is related to 'joining with friends', increasing the probability by as much as 27 percent and 25 percent, respectively. This perhaps sheds light on the community-wide impact of such traumatic events and government actions. However, as Model 2.1 shows, the variables have no consistent impact on the duration between introduction and joining the organization. In contrast, Model 2.2 shows that when 'hate' is the emotion that best captures the individual's decision to join, such respondents were consistently, in all iterations of the model, less likely to have joined with a friend.

Despite being a deterrent to joining (as shown in Models 1.1 and 1.2), Model 2.2 suggests that being a student or employed does make it much more likely that, if such an individual did join, they did so with a friend (by between 24 percent and 31 percent). This could be because of the extended social network available to those in employment or studying, as well as the importance of peer groups in the recruitment process.

FIGURE 50 SPECIFIC INCIDENT THAT FINALLY MOTIVATED RESPONDENT TO JOIN THE ORGANIZATION VOLUNTARY GROUP

Multiple-answer question. Shows percent of individuals who selected the incident.



FIGURE 51 EMOTION THAT BEST CAPTURES DECISION TO JOIN VOLUNTARY GROUP

Multiple-answer question. Shows individuals (percent of category) who selected the emotion.

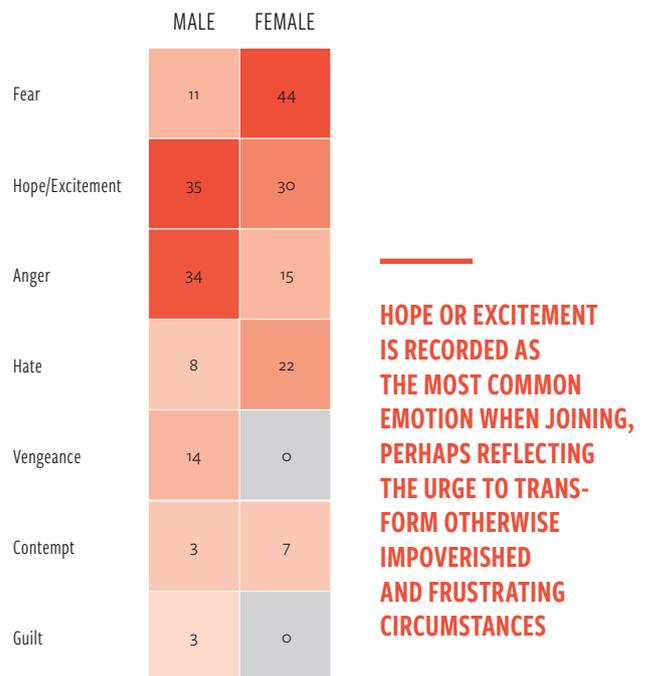


Figure 52 further illustrates the important role played particularly by community peer groups (e.g. friends), as well as religious figures, in facilitating recruitment to violent extremism in Africa. These findings demonstrate that recruitment is ultimately a highly localized process, influenced though it may be by globalized ideas.

Figure 53 illustrates the speed at which recruitment actually occurs, with 48 percent of respondents in the voluntary group taking less than one month from first introduction to the group and subsequent joining, and a further 32 percent taking between one month and one year. A total of 80 percent joined within a year. While the milestones along a typical journey to extremism date back to childhood, the final steps on the narrowing staircase, to borrow the metaphor, are remarkably quick.

Model 2.1 suggests that the speed of joining is hindered by three variables: age when the individual decided to join; whether the individual received six years of religious education; and whether the individual was aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining. The older individuals were when they decided to join the organization, the less likely it was that they joined before

a month had passed, likely a function of more mature decision-making abilities. All else constant, the three variables reduce the likelihood of individuals joining before one month by as much as 68 percent, 38 and 28 percent, respectively.

Model 2.1 compared variables related to position within the organization, as against speed of joining and whether or not individuals joined with a friend. It shows that if someone were to work in intelligence within the organization, they would be between 13 percent and 36 percent more likely to join before a month of knowing the organization had elapsed. Model 2.2 further indicates that fighters were more likely to join with a friend, while those in intelligence positions were less likely to do so.

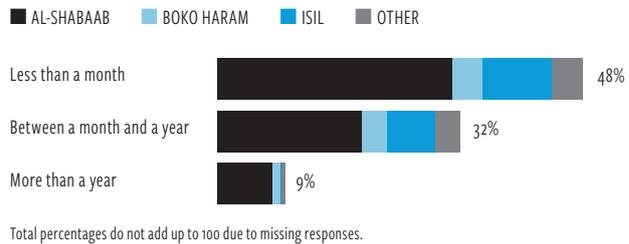
Taken as a whole, this data illustrates that, while on the one hand it may be possible to deduce a generic sense of the journey to extremism in Africa from the research findings, it is also important to better understand variations experienced by different types of individuals. These can be reflective of their future rank and position within the organizations, among other factors.

FIGURE 52 ‘WHO INTRODUCED YOU TO THE ORGANIZATION?’ VOLUNTARY GROUP

Multiple-answer question. Shows percent of individuals who selected the source of introduction.



FIGURE 53 PERIOD BETWEEN INTRODUCTION AND JOINING THE ORGANIZATION VOLUNTARY GROUP BY ORGANIZATION



**RECRUITMENT IS ULTIMATELY A HIGHLY LOCALIZED PROCESS, INFLUENCED THOUGH IT MAY BE BY GLOBALIZED IDEAS**

Meanwhile, the preponderance of attention given to online recruitment by violent extremist groups in other global contexts is challenged by the *Journey to Extremism* findings, which underscore the poor connectivity faced in most periphery areas of Africa where violent extremist activity is more prevalent. As shown in Figure 54, of the countries surveyed, Internet usage by those recruited was highest in Sudan, followed by Kenya, with extremely infrequent usage in Somalia and Nigeria. Overall, the voluntary group report a 9 percentage-point higher usage rate than among reference group counterparts. In Sudan's case, a high level of Internet usage among those in the sample, and the entirely foreign-fighter model of recruitment to groups such as ISIL, render it comparable to European foreign-fighter types of recruitment, for which the Internet is a major vehicle. For the other countries, Internet-based recruitment appears to be of far less prominence than more immediate contacts within the community, although not insignificant.<sup>66</sup> As connectivity rates continue to improve across the continent, the potential for new methods of recruitment to gain sway in these areas, bringing with them a far wider reach than the current highly localized processes, can also be anticipated.

As a result, an increase in African foreign-fighter participation in global settings may also emerge.

### 5.3 Drivers of non-recruitment, and demobilization

The research also sought to identify factors that may have constrained individuals who otherwise experience similar circumstances to those recruited by violent extremist groups from joining. A minority of reference group respondents reported being approached to join an extremist organization, as shown in Figure 55. While these numbers are perhaps surprisingly low, they serve to again underline that violent extremism has the potential to grow significantly in reach and spread, if the responses of the reference group can be taken to indicate a similar lack of contact in the population at large. Hence, given the prevalence of conducive conditions across Africa, the 'market' for violent extremist recruitment is far from saturated. This again underlines the importance of a continued focus on ending violent extremism in the region, with creative and evidence-based approaches.

FIGURE 54 FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE  
BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT AND COUNTRY OF INTERVIEW

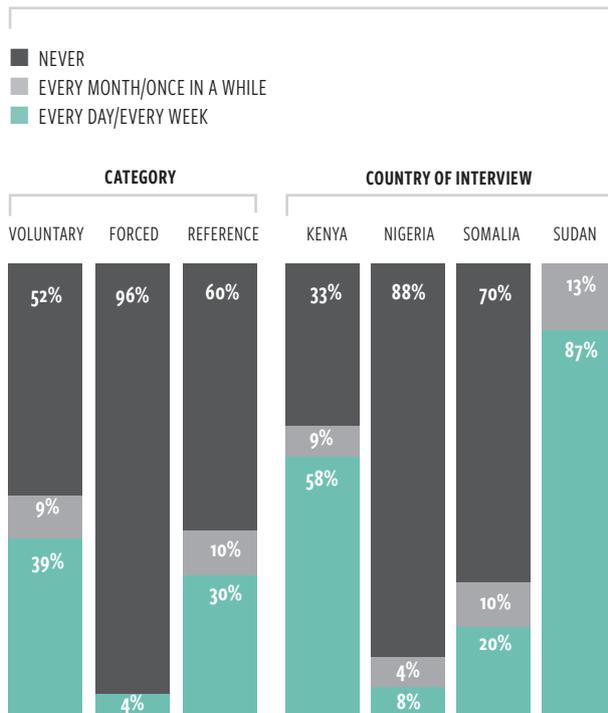


FIGURE 55 'HAVE YOU EVER BEEN APPROACHED TO JOIN AN EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION?' REFERENCE GROUP BY COUNTRY OF INTERVIEW



The most common reasons cited by reference group respondents for *not* joining were strikingly ideological (in the sense of non-agreement with the ideologies of extremist groups). This may be a function of the higher levels of religious literacy of this group, discussed in Chapter 2. Fear was also a prominent factor. Figure 56 shows top reasons offered.

Interestingly, a significantly larger share of reference group than voluntary group members were aware of initiatives to prevent people from joining, by 14 percent, as shown in Figure 57, possibly a positive indication of the value of such work. As Model 2.1 shows, individuals who were aware of initiatives were less likely to have joined before a month had elapsed (i.e. took longer to make the decision to join). Model 2.2 shows, however, that a person who is aware of preventive initiatives but does join is more likely to join with friends, which suggests the higher influence of peer groups on decision-making.

Just as ideological reasons prevent reference group respondents from considering joining, ideological reasons are also prioritized by voluntary group members who were aware of, but chose not to pursue, initiatives designed to prevent them from joining, as shown in Figure 58. Distrust of those who presented the initiatives was a further factor. This distrust perhaps resonates with the high-level of frustration with the international community explicitly expressed in Figure 40 (Chapter 3) – and some of the challenges arising from development partners privileging implementing agencies or contractors from their own countries when offering PVE programmes. A further factor highlighted in Figure 58 is perceptions that the ‘ideals of the violent extremist group were more attractive’. Distrust in those presenting the initiatives was especially high among the sample in Kenya, while the ideals of the group being more attractive was particularly high in Sudan (possibly a function of the higher use of the Internet).

FIGURE 56 RATING OF TOP REASONS FOR NOT JOINING EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION REFERENCE GROUP

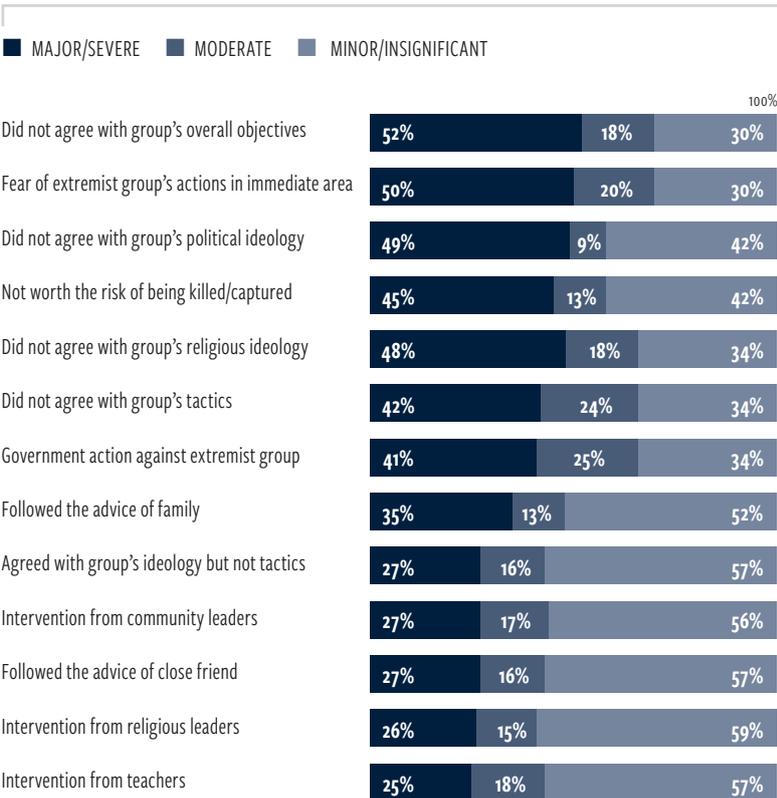
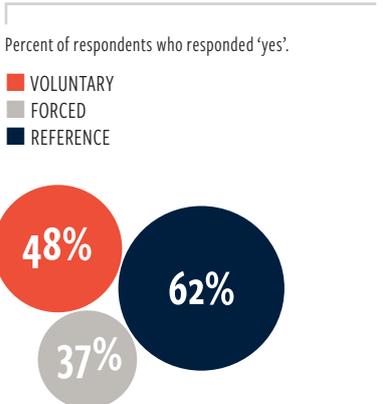


FIGURE 57 'WERE YOU AWARE OF ANY INITIATIVES TO PREVENT PEOPLE FROM JOINING?' BY CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT



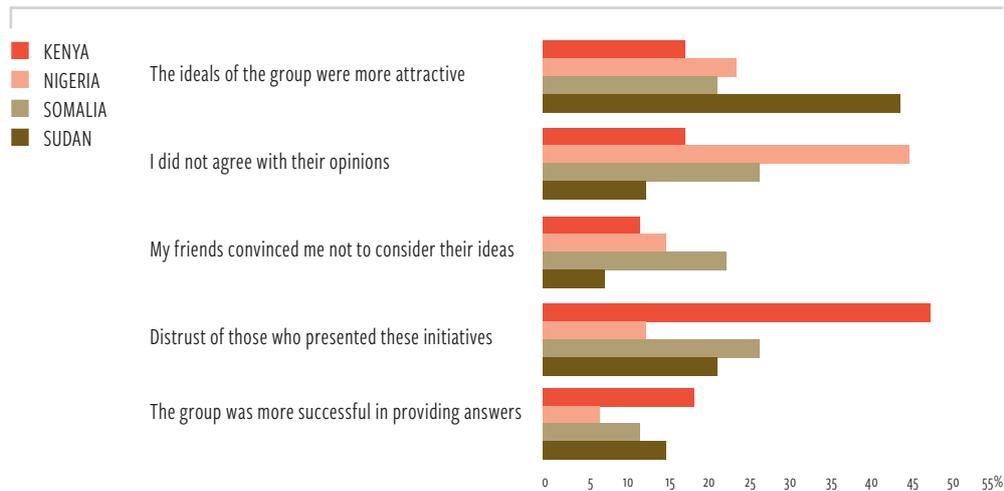
As already indicated in the introductory section on demographic profile of the respondents, the age of recruitment is typically between 17 and 26. Seventy percent of respondents stayed with the group in question for between six months and four years.

Voluntary group members were asked to rate the factors that influenced them in cases where they had willingly surrendered or applied for amnesty (Figure 59). Here, a clear shift in confidence in the ideology, leadership and actions of the violent extremist group in question, as well as a sense that the 'organization turned against me', were rated highest, above other factors such as risk of being killed or captured, or because friends were killed or arrested. Economic factors do not seem to have

come into the equation as strongly as they do at the time of recruitment, though given their prominence in earlier sections of the questionnaire, this ought not to be taken to negate the pertinence of livelihood aspects of reintegration.

Overall, the preponderance of answers that emphasize 'ideas' suggests both the importance of counter-narratives as well as intensified efforts to provide amnesty and other exit opportunities for those who have become disengaged or disenchanting. The level of disillusion indicates the scope for amnesty and other demobilization programmes to reach out with targeted initiatives offering 'exit strategies' to members of violent extremist groups looking for such opportunities.

FIGURE 58 'WHAT PREVENTED YOU FROM CONSIDERING THESE INITIATIVES?' (TOP REASONS)  
VOLUNTARY GROUP BY COUNTRY OF INTERVIEW



AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE SURRENDERED, A CLEAR SHIFT AWAY FROM THE IDEOLOGY, LEADERSHIP AND ACTIONS OF THE VIOLENT EXTREMIST GROUP WAS EXPRESSED

FIGURE 59 INFLUENCE OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS IF INDIVIDUAL SURRENDERED OR APPLIED FOR AMNESTY  
VOLUNTARY GROUP

Reason	Severe/Major	Moderate	Insignificant/Minor
No longer agreed with their ideology	53	1	3
Lost trust in the leadership	37	3	5
No longer agreed with their actions	38	1	3
Organization turned against me	25	8	5
Risk of being killed or captured	16	5	18
Friends convinced me	17	5	17
The government convinced me	16	5	18
Physical strain of the activities	9	2	27
Close friends were killed	5	5	31
Close friends were arrested	4	7	28
Other employment opportunities	0	1	9

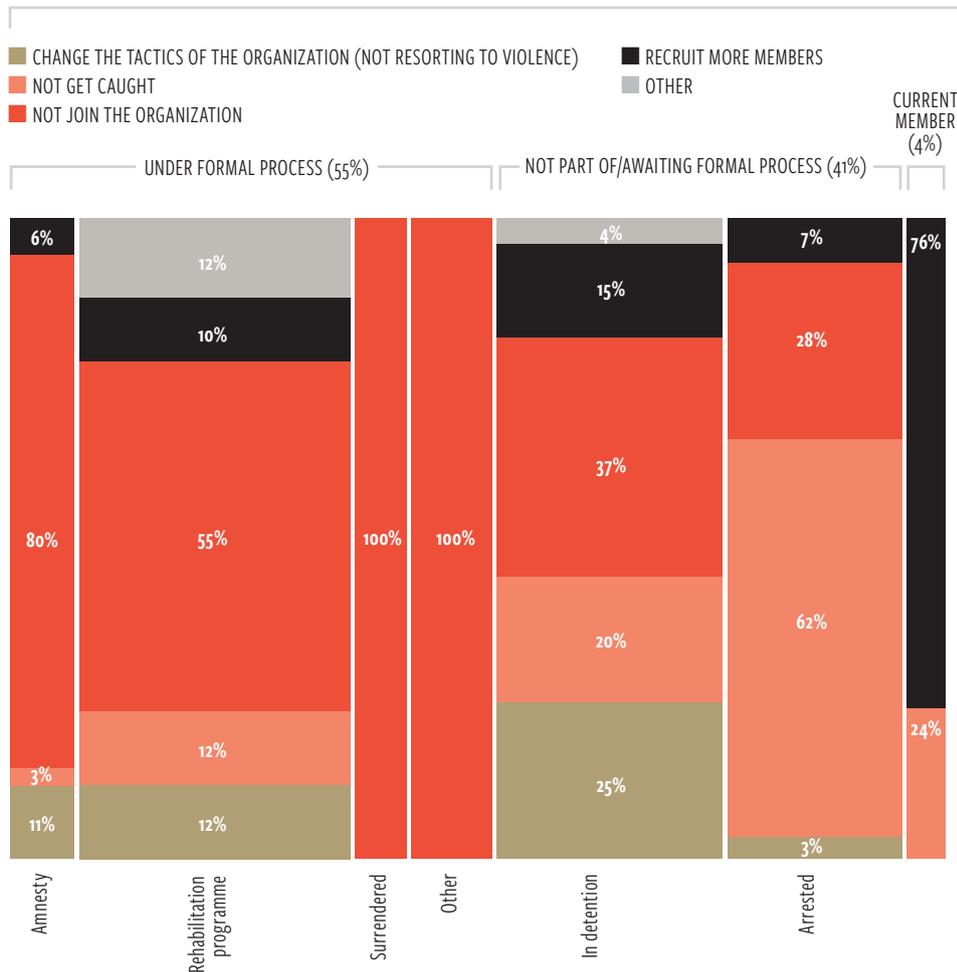
As a percent of total number of voluntary respondents who willingly surrendered or applied for amnesty.

Model 3 shows that those who reported ‘hate’ as the primary emotion for joining were more likely, by 24 percent to 44 percent, to apply for amnesty or to surrender. This finding may derive from the transience of such emotions, which fade and allow an individual to become disillusioned, and reconsider options. In contrast, joining the organization with friends is negatively related to surrendering or applying for amnesty, including when used as a treatment, by as much as 12 percent. Friends may add peer pressure while enhancing the feeling of family and belonging, making it harder for someone to leave. The model finds no consistent evidence that knowledge of initiatives to prevent people from joining is statistically significant in surrendering or applying for amnesty. With respect to age, the older the individual was when becoming aware of joining the organization, the more likely they were to surrender or apply for amnesty.

Finally, the level of regret at ever having joined the organization was unequivocally expressed by 100 percent of those in the ‘under formal process’ sub-categories of ‘surrendered’ or ‘other’; 80 percent of those involved in

amnesty programmes; and 55 percent of those in other formal rehabilitation programmes, as shown in Figure 60. These answers may have been particularly influenced by the circumstances faced by these individuals who were involved in specific programmes, and recalling that the majority of interviews took place in prisons and detention centres. It is interesting to note the relatively high numbers expressing regret at getting caught as compared to not joining in the first place; as well as other responses such as ‘change the tactics of the organization (not resorting to violence)’ among those not part of, or awaiting, formal process. Ongoing commitment to the cause among the few within the overall sample interviewed who were still active members of violent extremist groups is clearly apparent among the 76 percent who would have liked to ‘recruit more members’. This response is also present in small numbers across other sub-categories. Still, despite some ambiguity, an overall sense of regret at ever having joined, at least on the part of those involved in some sort of formal disengagement process, is the primary response expressed.

FIGURE 60 ‘LOOKING BACK, WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU WANT TO MAKE?’ VOLUNTARY GROUP BY STATUS IN ORGANIZATION



Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.

## Key findings

The overall environment faced by individuals most susceptible to recruitment to violent extremist groups in Africa would appear to be highly conducive, given the speed of recruitment evidenced by this research. Forty-eight percent of respondents joined in less than a month from first contact with the organization in question, and 80 percent within a year.

The idea of a 'transformative trigger' that pushes individuals decisively from the 'at-risk' category to actually taking the step of joining is substantiated by the *Journey to Extremism* dataset. Among the voluntary group respondents, 71 percent pointed to 'government action', including 'killing of a family member or friend' or 'arrest of a family member or friend', as the immediate incident that prompted them to join. The fact that the conduct of state security actors can serve as an accelerator of recruitment to this extent throws the urgency of the question of how CT and wider security functions of governments in at-risk environments conduct themselves with regard to human rights and due process into stark relief.

Feelings of 'hope/excitement' and 'being part of something bigger' were high among the voluntary group, indicating the 'pull' of opportunity for radical change and rebellion against the *status quo* of circumstances that is presented by violent extremism. Despite the highly personal aspects of the journey to extremism, community-level social networks are influential, with half of voluntarily recruited individuals reporting that they were first introduced to the organization by a friend.

With the exception of the Sudanese respondents, the journey to extremism in Africa among the sample relied significantly less heavily than in other regions on the Internet as a venue for recruitment. This finding has important implications for some of the popular counter-

messaging programmes emerging in the PVE space and how they are delivered. At the same time, the future for new and expanding theatres of violent extremism as well as larger numbers of African foreign fighters is also suggested, as connectivity and access to the Internet continue to improve across the continent.

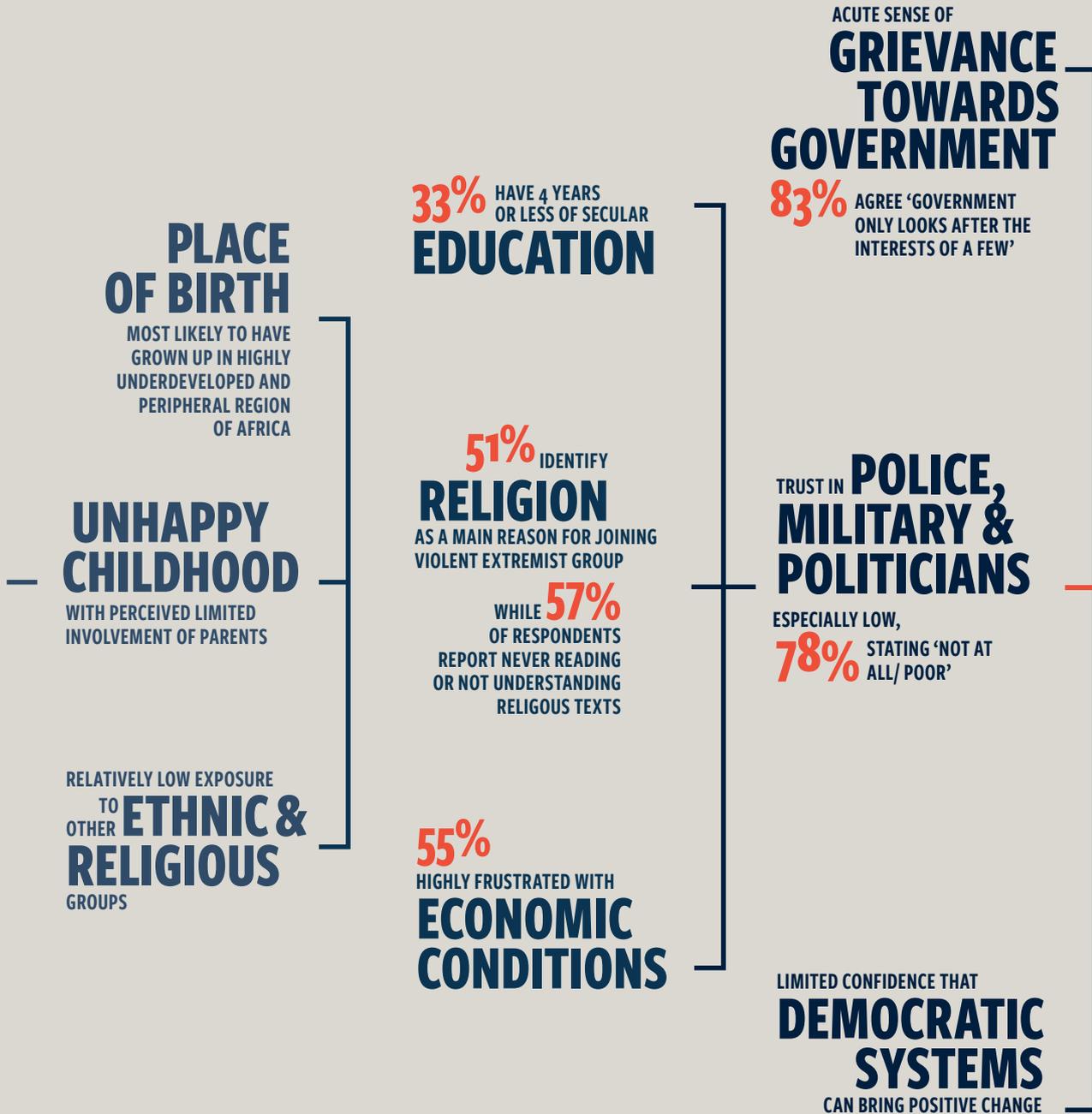
Moreover, the highly localized means of recruitment to violent extremism in Africa has important implications for response strategies and the search for solutions. The research found that people who were aware of initiatives to prevent them from joining were less likely to join within one month. Although most members of the voluntary group who were aware of such initiatives did not seek out their services, some important impacts in fulfilling preventive objectives can be deduced. Improved delivery mechanisms, ensuring these engage and work appropriately at the community level with trusted local partners and vernacular messaging, will lead to better results.

With respect to the 'tipping point' and the fact that the majority of citizens living in similar settings simply do not arrive at it, the importance of ideas and beliefs, and a sense of mistrust in, or disagreement with, the ideas of the violent extremist group in question emerge as critical. Ideas are similarly central to understanding later disillusionment with the groups on the part of those voluntarily recruited, including those who have sought amnesty. The importance of quality education is again underlined, while alternative narratives and discourse is also confirmed as key. The level of regret in evidence among those who had joined voluntarily is powerfully reflected and may itself provide important evidence to be leveraged in deterring others at risk of recruitment. It also points to the importance of scaling up programmes that offer targeted 'exit strategies' to those looking for opportunities to disengage.



# JOURNEY TO EXTREMISM IN AFRICA

As might be undertaken by an individual most at risk of recruitment by a violent extremist group in Africa, based on the key evidence produced by the *Journey to Extremism* project.



## EMPLOYMENT

SINGLE MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED IMMEDIATE NEED AT TIME OF JOINING

1 MONTH — 12 MONTHS

## TIPPING POINT

# 71% SAY GOVERNMENT ACTION TRIGGERED DECISION TO JOIN

6 MONTHS — 4 YEARS

## SPEED OF RECRUITMENT

FROM FIRST CONTACT WITH VIOLENT EXTREMIST GROUP IS EXTREMELY QUICK

**80%** WITHIN A YEAR    **48%** LESS THAN A MONTH

MOST LIKELY TO BE AGED BETWEEN **17 AND 26**

## IF LEAVES

LIKELY DUE TO LOSING TRUST IN ORGANIZATION'S LEADERSHIP, OR NO LONGER AGREEING WITH THEIR ACTIONS OR IDEAS

REGRETS EVER HAVING JOINED

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMMING**

The *Journey to Extremism* report is the result of an intensive two-year research process, visiting remote areas of Africa where recruitment to violent extremist groups is highest, and interviewing an unprecedented number of former recruits. It represents a major output of UNDP Africa's Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism: A Development Approach programme, which, as referenced in the Introduction, has set out to provide leadership and support to national and regional partners in delivering development-focused and effective responses to the expanding crises associated with violent extremism across the continent. The goal of the *Journey to Extremism* research was to construct an evidence base on the drivers and incentives for recruitment in Africa through the lens of individuals' stories. Its purpose was, from there, to generate pathways for more effective policy and programming responses, both to inform UNDP Africa's own ongoing work and that of other stakeholders and partners.

The process has revealed important insights into the macro, meso and micro aspects of this journey, as well as triggers, or what the study has referred to as the 'tipping point', for actual recruitment. The *Journey to Extremism* profile infographic above provides a summary of key findings about the features of this journey based on the research. Despite the richness of the process, limitations of the data have also been highlighted, together with cautions against over-generalizing findings to the wider population outside the sample. The research recalls the need for humility in efforts to try to understand such phenomena. Still, the body of findings points to important conclusions.

Africa faces a unique vulnerability to violent extremism that is shaped by persistent underdevelopment and incomplete peacebuilding and state-building in key regions, despite the overall gains in many countries of the past few decades. There are immense challenges faced by governments: in delivering peace and stability, and a platform for progress; and in ensuring that the pace and benefits of growth keep up with the expansion of the most youthful population in the world. According to the UNDP *Human Development Report 2016*, Africa must double its rate of progress in order to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030.<sup>67</sup>

Long-standing realities of 'centre/periphery' divides have, if anything, been exacerbated by the growth enjoyed overall. While poverty persists in national capitals, it is deepest and most desperate in remote territories, often borderlands. As highlighted in this study, the 'accident of geography' that is place of childhood dramatically impacts life horizons and opportunities. Narratives of radical upheaval and change, which appeal to the multifaceted sense of grievance that may envelop an individual whose horizons promise no path for advancement, will continue to be attractive as long as underlying circumstances remain unaddressed. Where there is injustice, deprivation and desperation, violent extremist ideologies present themselves as a challenges to the *status quo* and form of escape. The message is tailored by recruiters to suit different contexts as well as different types of individuals. Overall, lack of education and a reliance on religious teachers to interpret religion allows largely imported ideologies to serve as a lightning conductor for the frustration and anger that is the inevitable consequence of generations of socio-economic and political marginalization. State neglect and grievances against security agencies and political actors become particularly pronounced among those most vulnerable to recruitment, who also express greater levels of hostility to 'others', as well as deep-seated scepticism about the possibility of positive change.

By no means will everyone be vulnerable. This study suggests that ‘micro’ experiences within the family and beyond will refract with structural conditions to shape individual potential. Other sources of resilience have been identified that help to distinguish the path of those who voluntarily joined violent extremist groups and the majority who did not. These include higher levels of parental involvement as part of childhood experience, higher levels of civic participation in childhood, increased levels of both secular and religious education, as well as being in non-vulnerable employment or a student. However, the speed with which recruitment has been shown to take place, at less than a month in 48 percent of cases reviewed, illustrates both the ‘ripeness’ for recruitment of those who do make the journey and, by proxy, the depth of Africa’s vulnerability. Although recruitment to date is largely highly localized, steadily increasing connectivity across Africa will enable recruitment to expand over time (with numbers of African foreign fighters joining theatres of conflict outside of their immediate environments), adding to the sense of threat. Widespread feeling of religion being ‘under threat’ even among reference group respondents is a further factor. The prospect of a greater spread of violent extremism, with associated devastation and backsliding in development terms, is very real and warrants concerted efforts both to guard against and transform it. The window for sustained action to prevent and respond to violent extremism is now.

---

**The prospect of a greater spread of violent extremism, with associated devastation and backsliding in development terms, is very real and warrants concerted efforts both to guard against and transform it. The window for sustained action to prevent and respond to violent extremism is now**

Indeed, responding to the security and development challenges posed by violent extremism in Africa has become a major area of policy and programming attention over the past two decades. The AU, RECs, national governments and local civil society actors, including faith-based institutions, NGOs and even the private sector, are actively engaged with related institutions and initiatives in place, adapted to respond to the specifics of violent extremist group activity in different parts of the continent.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the support of the international community has been highly influential as a feature of regional-level responses. Key partners from across the United Nations system, the European Union (EU), as well as bilateral partners among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other countries, are all active, alongside numerous international NGOs and other implementers. Increasingly, a dominant emphasis on CT has been complemented by interventions in PVE, that are in turn funded both through foreign affairs budgets and overseas development assistance (ODA).

What informs these collective strategies? What are the assumptions about the nature of violent extremism and its manifestations in Africa that shape responses? And are these substantiated in the body of evidence generated through this research project? Crucially, what are the entry points at key moments along the ‘journey to extremism’ that emerge through this research, to prevent, disrupt and transform it, and how can a new generation of programming and response most effectively be designed, going forward?

The following discussion draws together key implications that arise from the *Journey to Extremism* findings. It is organized in two sections: (i) policy implications and (ii) programming recommendations.

### *I. Policy implications*

#### **Delivering on global human rights commitments and rights-based approaches to militarized and state-centric CT responses**

While military campaigns and state capacity to counter terrorism are essential components of combatting groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, the question of *how* such force is delivered, and in particular its impacts on local populations, is critical to long-term success. The *Journey to Extremism* dataset provides startling new evidence of just how directly counter-productive security-driven responses can be, when conducted insensitively. It highlights widespread mistrust in the police and military in the countries under review, with scepticism particularly rampant among voluntary group respondents. State security agency conduct is a direct trigger for recruitment in the final stages of the journey to extremism, with as many as 71 percent of the voluntary group pointing to ‘government action’, including traumatic incidents involving state security forces, as the immediate reason for joining. These findings suggest that a dramatic reappraisal of state security-focused interventions, including more effective oversight of human rights compliance, rule of law and state accountability, is urgently required.

---

**A dramatic reappraisal of state security-focused interventions, including more effective oversight of human rights compliance, rule of law and state accountability, is urgently required**

Despite the shifting policy discourse in favour of preventive approaches that is signalled by the 2015 United Nations Plan of Action, security-focused interventions and a preponderance of expenditure in supporting state CT capacity remain the major areas of international support in Africa, a feature that is called into question by these findings.<sup>69</sup> Going forward, it is essential to long-term outcomes that international commitments such as those shared across United Nations member states to human rights and rule of law, citizens’ participation and protection, and accountability of state security forces be actively upheld by all. Ensuring there are no unforeseen and counter-productive results from international support, particularly in regard to civic participation, is also critical. In the absence of ‘state legitimacy’, in the eyes of citizens living in high-risk areas, initiatives that focus exclusively on state capacity-building run the risk of perpetuating malign power structures, which are overt drivers of violent extremist recruitment in Africa.

#### **Reinvigorating state legitimacy through improved governance performance and accountability**

The importance of state legitimacy to delivering peacebuilding and state-building objectives is well-established globally, reflected in SDG 16, which calls for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice for all, and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.<sup>70</sup> The research suggests that improved public policy and delivery of good governance by African governments confronted with violent extremism will ultimately come to represent a far more effective source of CT and PVE impact than continued overconcentration on security-focused interventions. The *Journey to Extremism* findings call for a reinvigoration of commitment and action by states to upgrading the quality and accountability of institutions across service delivery areas, at national and sub-national levels, above all in at-risk areas. Deepening the democratic process and closely guarding its integrity beyond the moment of elections, into a wider commitment to an inclusive social contract between government and citizens, as well as meaningful opportunities for civic engagement and participation in the national development agenda, are also highly relevant policy responses implied by the data.

### Connecting PVE with peacebuilding and sustainable development policy frameworks

In addition to the critical importance of improved governance environments, the *Journey to Extremism* research underscores a spectrum of priorities and entry points along the journey of the individuals interviewed that can be deduced to be directly relevant to preventing further expansion of violent extremism in Africa. Many of these fall squarely within the sectoral foci and priorities of the international development agenda. Accelerated implementation of the Transforming Our World: Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, including the 17 SDGs in at-risk areas, would provide an important foundation for long-term resilience. The fusion of violent extremism with national and sub-national conflict dynamics that are both deeper and constantly evolving is also underscored by this research. This fusion has proved itself to be both highly combustible and profoundly destructive, and underlines the pertinence of rounded response strategies that are situated in appropriate analytical frameworks providing the contextualized identification of root and proximate causes of violent extremism, as well as its drivers. The interplay of conflict, development and violent extremism calls for significant intensification of development and peacebuilding interventions in at-risk contexts by national governments and international partners alike.

Following a wider convergence between security and development over the past decade and as signalled by the 2015 United Nations Plan of Action and other related policy frameworks, there is now increasing high-level recognition of the importance of development approaches in tackling the root causes, drivers and consequences of violent extremism as they variously play out in different settings.<sup>71</sup> As also emphasized by the United Nations and well recognized globally, the financial, material and humanitarian costs of investing in prevention compared to reactively dealing with security crises are significantly lower, providing a clear policy argument for scaling up prevention work. There is a strong policy basis for amplifying PVE, including through leveraging ODA as the anchor of prevention and response efforts in Africa.

---

**Military solutions alone will not deliver. Development budgets must be protected, and smart, targeted PVE programming expanded, if lasting solutions are to be found**

Further, the *Journey to Extremism* research has shown that awareness of initiatives to prevent people from joining violent extremist groups *does* act as a factor influencing decision-making about joining, even while other challenges concerning the most effective means of delivery emerge.

However, even as the development dimensions of violent extremism are gaining higher recognition, key development partner governments have already reduced or are considering reductions in ODA expenditure. This poses the scenario of the range of resources invested in building peace and amplifying development gains shrinking, even as military expenditure continues to grow. Pulling back from international support to accelerating development progress in areas at-risk of violent extremism in Africa will be unconstructive in the extreme. African states must themselves leverage ODA as well as domestic resources more effectively for prevention and response efforts. Military solutions alone will not deliver. Development budgets must be protected, and smart, targeted PVE programming expanded by national and international actors alike, if lasting solutions are to be found.

A tendency for responses to violent extremism to be articulated outside of the well-established discourse around peacebuilding and conflict prevention, as well as sustainable development, persists. Instead, security perspectives and national interests dominate. Challenges also persist in integrating institutional perspectives across security, peacebuilding and development arms of government. Streamlining responses and drawing on all relevant departments and capacities across government, ensuring responses to violent extremism are embedded and coordinated, must intensify to yield comprehensive strategies and positive results.

### Clarifying tiers of relevance between ODA and PVE

At present, the global context in which international development budgets are facing new threats has created a significant inducement for development programming in at-risk African contexts to be rebranded as to some extent PVE-related. This brings its own challenges. Some observers have raised concerns about ‘securitization of aid’, as well as the potential pitfalls that may arise through the framing of development interventions as PVE-relevant in highly charged political contexts.

Further, as yet there is limited consensus as to precisely how different types of development programmes can actually deliver PVE results. Development interventions that in and of themselves contribute to building more peaceful and inclusive societies are important. While *conducive* in a generalized sense to reducing the scope

## Framework for understanding the ODA/ PVE relationship

A common distinction has emerged in the discourse between ‘PVE-specific’ and ‘PVE-relevant’ interventions. The overall goal of PVE-specific interventions is most usefully understood to be that of seeking to disrupt the radicalization and recruitment process and to reintegrate individuals who have already actively joined a violent extremist organization (working on ‘pull’ factors).<sup>i</sup> The overall goal of PVE-relevant interventions is most usefully defined as those that seek to address the structural drivers of violent extremism (‘push’ factors): a rich cluster of development indicators, public and market-based goods and opportunities, the absence of which combine to incentivize and sustain the activities of violent extremists in certain settings.<sup>ii</sup>

However, maximizing the broad sectoral resonance between mainstream international development interventions and PVE objectives requires a sharpened understanding of the potential for development programming to influence violent extremism in order to pinpoint and maximize real ‘relevance’. Context-specific evidence such as that generated by the *Journey to Extremism in Africa* dataset helps to weigh and prioritize intervention areas based on grounded understanding of vulnerability to recruitment.

In general terms, the first and foremost question to be asked in order to tighten the line of relevance between a development sector intervention and PVE relates to geographic targeting, with national and international actors needing to challenge themselves to ensure that the benefits of their cooperation are felt in often hard-to-reach geographic areas where violent extremism may flourish. PVE-relevance can also be enhanced through reflection on the overall positioning of ODA in regard to state-citizen relations. Overconcentration of programming that focuses on state capacity across key sectors, that is not better balanced with support to non-state actors to engage as active citizens in development processes, risks playing into malign power structures, as discussed. Building accountability objectives and civic oversight mechanisms into all areas of development programming is therefore a further area through which to sharpen PVE relevance. Finally, decisions about beneficiary selection may be adjusted to improve convergence between sectoral interventions and PVE outcomes in some instances. Ensuring that interventions are cognizant of opportunities to reach out to at-risk populations as part of overall intervention design is another area that in some instances may provide opportunities for synergies. Similarly, ensuring such groups’ feelings of marginalization are not exacerbated inadvertently is key. Development programmes too often become hostage to localized patronage networks that influence their distribution; rigorous oversight is required to ensure that programmes designed to improve the confidence of at-risk individuals do not have the opposite effect.

FIGURE 61 FRAMEWORK FOR CLARIFYING RELEVANCE OF ODA TO PVE

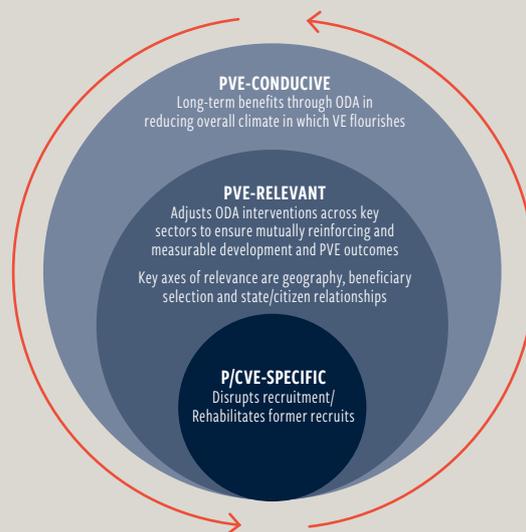


Figure 61 illustrates a framework for understanding the relationship between ODA and PVE, highlighting the overall synergy between development and PVE objectives across a range of sectors as delivered in countries affected by or at-risk of violent extremism (‘PVE-conductive’).<sup>iii</sup> It allows for concrete points of intersection between development programmes and PVE objectives to be identified, related to context-specific factors in key countries, denoted in the ‘PVE-relevant’ category. And it also encourages ‘PVE-specific’ (or CVE) programmes to accurately distinguish whether they are seeking to influence a generalized group of ‘at-risk’ individuals, or an even narrower set of interventions that set out to work with actual recruits or former recruits.

Maximizing the opportunity inherent in ODA to make these contributions requires a deep and localized grasp of the dynamics shaping violent extremism in each context, including its political economy and gender variables. The red arrows included in Figure 61 indicate the primacy of ongoing assessment of the violent extremism context that is required to inform this spectrum of response.<sup>iv</sup>

- <sup>i</sup> Such interventions can also usefully be described as CVE.
- <sup>ii</sup> Here, the ‘countering’ of CVE can become misleading, and ‘preventing’ is more accurate.
- <sup>iii</sup> This framework was developed as part of UNDP’s collaboration with the Government of the Netherlands. UNDP (2017b).
- <sup>iv</sup> The established conflict-sensitivity approach, adjusted to articulate PVE as part of its framework, is a useful entry point into which more specific issues around the dynamics of violent extremism in different country contexts can be built. The conflict-sensitivity approach also serves the purpose of ensuring a process is in place for mitigating the risks of potential harmful interactions between development programmes and violent extremism. In certain settings, it may highlight that ‘labelling’ programmes or components of programmes as PVE-relevant or -specific should be avoided due to political sensitivities and other factors.

for violent extremism, confusion between these and more immediate PVE goals should be avoided. The argument for protecting development interventions in at-risk environments, while at the same time expanding PVE-specific programming, is clear. Greater clarity on understanding what this means for policy and programming, such as that proposed in the box on the previous page, needs to be articulated and internalized across relevant government institutions, to inform and shape more targeted programmatic responses.

### **Coordinating national, regional and global policy responses to violent extremism**

Finally, it is also necessary that policy responses are coordinated more effectively across the expanding plethora of actors engaged in CT and PVE, with appropriate roles and responsibilities defined and distributed; a common understanding of drivers and entry points for prevention and transformation debated and established; and with shared commitment to mutual peer review and constant improvement. At present, the PVE space is crowded with players often working with contrasting understanding of priorities. The 2015 United Nations Plan of Action calls on each member state to ‘consider developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and complements national counter-terrorism strategies where they already exist’.

It is recommended that such national planning processes are inclusive, engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including women and youth. National plans provide a platform for convergence in understanding and prioritization, as well as efficient distribution of resources and capabilities across government agencies, international and civil society partners.<sup>72</sup> Increasingly, there are also moves to link national plans to the sub-regional level. This responds to the invariably transboundary nature of violent extremist group activity, with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), for instance, recently developing a sub-regional strategy on PVE, which will in time be linked again to the continent level and the AU’s own frameworks. International partners need to continue to work to find the most constructive mechanisms for supporting national and regional actors in this domain, also taking care to coordinate among themselves.

## **II. Programming implications**

The *Journey to Extremism* research points to the need for enhanced development outcomes in at-risk areas as well as dedicated interventions across the journey map itself, seeking to disrupt and transform the incentive structure that creates a ready supply of recruits for violent extremist groups in Africa. Many of the intervention areas that are suggested by this research are familiar to some degree. However, a number of issues hampering impact of some PVE programmes can also be observed and are hinted at in the research.

First and foremost is the question of resourcing, with interventions on the PVE side representing a small fraction of overall response. Even here, overconcentration on state-led interventions may hamper effectiveness. While governments clearly have the central role to play in responding to violent extremism, state leadership must be balanced by the critical contributions of non-state actors. The *Journey to Extremism* findings underscore the strategic value of such re-balanced approaches and delivery mechanisms both through exposure of the highly localized nature of recruitment, which suggests that remedies must also be locally driven, and in regard to the low levels of citizen confidence in the state in precisely the communities where PVE must focus.

Questions of how PVE programmes are branded and the profile of implementing partners are directly highlighted by the research, with voluntary group respondents expressing an attitude of distrust on these points. Overly branding PVE work as associated with international institutions or foreign governments, and delivering interventions through ‘messengers’ that operate primarily outside of the context, may alienate target beneficiaries and even put local partners at risk. Conflict-sensitivity provides a useful tool for identifying how programmes may be perceived and for ensuring that interventions do not put such partners in harm’s way, among other factors.

Synergy and sequencing among interventions has been lacking to date, underlining the importance of national PVE planning and coordinated inputs across partners. For instance, supporting amnesty programmes and exit strategies for disillusioned recruits is critical, but if there are no job opportunities for them to start the process of rebuilding a civilian life, net results will be at best tentative. The urgency of the challenge requires all stakeholders to work collaboratively and to avoid piecemeal approaches in the interests of transforming the spectrum of micro-, meso- and macro-level factors currently driving violent extremism in Africa. Further, flexibility, risk-taking and responsiveness are critical

elements of success, particularly for PVE-specific work, noting the extremely short timeframe for actual recruitment that has been highlighted through this data.

Finally, it is now recognized that PVE programming has tended until recently to be gender-blind. To date, it has often overlooked the small but significant numbers of female recruits to violent extremist groups (as reflected to some degree in the *Journey to Extremism* sample); the wider gender dynamics and ideologies informing recruitment and violent extremist group behaviour; and the gendered impacts of PVE programmes themselves. This remains a critical and underexplored dimension of PVE that warrants closer attention going forward.

Following are entry points and recommendations for PVE programming suggested by the research.

### **Family circumstances, childhood happiness and education**

The *Journey to Extremism* research found that childhood experiences correlate with future susceptibility to violent extremist recruitment. These include overall place of childhood, as well as perceptions of unhappiness and a sense of reduced parental involvement during childhood; and lower levels of even basic education among those who went on to join violent extremist groups. Programming response areas include:

- Supporting community-led outreach on good parenting, domestic violence and providing child-welfare services;
- Ensuring provision of education for all in at-risk areas (SDG 4), together with social protection interventions to ensure children's sustained attendance at school;
- Upgrading school curricula and teaching quality, enabling the development of critical thinking, social cohesion, peace education and civic engagement values from childhood;
- Reducing the acute impoverishment, often relative in national terms, of areas such as those where the majority of the respondents grew up, with dedicated catch-up development programmes and commitments, and through accelerated and purposeful implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

### **Religious ideologies**

The research confirms the notion that religion is exploited by violent extremist groups to justify resorting to violence, becoming a focal point for a number of other grievances and issues, with as many as 51 percent offering religion as a reason for joining. It also points to the importance of appropriate strategies to engage with religious ideologies constructively as part of CT and PVE interventions, as well as to advance religious tolerance. Feeling that religion is under threat is widespread across respondents, including in the reference group, suggesting scope for further expansion of violent extremism. Higher than average years of religious schooling appear to have been a source of resilience within the sample, with religious literacy particularly low among the voluntary group. Programming response areas include:

- Supporting and amplifying the voices of traditional religious leaders who challenge misinterpretations of Islam and preach religious tolerance and inter-faith cohesiveness;
- Providing opportunities for religious leaders to network and develop national and regional PVE strategies of their own;
- Investing in the development of community-led governance systems providing transparent and accountable leadership of religious affairs. Such systems should include mosque management, development and dissemination of curricula by religious preachers and *madrassas*, and engagement with parents on teaching content;
- Capitalizing on the important role that religious teaching can play as a source of resilience, supporting increased religious literacy among at-risk groups.

### **Economic factors**

Economic factors are a critical component of the overall incentives and drivers leading to recruitment, with 'employment' the single most frequently cited immediate need at the time of joining; frustration at economic circumstances high among voluntary respondents; and multidimensional poverty in at-risk regions deeper than national averages. Programming response areas include:

- Investing in economic regeneration of at-risk areas, upgrading infrastructure, access to markets and financial services, removing obstacles to entrepreneurship, and prioritizing job-creation opportunities;

- Providing immediate as well as long-term livelihood programmes and entrepreneurship training and schemes for at-risk youth, integrating citizenship values, life skills and social cohesion curricula to programme design;
- Working with demobilized former recruits to develop and communicate narratives designed to disincentivize at-risk groups regarding the economic opportunities of recruitment;
- Developing strategies that learn from the challenges of past disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes and successfully provide economic incentives and alternatives for violent extremist recruits – engaging wider communities so as to avoid being seen as ‘rewarding’ those recruited.

### State and citizenship

Respondents in the voluntary group expressed acute lack of trust in government, particularly across security agencies, but also in regard to other areas of service delivery. Eighty-three percent agreed with the statement ‘government only looks after the interests of a few’. Positive experiences of service delivery is, furthermore, a source of resilience within the sample. Relative confidence in democratic processes is a further distinction between those who make the journey to extremism and those who do not. Programming response areas include:

- Improving service delivery across the spectrum of security and other basic services provided by the state, integrating citizens’ oversight and engagement as part of delivery;
- Amplifying the effectiveness of anti-corruption campaigns with renewed emphasis on building state-citizen confidence and accountability, ending impunity for officials;
- Deepening democratic institutions and processes, and supporting related civic-education processes;
- Supporting initiatives to build national identities, social cohesion and citizenship.

### The ‘tipping point’

Forty-eight percent of respondents joined in less than a month from first contact with the organization in question, and 80 percent in less than a year. Seventy-one percent took the final decision in response to ‘government action’, usually a traumatic event involving state security forces. Despite the highly personal aspects of the journey to extremism, social networks are influential; the community-based nature of recruitment in Africa, where the Internet plays a less prominent role, suggests PVE efforts must be equally localized. Programming response areas include:

- Escalating implementation of security-sector reform processes, tailored to the specific challenges of violent extremism, that are grounded in international humanitarian law, standards and rights-based approaches, integrating civic oversight and confidence-building mechanisms;
- Supporting community-led mentoring and trauma-counselling services;
- Implementation of counter-messaging programmes that are highly contextualized in vernacular cultures, emphasizing peer-group factors and influences, and delivered through DVDs, SMS, radio and community centres, avoiding over-reliance on the Internet, and giving priority to trusted local organizations as ‘messengers’;
- Scaling-up amnesty and other exit opportunities for disillusioned recruits, investing in comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration services;
- Leveraging the perspectives and voices of former recruits as conduits for counter-messaging.



## ENDNOTES

### Executive summary

- 1 Respondents were primarily former members of Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, followed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), with smaller numbers from Al-Mourabitoun, Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and Al-Qaida. They were interviewed largely in prisons and detention centres in Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan, with smaller numbers in Cameroon and Niger.

### Introduction

- 2 2015 figures are the most recent that are available, published in the 2016 *Global Terrorism Index*. IEP (2016).
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 African Union (2014).
- 5 UNDP (2015a) has classified 13 countries facing different degrees of threat from violent extremism in Africa: 'epicentre countries' – Mali, Nigeria and Somalia; 'spill-over countries' – Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Mauritania and Niger; and 'at-risk' countries – the Central African Republic, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda.
- 6 Boukhars (2015). See also Sharif and Richards (2016).
- 7 UNDP (2015b). The UNDP Africa PVE programme has also recently launched a research facility and will be producing a series of in-depth country and thematic studies in the coming months.
- 8 For continent-level perspectives, see Cilliers (2015), Busher (2014) and Abdalla (2016).
- 9 UN (2015).
- 10 Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (2016).
- 11 'Micro' refers to personal motives and convictions, for instance, negative experiences of exclusion, rejection, humiliation, injustice, or frustration. 'Meso' refers to the social milieu of the violent extremist, including community, and the social structures in which he or she is engaged. 'Macro' level refers to structural drivers, including: chronically unresolved political conflicts; the 'collateral damage' to civilian lives and infrastructure caused by military responses to terrorism; human rights violations; ethnic, national, and religious discrimination; the political exclusion of ethnic or religious groups; socio-economic marginalization; lack of good governance; and a failure to integrate diaspora communities of immigrants who move between cultures. Centre for Security Studies (2015).
- 12 'Push' factors usually refer to locally informed structural drivers, while 'pull' factors refer to proximate incentives leading to recruitment and radicalization. USAID (2011). For a helpful summary based on a review of recent literature on violent extremism, see RUSI (2015).
- 13 Fink and Bhulai (2016). See also National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (2016) and Borum (2014).

- 14 One recent review of a sample of 3,000 representative studies extracted from the overall literature on terrorism and violent extremism found that studies on the Middle East and Europe as compared to other regions of the world, including Africa, were significantly over-represented. Douglas and Rondeaux (2017).
- 15 Holmer (2013).
- 16 For further detail on the methodology used both to gather the data and to analyze and interpret it, refer to Annex 1. The political socialization approach and overall *Journey to Extremism* questionnaire drew conceptually on a PhD study conducted by Dr. Anneli Botha at the University of the Free State, South Africa, into radicalization in Kenya and Uganda. Botha (2014).
- 17 Dawson and Prewitt (1969: 17).
- 18 Botha (2014). Ultimately, the political self is made, not born, to include 'feelings of nationalism, patriotism, or tribal loyalty; identification with particular partisan factions or groups; attitudes and evaluations of specific political issues and personalities; knowledge regarding political structures and procedures; and a self-image of rights, responsibilities, and position in the political world'. Dawson and Prewitt (1969:18).
- 19 The reference group is entirely made up of respondents from Kenya, Nigeria and Somalia. Given limited access to the primary group and the resulting small sample size in Cameroon and Niger, reference group data in these countries was not collected. Reference group data was also not collected for Sudan due to restrictions faced by the research team.

### Demographic profile of research sample

- 20 There remains some ambiguity in distinguishing between categories of respondents, noting pressures to join that may arise in areas under territorial control of a violent extremist group, for instance. Respondents' own self-categorization was taken as the basis for analysis throughout.
- 21 Noting the distinction between country where interview took place and nationality of respondent, Figure 14 in Chapter 1 provides further information on place of childhood of individuals taking part in the survey.
- 22 The sample included one forced individual associated with Al-Shabaab, but this does not show in the figure due to rounding off.
- 23 An overview is provided in Chowdhury Fink, N., Zeiger and Bhulai, eds. (2016).
- 24 UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015), available at [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2242.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2242.pdf), was also predated by references to women's participation in CT in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2129 (2013).

### Chapter 1: Family circumstances, childhood and education

- 25 A minority of respondents in the voluntary group were interviewed in capital cities as shown. Urbanization in Africa is driven by vulnerability in rural and periphery areas. Widening inequality within cities has led to an evolving policy discourse identifying 'pockets of fragility' within otherwise more developed contexts. OECD (2013).
- 26 Save the Children (2012).
- 27 See Victoroff (2005).
- 28 RUSI (2015: 18).
- 29 Victoroff, J. (2005: 7).

- 30 Botha, A. (2014: 12).
- 31 For probability estimates reported in this report, first difference probabilities are calculated by holding all other variables median or mode. They represent punctual estimations at 95 percent confidence unless otherwise stated.
- 32 Ghosh et al. (2016).
- 33 RUSI's literature review testing different hypotheses concludes that 'education has a minor and/or largely unsubstantiated influence'. RUSI (2015).
- 34 The number of years of secular education was not used in the econometric analysis given a high non-response rate, which significantly reduced the number of observations and led to an accurate prediction of success/failure.
- 35 CGCC and Hedayah (2013) and Ghosh et al. (2016).
- 36 These findings are corroborated by another recent study reviewed for this report undertaken by the CLEEN Foundation in partnership with USIP exploring why young people join Boko Haram that entailed over 100 interviews, which offered a strong conclusion that, in the view of those interviewed, children with difficult upbringings are more vulnerable to extremist views. See Ohuoah (2014).

### Chapter 2: Religious ideologies

- 37 RUSI (2015). Ethnic identity can play a similar function and has been found to do so in some but not all violent extremist settings in Africa. See ISS (2014).
- 38 It must be noted that the tendency for discussions on terrorism and violent extremism to focus on radical Islamist groups can be problematic, in some cases reinforcing dynamics of alienation as well as competing global great-power narratives. Right-wing hate groups with violent extremist agendas are on the rise across Europe and the United States of America; other religiously inspired violent extremism are also observable in different contexts.
- 39 While country variations in regard to attitudes about treatment of people of different religions were clear, reflecting the different demographic structures and higher levels of multiculturalism in Kenya and Nigeria, these do not positively correlate with the experience of coming into contact with people from other religions. Kenyan respondents, who have had the highest experience of mixing with people with other religions, appear to feel the most strongly about inequality between religions, after Sudanese. This may be particular to the Kenyan experience, where religious identity is accompanied with stark variations in socio-economic position.
- 40 While cautioning against essentializing perspectives on women during violent conflict that assume an innately peaceful outlook, and recognizing at-times direct participation either in perpetrating terrorist acts or otherwise enabling and facilitating violent extremism, it is also recognized that women can and often do play a critical role at the fore of peacebuilding.
- 41 As also the case with childhood happiness, the religious tolerance variable loses its predictive and statistical significance when variables related to religion are exchanged for trust in election variables in Model 1.2. It could again be a result of collinearity between religious tolerance and the religion related variables added in Model 1.2.
- 42 The variable is statistically significant in all but one of the 11 specifications of Models 1.1 and 1.2, including when used as a treatment.
- 43 Bergen and Pandey (2006).
- 44 RUSI (2015) and Ghosh et al. (2016).

### Chapter 3: Economic factors

- <sup>45</sup> UNDP (2013).
- <sup>46</sup> Ohuoah (2014).
- <sup>47</sup> Africa is described in the most recent report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change to be one of the regions likely to be most affected. See <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/africa-and-climate-change>.
- <sup>48</sup> Collier (2000).
- <sup>49</sup> Anecdotal evidence gathered during the research seems to indicate that non-payment relates to periods of reduced cash flow on the part of different violent extremist groups, rather than deliberate strategy. It also suggests that, at least in Somalia, mobile phones are frequently used to transfer payments, which are structured to reflect individual recruits' level of family responsibilities as well as rank.

### Chapter 4: State and citizenship

- <sup>50</sup> Gelfand et. al. (2013).
- <sup>51</sup> World Bank (2011).
- <sup>52</sup> RUSI (2015: 22).
- <sup>53</sup> Many accounts of violent extremism proceed to demonstrate how violent extremist groups may step in as alternative service providers in such contexts. While this is known to be occurring in Africa, as elsewhere, it did not emerge sharply through the *Journey to Extremism* study.
- <sup>54</sup> This trend has been extensively documented by rights groups monitoring specific country contexts, as well as civil society umbrella organizations monitoring global trends affecting civil society such as CIVICUS (2016). See also CGCC (2008).
- <sup>55</sup> Van Ginkel (2012), CT MORSE (2016) and Ohuoah (2014).
- <sup>56</sup> Cilliers (2015).
- <sup>57</sup> IEP (2017).
- <sup>58</sup> Ali-Koor (2016).
- <sup>59</sup> Reference group respondents were not asked to rate their level of trust in community and religious leaders.

### Chapter 5: The 'tipping point' and recruitment process

- <sup>60</sup> Botha (2014: 16).
- <sup>61</sup> McCormick (2003).
- <sup>62</sup> Borum (2014).
- <sup>63</sup> McCauley and Moskalenko (2008).
- <sup>64</sup> Moghaddom (2005).
- <sup>65</sup> Wilner and Dubouloz (2011:420).
- <sup>66</sup> In fact, in Africa's case, other studies suggest that recruitment material relies more on tapes and DVDs of radical preachers that are circulated within communities, rather than over the Internet.

### Implications for policy and programming

- <sup>67</sup> UNDP (2017: 163).
- <sup>68</sup> At the continent level, first steps were taken as far back as 1992 by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to strengthen cooperation and coordination among African states on CT, with the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism entering into force in 2002, followed by the AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. The AU established the African Centre for the Study and Research of Terrorism in 2004 based in Algiers and appointed a Special Representative for Counter-Terrorism who has been active since 2010. Activity has intensified in recent years, with the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) adopting a communique at its 455<sup>th</sup> meeting on the preventing and combating of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. Also established were regular coordination mechanisms among heads of intelligence from across Africa. In 2015, the PSC authorized a Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) to fight Boko Haram made up of troop contingents from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. The MJTF has been matched by sub-regional initiatives such as the joint military force composed of five West Africa countries known as the G-5 Sahel. See Sharif and Richards (2016).
- <sup>69</sup> Many experts concur that military operations can only hope to curb some of the outward expressions of violent extremism, but, as stated in the 2015 United Nations Plan of Action, 'will not be able to address the endemic levels of poverty and marginalization, lack of governance, corruption and instability driving it, and increasing its appeal. On the contrary, military campaigns, when not conducted sensitively, can bolster extremist narratives [...]'. See also Afzal (2013) and Phillips (2013).
- <sup>70</sup> See Sustainable Development Goal 16, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.
- <sup>71</sup> Kessels and Nemr (2016). The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has revised reporting directives for ODA in the field of peace and security to include specific guidance on activities to prevent violent extremism. OECD (2016). The EU has also undertaken a number of initiatives.
- <sup>72</sup> See International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 12 Principles for National Action Planning, at <https://icct.nl/update/12-principles-for-national-action-planning>.



## REFERENCES

- Abdalla, A. (2016). 'Africa and the Growth of Violent Radicalization in the name of Islam: The Need for a Doctrine Revision Approach', *IPSS Policy Brief*, Vol. 1, January/February 2016. Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- African Union (2014). *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa*. Submitted to the Peace and Security Council 45th Heads of State meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, September 2014.
- Afzal, M. (2013). 'Drone Strikes and Anti-Americanism in Pakistan', Brookings Institute, op-ed.
- Ali-Koor, A.M. (2016). 'Islamist Extremism in East Africa', *Africa Security Brief*, August 2016. African Centre for Security Studies, Washington D.C, USA.
- Bergen, P. and S. Pandey (2006). 'The Madrassa Scapegoat', *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring, 2006.
- Blackwell, M., Stefano Iacus, Gary King and Giuseppe Porro (2009). 'CEM: Coarsened Exact Matching in Stata', *The Stata Journal*, Vol. 4.
- Borum, R. (2014). 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism 2: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research', *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Winter 2014.
- Botha, A. (2014). *Radicalization to Commit Terrorism from a Political Socialization Perspective in Kenya and Uganda*. Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State, South Africa.
- Boukhars, A. (2015). 'Rethinking Security across the Sahara and the Sahel', *FRIDE Policy Brief*, No. 199, April 2015. Madrid, Spain.
- Busher, J. (2014). 'Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 5(1).
- Center on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Hedayah (2013). 'The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism', *Meeting Note*, December 2013. Available at [http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dec13\\_Education\\_Expert\\_Meeting\\_Note.pdf](http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dec13_Education_Expert_Meeting_Note.pdf).
- Centre for Security Studies (2015). 'The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism', *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, No. 183, December. Zurich, Switzerland.
- Chowdhury Fink, N., S. Zeiger and R. Bhulai (eds.) (2016). *A Man's World: Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism*. Hedayah and The Global Center on Cooperative Security, 2016.
- Cilliers, J. (2015). 'Violent Islamist Extremism and Terror in Africa', *ISS Paper 286*, October 2015. Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa.
- CIVICUS (2016). *Civil Society Watch Report*, June 2016. Washington, D.C, USA.
- Collier, P. (2000). 'Doing Well out of War: An Economic Perspective', in M. Berdal and D. Malone (eds.) *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder, USA.
- CT MORSE (2016). *Proceedings of the June 15<sup>th</sup> Conference on CVE in a Development Context*. Available at <http://ct-morse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PCVE-in-a-Development-Context-CT-MORSE.pdf>.
- Dawson, R. E. and K. Prewitt (1969). *Political Socialization*. LittleBrown, Boston, USA.
- Douglas, R.D and C. Rondeaux (2017). *Mining the Gaps: A Text Mining-Based Meta-Analysis of the Current State of Research on Violent Extremism*. RESOLVE. Available at [http://resolvenet.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/RVEMiningGapsCVEAnalysis\\_DouglasRondeaux\\_20170208.pdf](http://resolvenet.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/RVEMiningGapsCVEAnalysis_DouglasRondeaux_20170208.pdf).
- Fink, N. C. and R. Bhulai (2016). 'Development and Countering Violent Extremism', in UN (2016). *Meeting the Demand: Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*. New York, USA.
- Gelfand, M.J., Gary LeFree, Susan Fahey, Richard Stockton and Emily Feinberg (2013). 'Culture and Extremism', *Journal of Social Issues* 69.3. Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Washington, D.C, USA.
- Ghosh, R., Mehdi Babaei, Wing Yu Alice chan, Maihemuti Dilimulati and Norma Tarrow (2016). *Education and Security: A Global Literature Review of the Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism*. Tony Blair Faith Foundation, London, UK.
- Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (2016). <https://toolkit.thegcft.org/document-sets/un-secretary-generals-plan-action-preventing-violent-extremism/good-practices/iii>.
- Holmer, G. (2013). *Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective*, Special Report. United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C, USA.
- ICCT (International Centre for Counter Terrorism) (2016). 12 Principles for National Action Planning. Available at <https://icct.nl/update/12-principles-for-national-action-planning>.
- IEP (Institute for Economics and Peace) (2016). *Global Terrorism Index*. Available at <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>.
- IEP (2017). *Global Peace Index 2017*. Available at <http://economicsandpeace.org>.
- ISS (Institute for Security Studies) (2014). 'Radicalization in Kenya: Recruitment to Al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council', *Paper 265*. Pretoria, South Africa.
- Kessels, E. and C. Nembr (2016). 'Countering Violent Extremism and Development Assistance: Identifying Synergies, Obstacles, and Opportunities', *Global Centre on Cooperative Security Policy Brief*, February 2016. GCCS, New York, USA.

- Mahmoud, Y. (2016). 'In the Fight against Violent Extremism, Why is Prevention Elusive?' IPI Global Observatory blogpost 7, 2016. Available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/01/countering-violent-extremism-isis-libya-sahel>.
- McCaughey, C. and S. Moskalenko (2008). 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20 (3).
- McCormick, G. H. (2003). 'Terrorist Decision Making', *Annual Review of Political Science* 6.
- Miles, W.F.S. (2012). 'Deploying Development to Counter-Terrorism: Post-9/11 Transformation of US Foreign Aid to Africa', *African Studies Review*, Volume 55, Issue 3.
- Moghaddom, F.M. (2005). 'The Stairway to Terrorism', *American Psychologist*, February-March, 2005.
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (2016). *Surveying CVE Metrics in Prevention, Disengagement and Deradicalization Programmes*. University of Maryland, Virginia, USA.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2013). *Fragile States 2013: Resource Flows and Trends in a Shifting World*. OECD: Paris, France.
- OECD (2016). *OECD DAC High Level Meeting Communiqué*, 19 February, 2016, Clause 7. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/DAC-HLM-Communique-2016.pdf>.
- Ohuoh, F. (2014). 'Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?', *Special Report*, 248, June 2014, United States Institute for Peace, Washington, D.C, USA.
- Phillips, A. L. (2013). 'The Search for Anti-Septic War: The Prospects and Perils of Drones for the US, the Sahel and Beyond', *Africa Program Policy Brief*, No. 6, Wilson Center, April 2013. New York, USA.
- Rosand, E., Alistair Millar and Jason Ipe (2008). *Civil Society and the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Opportunities and Challenges*. Global Center on Cooperative Security. Available at <http://www.globalcenter.org/publications/civil-society-and-the-un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy-opportunities-and-challenges/>.
- RUSI (Royal United Services Institute) (2015). *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review*. London, UK.
- Save the Children (2012). *Born Equal: How Reducing Inequality Could Give Our Children A Better Future*. London, UK.
- Sharif, T.A. and J. Richards (2016). 'Towards a Continental Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism in Africa', *Global Peace Operations Review*, December 2016. New York Center on International Cooperation. New York, USA. Available at <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/towards-a-continental-strategy-for-countering-violent-extremism-in-africa/>.
- UN (United Nations) (2016). *Meeting the Demand: Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*. New York, USA.
- UN (2015). *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*. Available at [www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674).
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) (2017a). *Human Development Report*, 2016. New York, USA.
- UNDP (2013). *Kenya's Youth Employment Challenge*, Discussion paper.
- UNDP (2017b). *Maximizing Opportunity to Enhance Security: Understanding the Relevance of Dutch ODA to Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa*. New York, USA.
- UNDP (2015b). *Perceptions of Radicalization, Violence and (In)security Drivers in the Sahel*.
- UNDP (2015a). *Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach*. Programme document.
- UN General Assembly Resolution 49/60 (1994) 'Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism'. Available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/49/a49ro60.htm>.
- United Nations University (2008). *Africa and Climate Change. OurWorld*. Available at <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/africa-and-climate-change>.
- USAID (United States Agency for International Development) (2011). *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency*. Washington, D.C, USA.
- van Ginkel, B. (2012). *Engaging Civil Society in Countering Violent Extremism*. The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, The Netherlands.
- Victoroff, J. (2005). 'The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 1.
- Wilner, A.S. and C. J. Dubouloz (2011). 'Transformative Radicalization: Applying Learning Theory to Islamist Radicalization', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 34:5.
- World Bank (2011). *Conflict, Security and Development: World Development Report 2011*. Washington, D.C, USA.

# **ANNEX 1: OVERVIEW OF THE ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS**

## Approach

The econometric analysis of the *Journey to Extremism* database was divided into three parts, each exploring a different moment in the journey to and from becoming a member of a violent extremist group.

The descriptive analysis made evident the uneven distribution of relevant variables between groups, so a coarsened exact matching (CEM) was run before every regression (Blackwell, 2009). CEM matching gives different importance and weights to different observations to improve the balance of the distribution of variables that can modify the effect of the treatment on the treated. After CEM, the treatment and the treated groups would be comparable on levels of the balancing variables. The weights produced from CEM matching were then used to run weighted logistic regressions. (This same procedure was replicated for each of the five models.)

Models 1.1 and 1.2 explore the systematic differences between voluntary group respondents and others in the survey sample. Due to the pattern of missing data and to avoid an extremely small sample and biased estimators, Model 1.1 includes questions pertaining to elections, while Model 1.2 contains questions pertaining to the study of the Quran and Tafsir.

Models 2.1 and 2.2 explore the path of the voluntary group towards extremism and included regressions with two different dependent variables. The first dependent is a dummy coded 1 for respondents who joined the organization within a month of introduction, and 0 if it took them longer than a month. The second dependent is a dummy coded 1 for those who joined with friends and 0 for those who did not (they include people who joined alone, with strangers or with family members). Models 2.1 and 2.2 explored what makes someone join suddenly, as well as the social structures that encouraged or discouraged them to join.

Model 3 was intended to explain the path towards demobilization. It used a dummy coded 1 if the respondent had surrendered or applied for amnesty at the time of responding to the survey, and 0 if he or she had any other status in the organization – as a dependent variable. It was intended to help explain what circumstances, events, reasons for joining and which personal characteristics are related with the decision of leaving a particular violent extremist group.

Details on each of the models specified follow.

## Model 1.1 and Model 1.2: Journey to recruitment

Model 1.1 explored factors that increased or decreased the likelihood of being a member of an extremist organization, within the sample. The sample included the reference group and voluntary group respondents from the main dataset. The dependent variable was coded 1 if the respondent was a voluntary member and 0 if a reference respondent.

Three variables were selected as the balancing variables, and six different variables were used as treatments to better gauge their individual effect on the dependent variable. The balancing variables were as follows: ‘willingness to die for your religion’; ‘willingness to die for your ethnic group’; and a dummy coded 1 if the respondent’s father had more than one wife growing up. The first two variables can be seen as being proxies for endogenous values and characteristics of the individual, which could modify and alter the effect of any treatment on the treated. The second responds to the need to balance experience during upbringing, which may also influence the effect of the treatment.

The treatment variables are as follows:

- 1) Happy childhood – coded 1 if the respondent rated their happiness during childhood as 7 or greater, 0 if not;
- 2) Religious education – coded 1 if respondent reported having had at least 6 years of religious education, 0 if less or none at all;
- 3) Prospects – coded 1 if respondent said they were studying or working before joining an extremist organization, or, in the case of reference respondents, if they reported to be studying or working at the time of interview. Coded 0 if respondent reported being unemployed;
- 4) Married – coded 1 if married at the time of joining the organization (or at time of interview), 0 if divorced or single;
- 5) Third Quran – coded 1 if respondent reported knowing a third of the chapters in the Quran or more, 0 if they knew less or none at all;
- 6) National anthem – coded 1 if respondent sang the national anthem growing up, 0 if they didn’t.

Each of the six variables listed above was used as treatment, one at a time. They were also used as individual covariates when not used as treatment. The additional covariates used for the regression were as follows:

- 1) Age of respondent, divided into seven groups, from 11 to 68 years;
- 2) Respondent's rating of government provision of education, coded 1 if either 'Excellent' or 'Improving', and 0 if other;
- 3) Respondent's rating of government provision of healthcare, coded 1 if either 'Excellent' or 'Improving', and 0 if other;
- 4) 'People belonging to different religions should be treated equally?', coded 1 if answer was affirmative, 0 if other;
- 5) 'Have you studied the interpretation (Tafsir) of the Holy Quran?', coded 1 if answer was affirmative, 0 if other;
- 6) 'Studied Tafsir \* Third of Quran' – an interactive variable which takes on the value of 1 if respondent studied the Tafsir and has memorized at least one third of the Quran, and 0 if otherwise;
- 7) 'Ever vote in elections?', coded 1 if respondent answered 'yes', and 0 if not;
- 8) 'Elections could bring change?', coded 1 if respondent answered 'yes', and 0 if not;
- 9) 'Ever voted \* elections can produce change' – an interactive variable which takes on the value of 1 if respondent voted in elections and believed elections could bring change, and 0 otherwise.

Given the pattern of missing data, the election variables (in Model 1.1) had to be separated from the Quran and Tafsir (included in Model 1.2) variables in order to avoid producing biased estimators. Hence, each treatment was used twice, one with a specification that included election variables and once with one that included religious variables; except for when Third Quran was used as the treatment, where the specification with election variables was omitted.

Fixed effects by country where the interview was conducted were used, but the Sudan dummy was dropped because of the excessive number of missing values on relevant variables. The baseline for comparison was Somalia.

### **Model 2.1 and Model 2.2: Recruitment strategy**

Model 2 focused solely on the voluntary group of respondents, exploring their path towards actual recruitment. In Model 2.1, the dependent variable was coded 1 if the individual joined within one month of introduction to the organization, and 0 if it took them longer. In Model 2.2, the dependent variable is another dummy coded 1 for those who joined with friends, and 0 for those who did not with friends.

Both the treatment and the variables used for balancing the treated and non-treated groups changed. The balancing variables were three dummies, the first coded 1 if the respondent had friends from different ethnicities growing up, 0 if not; the second was knowledge of at least a third of the Quran; and for the variable, prospects, which was coded 1 if respondent studied or worked before joining, and 0 otherwise. These variables were selected to balance life experiences and knowledge that could modify the effect of the treatment on the treated.

Eight variables were used as treatment twice, once against the dependent variable in Model 2.1 and once against that in Model 2.2.

- 1) Discussed politics with family while growing up? Coded 1 if respondent said yes, 0 otherwise;
- 2) Specific killing of family member identified as final motivation to join the organization? – coded 1 if respondent said that one such event was the final event that motivated them to join, and 0 if other;
- 3) Prospects – coded 1 if respondent said they were studying or working before joining an extremist, organization and 0 if unemployed;
- 4) Religious education – coded 1 if respondent reported having had at least six years of religious education, 0 if less or none at all;
- 5) Position: Intelligence – coded 1 if respondent described their position inside the organization as 'Intelligence', 0 if other;

- 6) Awareness of prevention initiatives – coded 1 if respondent was aware of initiatives to prevent people from joining, 0 if they were not;
- 7) Hope or excitement – coded 1 if respondent identified ‘hope’ or ‘excitement’ as the emotion that best captured decision to join, and 0 if other;
- 8) Fear – coded 1 if respondent identified ‘fear’ as the emotion that best captured decision to join, and 0 if other.

The additional covariates used in the regressions are as follows:

- 1) Age at which respondent became aware that they should join the organization;
- 2) Married – coded 1 if married, and 0 if divorced or single;
- 3) Specific government action identified as final motivation to join the organization? – coded 1 if respondent said that one such event was the final reason they joined, 0 if any other reason;
- 4) Position: Fighter– coded 1 if respondent described their position in the organization as ‘Fighter’, 0 if other;
- 5) Hate – coded 1 if respondent identified ‘hate’ as the emotion that best captured decision to join, and 0 if other.

Fixed effects by organization were used against the first dependent variable. The baseline for comparison was Al-Shabaab.

### Model 3: Path to demobilization

Model 3 intends to explain the path towards demobilization; it uses a dummy, coded 1 if the respondent reported to have surrendered or applied for amnesty, and 0 if they had any other status in the organization, as a dependent variable. Only respondents from the primary sample were included.

The variables used to balance the groups were being married, awareness of initiatives to prevent people from joining, and identifying religion as a reason for joining. The balance variables were chosen because they can modify the effect of the treatment on the likelihood that someone decides to surrender or apply for amnesty. Four variables were used as treatment:

- 1) Period between introduction and joining the organization – coded 1 if less than one month, and 0 if longer;
- 2) Joined the organization with friends, 1 if yes, 0 if otherwise;
- 3) Specific government action identified as final motivation to join the organization? – coded 1 if respondent said that one such event was the final reason they joined, 0 if any other reason;
- 4) Position: Fighter– coded 1 if respondent described their position in the organization as ‘Fighter’, 0 if any other position.

The additional covariates used for the regressions include:

- 1) Age at which they became aware that they should join the organization, five age groups ranging from 10-15 to 36-39;
- 2) Position: Taxes – coded 1 if respondent described their position in the organization as ‘Collect Taxes’, 0 if other;
- 3) Marital status – coded 1 if respondent was married and 0 if single or divorced;
- 4) Reason for joining – coded 1 if respondent identified ‘religion’ as a reason they joined the organization, and 0 if other;
- 5) Religious education – coded 1 if respondent reported having had at least 6 years of religious education, 0 if less or none at all;
- 6) Awareness of preventive initiatives – coded 1 if respondent was aware of initiatives to prevent people from joining, 0 if not;
- 7) Position: Intelligence – coded 1 if respondent described their position in the organization as ‘Intelligence’, 0 if other;
- 8) Hate – coded 1 if respondent identified ‘hate’ as the emotion that best captured decision to join, and 0 if other;
- 9) Fear – coded 1 if respondent identified ‘fear’ as the emotion that best captured decision to join, and 0 if other.

Fixed effects by organization were used. The baseline or comparison was Al-Shabaab.

## Results

The results of these models were transformed into first differences to make the interpretation easier. First differences show the change in the probability that the dependent variable will be a success (or a 1) when an independent variable changes from its minimum to its maximum value, everything else held constant at its median or mode. They are, then, regular probabilities and can be interpreted as such. All the econometric graphs are first differences.

The interpretation of the graphed results is straightforward: the number plotted represents the estimation of the probability change, it includes a line representing the interval of 95 percent confidence. If the probability is positive, it means that a change from the minimum to the maximum of that variable increases the chances of the dependent variable being 1 by the probability plotted; if it is negative, it means it decreases the chances of the dependent variable being 1 by that percentage. If the confidence interval crosses 0 it means that variable has no statistically significant effect on the probability of the dependent variable being 1.

## ECONOMETRIC MODELS

### MODEL 1.1

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: 1 = RESPONDENT VOLUNTARY MEMBER; 0 = RESPONDENT FROM REFERENCE GROUP

VARIABLES	TREATMENT				
	Happy childhood	Religious education	Prospects	Married	National anthem
Childhood happiness rating >=7	-0.743**	-1.213***	-0.896**	-1.059***	-1.065***
Attended religious schooling >= 6 years	-0.469	-0.909**	-0.914**	-0.750*	-0.735*
Did your father have more than one wife (your mother) growing up?	0.454	-0.231	0.581	-0.129	0.467
Government's success in providing healthcare is 'Excellent' / 'Improving'	0.259	-0.205	0.332	0.0870	0.566
Government's success in providing education is 'Excellent' / 'Improving'	-1.027**	-0.479	-1.233**	-1.123*	-1.513***
Married	0.167	0.0452	0.0447	0.114	0.109
As a child - did you sing the national anthem?	-1.236***	0.0506	-1.070**	-0.768	-1.529***
Either employed or studying	-0.786**	-1.349***	-0.624*	-0.780**	-0.650
Believes people belonging to different religions should be treated equally	-1.066***	-1.767***	-1.080***	-1.402***	-1.223***
Age of respondent	0.362**	0.433**	0.511***	0.436**	0.524***
Country of interview = Nigeria	-1.388**	-2.149***	-1.711***	-1.951***	-1.613**
Country of interview = Kenya	0.118	-0.448	0.331	0.0348	0.470
Ever vote in elections?	-0.235	0.0401	0.0592	-0.266	-0.0736
Believe elections could bring change	-1.997***	-1.995***	-1.931***	-1.921***	-2.112***
Ever vote in elections?*Believe elections could bring change	0.582	0.626	0.625	1.075	0.697
Constant	3.256***	4.410***	2.911***	3.975***	3.506***
Observations	283	280	284	278	274

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**MODEL 1.2**

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: 1 = RESPONDENT VOLUNTARY MEMBER; 0 = RESPONDENT FROM REFERENCE GROUP

VARIABLES	TREATMENT				Memorized at least a third of the Quran	National anthem
	Happy childhood	Religious education	Prospects	Married		
Childhood happiness rating >=7	-0.0833	-0.280	-0.410	-0.608*	-0.646	-0.422
Attended religious schooling >= 6 years	-1.470***	-1.397***	-1.459***	-1.411***	-1.395***	-1.280***
Did your father have more than one wife (your mother) growing up?	0.185	-0.0887	0.243	-0.283	-0.884*	0.244
Government's success in providing healthcare is 'Excellent' / 'Improving'	0.472	-0.633	0.569	0.866	0.877	0.690
Government's success in providing education is 'Excellent' / 'Improving'	-0.0771	0.262	-0.628	-0.869	-1.499**	-1.033*
Married	0.281	-0.560	-0.101	-0.594	0.240	-0.446
As a child - did you sing the national anthem?	-1.429**	-0.738*	-1.483***	-1.303***	-1.738***	-1.694***
Have you studied the interpretation (Tafsir) of the Holy Quran?	0.867**	0.957**	0.756**	0.879**	0.834*	0.771**
Memorized at least a third of the chapters in the Holy Quran?	1.416*	1.849**	1.578**	0.913	0.867	1.049
Has studied the Tafsir * Has memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran	-0.570	-0.937	-0.646	-0.757	-0.0525	-0.448
Either employed or studying	-1.227***	-1.780***	-1.013***	-0.884**	-0.690	-1.241***
Believes people belonging to different religions should be treated equally	-0.0924	-0.467	-0.00935	-0.0346	0.193	0.221
Age of respondent	0.0847	0.276*	0.217	0.369**	0.371*	0.258
Country of interview = Nigeria	-2.030***	-2.180***	-2.150***	-1.955***	-2.085**	-2.252***
Country of interview = Kenya	0.623	0.585	0.845	0.627	1.202	0.626
Constant	2.175***	2.358***	2.068***	2.268***	2.628***	2.379***
Observations	240	237	241	235	215	237

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**MODEL 2.1**

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: 1 = INDIVIDUAL JOINED THE ORGANIZATION IN ONE MONTH OR LESS; 0 = INDIVIDUAL TOOK LONGER THAN ONE MONTH TO JOIN THE ORGANIZATION

VARIABLES	TREATMENT							
	Discussed politics with family while growing up?	Killing of family member as final motivation to join the organization	Prospects	Religious education	Position Intelligence	Aware of initiatives to prevent people from joining	Hope or excitement	Fear
Growing up, did your family discuss politics?	-0.145	-0.0760	-0.294	-0.638	-0.0328	-0.272	-0.256	-0.226
Married	0.554	-0.0178	-0.00574	0.617	-0.443	0.213	-0.359	-0.0923
Either employed or studying	0.290	-0.0536	-0.211	0.450	0.0742	-0.218	0.0442	0.191
Age when individual decided to join	-1.053**	-0.947**	-1.034***	-0.436	-0.834**	-0.905**	-0.992***	-0.847**
Identified specific other government action as motivation to join	-0.881*	-0.505	-0.465	-0.827	-0.401	-0.649	-0.455	-0.649
Identified specific killing of family as motivation to join	0.654	0.847	0.906*	1.177*	0.529	0.984*	0.532	0.886
Attended religious schooling >= 6 years	-1.132*	-1.333**	-1.236**	-1.508**	-1.849***	-1.082	-1.765***	-1.662**
Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?	-1.292**	-1.236**	-1.191**	-1.449**	-1.378***	-1.195**	-1.254**	-1.074**
Position = Fighter	0.344	0.890	0.883	-0.336	1.379**	0.793	0.952*	0.642
Position = Intelligence	1.643**	1.644**	1.443**	2.019***	1.232**	1.734**	1.355**	1.324**
Memorized at least a third of the chapters in the Holy Quran?	0.467	-0.0187	-0.395	-0.413	-0.267	-0.0519	-0.615	-0.409
Emotion when joining = Fear	-0.0601	-0.275	-0.973	-0.233	-1.695**	-0.436	-1.546**	-0.890
Emotion when joining = Hope or excitement	0.199	0.606	0.203	0.509	-0.200	0.492	-0.138	0.0638
Emotion when joining = Hate	0.0582	-0.106	-0.682	-0.532	-0.617	-0.541	-0.745	-0.324
Organization = Boko Haram	0.728	1.716	2.682**	0.249	2.326*	1.784	2.739**	1.898
Constant	1.865 (1.225)	1.070 (1.283)	2.051* (1.199)	1.791 (1.423)	1.647 (1.109)	1.531 (1.264)	2.289** (1.090)	1.838 (1.226)
Observations	124	128	132	132	131	131	131	131

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**MODEL 2.2**

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: 1 = INDIVIDUAL JOINED WITH FRIENDS; 0 = INDIVIDUAL DID NOT JOIN WITH FRIENDS

VARIABLES	TREATMENT							
	Discussed politics with family while growing up?	Killing of family member as final motivation to join the organization	Prospects	Religious education	Position Intelligence	Aware of initiatives to prevent people from joining	Hope or excitement	Fear
Growing up, did your family discuss politics?	1.049*	0.259	0.707	0.844	0.598	0.626	0.790	0.598
Married	0.201	-0.368	-0.188	-0.195	0.638	-0.0970	0.0620	0.160
Either employed or studying	0.713	0.827	1.059**	1.495***	0.798*	0.986*	0.786*	0.715
Age when individual decided to join	-0.428	0.0828	0.0396	-0.0975	-0.324	0.0144	-0.167	-0.193
Identified specific other government action as motivation to join	1.151**	1.120*	0.713	0.737	1.071**	0.737	1.065**	0.793
Identified specific killing of family as motivation to join	1.191**	1.067*	0.455	1.452**	0.520	0.654	0.852*	0.866
Attended religious schooling >= 6 years	-1.635**	-1.133*	-1.339**	-1.493**	-0.825	-1.373**	-1.009*	-1.084*
Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?	1.167**	0.874*	0.924*	1.269**	1.061**	1.014*	1.005**	0.931*
Position = Fighter	1.429**	1.521**	1.251**	0.592	1.337***	1.319**	1.456***	1.126**
Position = Intelligence	-2.645***	-2.078***	-2.026***	-2.455***	-2.127***	-2.157***	-2.171***	-2.069***
Knows at least a third of the chapters in the Holy Quran?	-0.367	-0.982	-0.110	-0.103	-0.206	-0.397	0.129	-0.266
Emotion when joining = Fear	-0.873	-0.499	0.00669	-0.179	0.341	-0.186	0.120	-0.175
Emotion when joining = Hope or excitement	-0.804	-1.064*	-0.759	-0.323	-0.705	-0.873	-0.763	-0.650
Emotion when joining = Hate	-3.314***	-3.715***	-3.267***	-3.837**	-2.795***	-3.609***	-3.550***	-3.312***
Constant	-2.007*	-1.887	-2.374**	-2.432*	-2.014**	-2.203*	-2.436**	-1.731
	(1.151)	(1.202)	(1.079)	(1.305)	(0.955)	(1.178)	(0.986)	(1.079)
Observations	124	128	132	132	131	131	131	131

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**MODEL 3**

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: 1 = INDIVIDUAL SURRENDERED OR APPLIED FOR AMNESTY; 0 = OTHER CURRENT STATUS

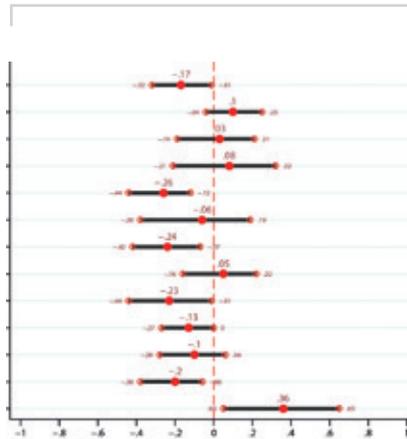
VARIABLES	TREATMENT			
	Period between introduction and joining the organization	Joined with friends	Specific other government action as final motivation to join the organization	Position = Fighter
Time between introduction and joining <= 1 month	0.973	0.887	0.368	0.412
Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?	0.513	0.820	1.127*	0.801
Age when individual decided to join	1.273***	1.122***	-0.198	0.750**
Married	-0.142	-0.0797	0.705	0.0125
Emotion when joining = Fear	1.428*	1.096	0.436	1.584**
Emotion when joining = Hate	1.919***	2.281***	1.426**	1.471**
Joined with a friend	-1.728***	-1.534**	-0.316	-1.269**
Identified specific other government action as motivation to join	1.114*	0.485	-0.254	0.337
Attended religious schooling >= 6 years	-1.611*	-1.484*	-0.0616	-0.824
Position = Fighter	0.302	0.558	-0.266	-0.0940
Position = Intelligence	-0.941	-0.544	-0.189	-0.408
Position = Tax collector	3.325**	2.326*	2.433**	3.222***
Joined for religion	0.0801	-0.248	-0.183	-0.0717
Organization = Boko Haram	-3.337*	-2.892**	-1.329	-2.741*
Organization = MRC	0.0647	-0.493	0.668	-0.736
Constant	-5.823***	-5.489***	-2.557***	-3.989***
	(1.359)	(1.169)	(0.963)	(1.060)
Observations	207	207	206	207

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

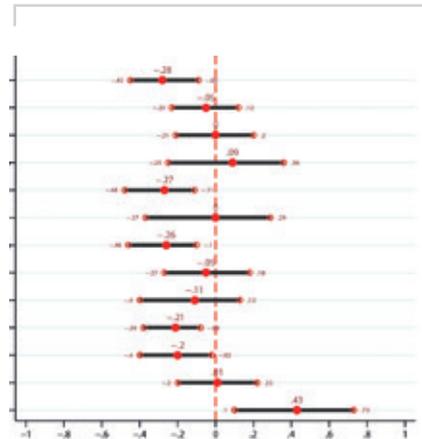
# FIRST DIFFERENCES GRAPHS FROM ECONOMETRIC MODELS

Rating of 7 or more in happiness as a child  
 Father had more than one wife  
 Married?  
 Ever voted? \* Elections can produce change  
 Elections could bring change?  
 Ever voted in elections?  
 People belonging to different religions should be treated equally  
 Government's provision of healthcare is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Government's provision of education is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Studying or working  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 As a child - did you sing the national anthem?  
 Age of respondent

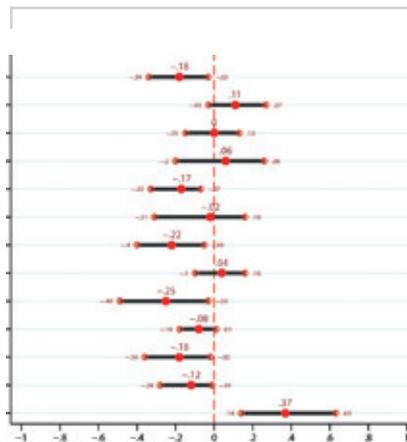
**MODEL1.1**  
 TREATMENT: CHILDHOOD HAPPINESS RATING >=7



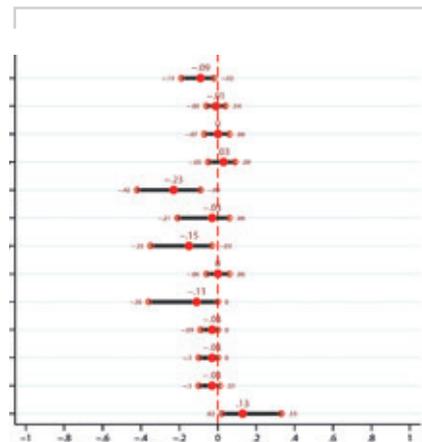
**MODEL1.1**  
 TREATMENT: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION >=6 YEARS



**MODEL1.1** TREATMENT: STUDYING OR WORKING BEFORE JOINING OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW

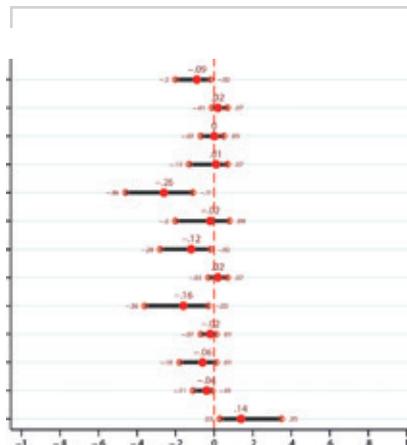


**MODEL1.1**  
 TREATMENT: MARRIED



Rating of 7 or more in happiness as a child  
 Father had more than one wife  
 Married?  
 Ever voted? \* Elections can produce change  
 Elections could bring change?  
 Ever voted in elections?  
 People belonging to different religions should be treated equally  
 Government's provision of healthcare is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Government's provision of education is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Studying or working  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 As a child - did you sing the national anthem?  
 Age of respondent

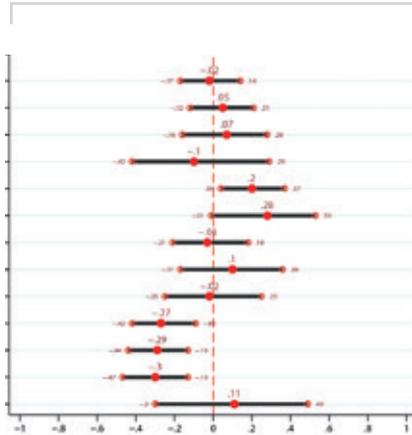
**MODEL1.1**  
 TREATMENT: SANG THE NATIONAL ANTHEM WHILE GROWING UP



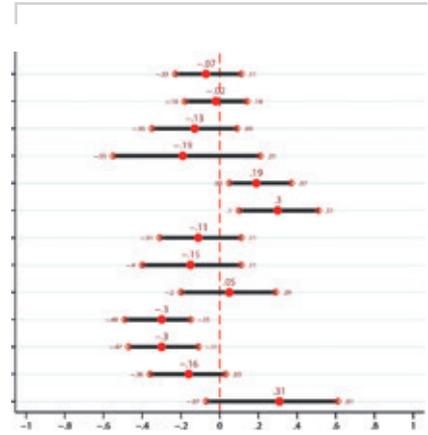
Rating of 7 or more in happiness as a child  
 Father had more than one wife  
 Married?  
 Ever voted? \* Elections can produce change  
 Elections could bring change?  
 Ever voted in elections?  
 People belonging to different religions should be treated equally  
 Government's provision of healthcare is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Government's provision of education is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Studying or working  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 As a child - did you sing the national anthem?  
 Age of respondent

Rating of 7 or more in happiness as a child  
 Father had more than one wife  
 Married?  
 Studied Tafsir\* Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran  
 Have you studied the interpretation (Tafsir) of the Holy Quran?  
 Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran  
 People belonging to different religions should be treated equally  
 Government's provision of healthcare is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Government's provision of education is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Studying or working  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 As a child - did you sing the national anthem  
 Age of respondent

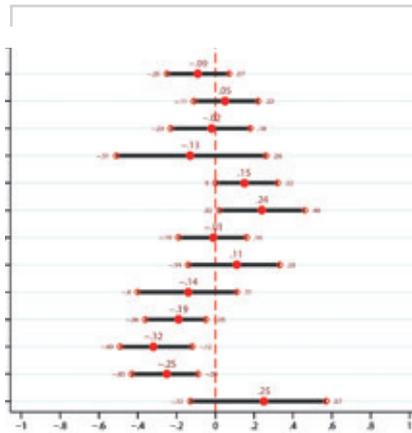
**MODEL1.2**  
 TREATMENT: CHILDHOOD HAPPINESS RATING >=7



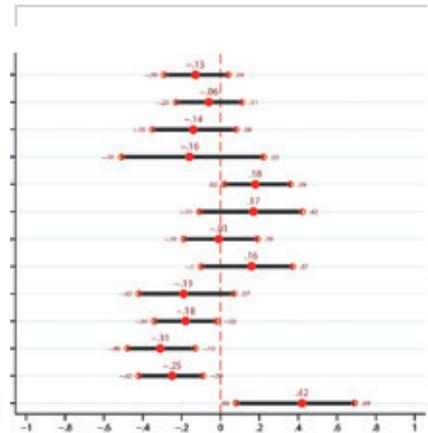
**MODEL1.2**  
 TREATMENT: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION >=6 YEARS



**MODEL1.2** TREATMENT: STUDYING OR WORKING BEFORE JOINING OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW

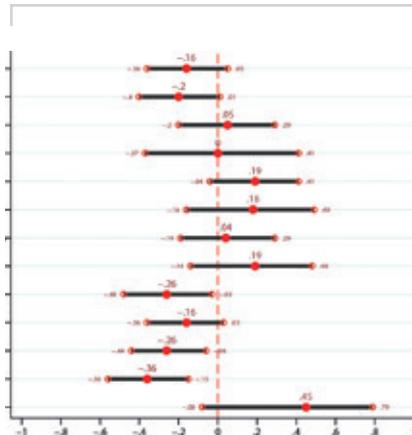


**MODEL1.2**  
 TREATMENT: MARRIED

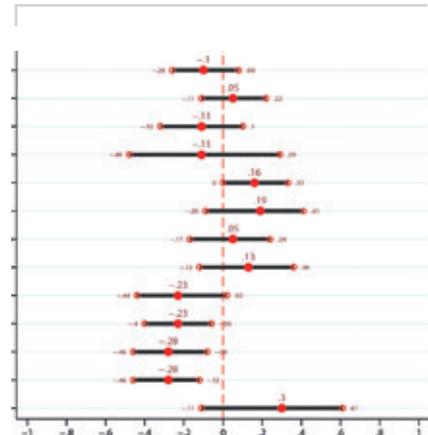


Rating of 7 or more in happiness as a child  
 Father had more than one wife  
 Married?  
 Studied Tafsir\* Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran  
 Have you studied the interpretation (Tafsir) of the Holy Quran?  
 Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran  
 People belonging to different religions should be treated equally  
 Government's provision of healthcare is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Government's provision of education is either 'Excellent' / 'Improving'  
 Studying or working  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 As a child - did you sing the national anthem  
 Age of respondent

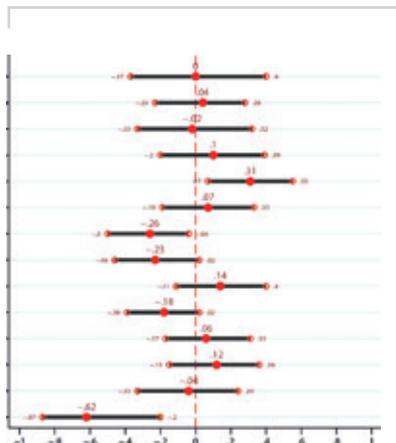
**MODEL1.2** TREATMENT: HAS MEMORIZED AT LEAST ONE THIRD OF THE QURAN



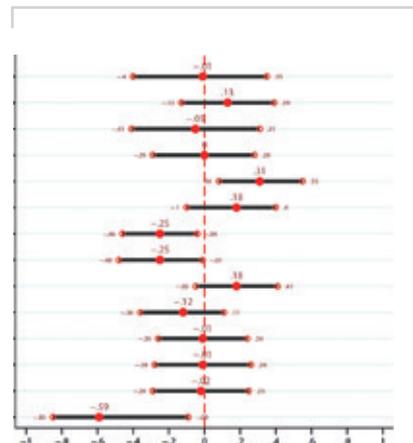
**MODEL 1.2**  
 TREATMENT: SANG THE NATIONAL ANTHEM WHILE GROWING UP



**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: DISCUSSED POLITICS WITH FAMILY WHILE GROWING UP**

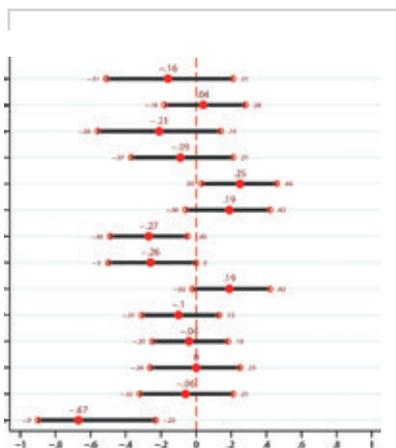


**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: KILLING OF FAMILY MEMBER IDENTIFIED AS FINAL MOTIVATION TO JOIN ORGANIZATION**

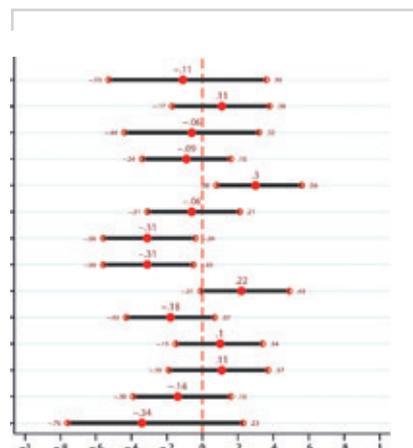


Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Hope or excitement is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran  
 Describe position in organization as 'Intelligence'  
 Describe position in organization as 'Fighter'  
 Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 Specific killing of family member that motivated you to join the organization?  
 Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?  
 Studying or working  
 Married?  
 Growing up, did your family discuss politics?  
 At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?

**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: STUDYING OR WORKING BEFORE JOINING OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW**

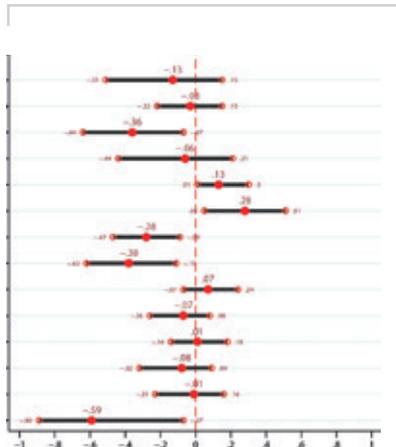


**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION >=6 YEARS**

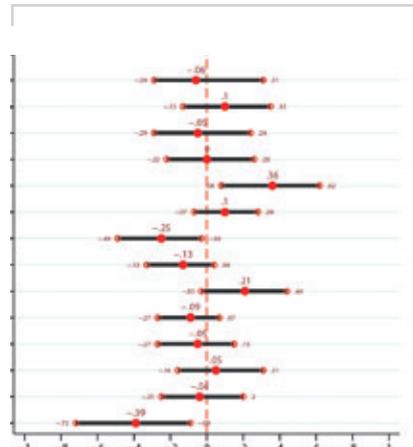


Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Hope or excitement is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran  
 Describe position in organization as 'Intelligence'  
 Describe position in organization as 'Fighter'  
 Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 Specific killing of family member that motivated you to join the organization?  
 Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?  
 Studying or working  
 Married?  
 Growing up, did your family discuss politics?  
 At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?

**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: POSITION = INTELLIGENCE**



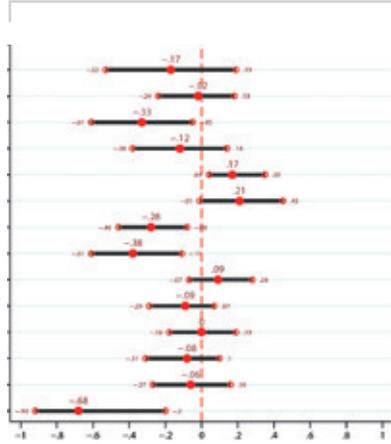
**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: AWARE OF INITIATIVES TO PREVENT PEOPLE FROM JOINING EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION**



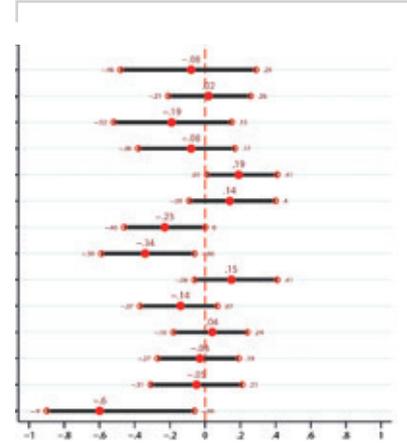
Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Hope or excitement is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join  
 Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran  
 Describe position in organization as 'Intelligence'  
 Describe position in organization as 'Fighter'  
 Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?  
 Received at least 6 years of religious schooling  
 Specific killing of family member that motivated you to join the organization?  
 Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?  
 Studying or working  
 Married?  
 Growing up, did your family discuss politics?  
 At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?

- Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Hope or excitement is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran
- Describe position in organization as 'Intelligence'
- Describe position in organization as 'Fighter'
- Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?
- Received at least 6 years of religious schooling
- Specific killing of family member that motivated you to join the organization?
- Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?
- Studying or working
- Married?
- Growing up, did your family discuss politics?
- At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?

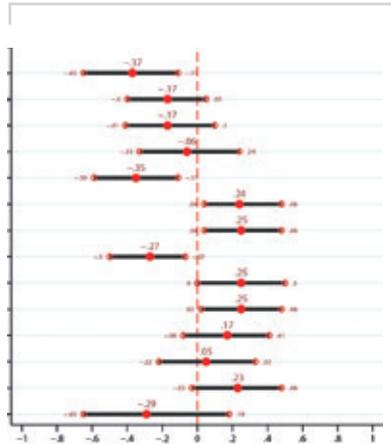
**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: HOPE OR EXCITEMENT BEST CAPTURES EMOTION WHEN JOINING**



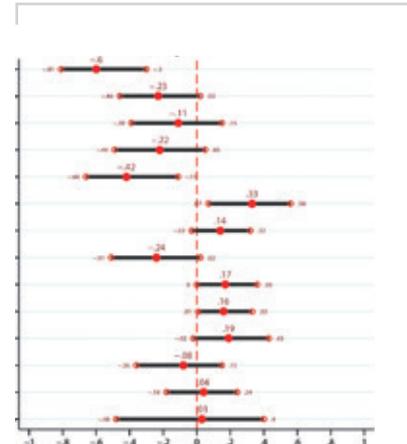
**MODEL 2.1 TREATMENT: FEAR BEST CAPTURES EMOTION WHEN JOINING**



**MODEL 2.2 TREATMENT: DISCUSSED POLITICS WITH FAMILY WHILE GROWING UP**

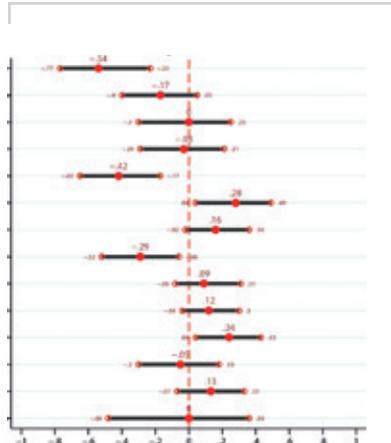


**MODEL 2.2 TREATMENT: KILLING OF FAMILY MEMBER IDENTIFIED AS FINAL MOTIVATION TO JOIN ORGANIZATION**

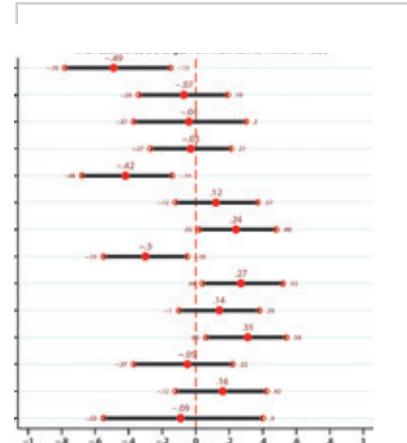


- Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Hope or excitement is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran
- Describe position in organization as 'Intelligence'
- Describe position in organization as 'Fighter'
- Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?
- Received at least 6 years of religious schooling
- Specific killing of family member that motivated you to join the organization?
- Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?
- Studying or working
- Married?
- Growing up, did your family discuss politics?
- At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?

**MODEL 2.2 TREATMENT: STUDYING OR WORKING BEFORE JOINING OR AT TIME OF INTERVIEW**

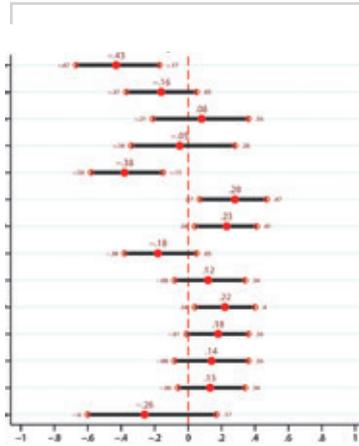


**MODEL 2.2 TREATMENT: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION >=6 YEARS**

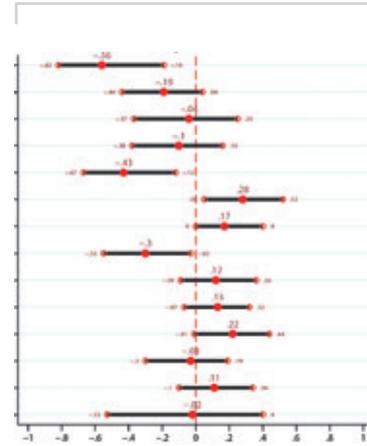


**MODEL 2.2**  
TREATMENT: POSITION = INTELLIGENCE

- Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Hope or excitement is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran
- Describe position in organization as 'Intelligence'
- Describe position in organization as 'Fighter'
- Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?
- Received at least 6 years of religious schooling
- Specific killing of family member that motivated you to join the organization?
- Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?
- Studying or working
- Married?
- Growing up, did your family discuss politics?
- At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?

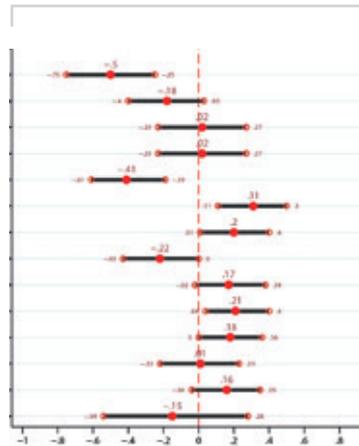


**MODEL 2.2 TREATMENT: AWARE OF INITIATIVES TO PREVENT PEOPLE FROM JOINING EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION**

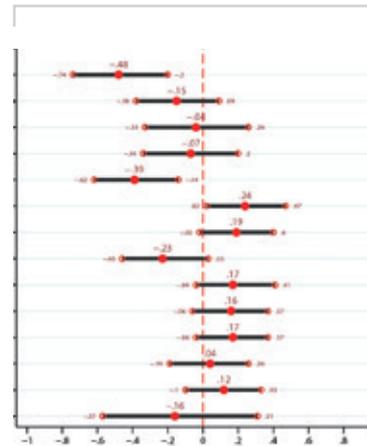


**MODEL 2.2 TREATMENT: HOPE OR EXCITEMENT BEST CAPTURES EMOTION WHEN JOINING**

- Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Hope or excitement is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Memorized at least a third of the Holy Quran
- Describe position in organization as 'Intelligence'
- Describe position in organization as 'Fighter'
- Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?
- Received at least 6 years of religious schooling
- Specific killing of family member that motivated you to join the organization?
- Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?
- Studying or working
- Married?
- Growing up, did your family discuss politics?
- At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?

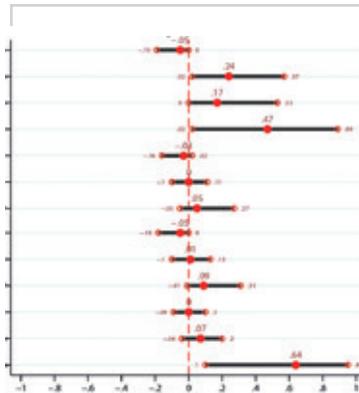


**MODEL 2.2 TREATMENT: FEAR BEST CAPTURES EMOTION WHEN JOINING**

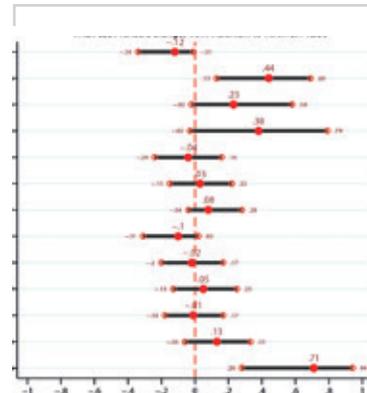


**MODEL 3 TREATMENT: PERIOD BETWEEN KNOWING AND JOINING THE ORGANIZATION <= 1 MONTH**

- Joined the organization with friends
- Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Described position in organization as 'Tax collector'
- Described position in organization as 'Intelligence'
- Described position in organization as 'Fighter'
- Where you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?
- Received at least 6 years of religious schooling
- Identified religion as a reason for joining
- Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?
- Married?
- Period between introduction and joining the organization <=month
- At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?



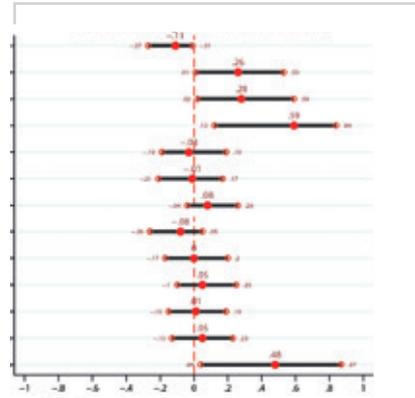
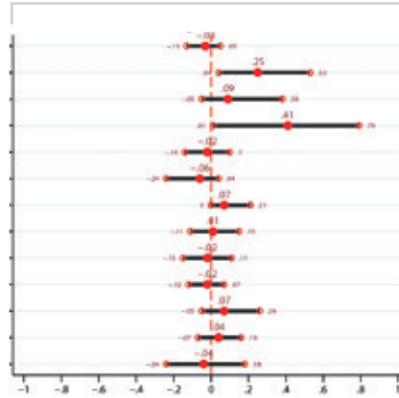
**MODEL 3 TREATMENT: JOINED THE ORGANIZATION WITH FRIENDS**



**MODEL 3** TREATMENT: GOVERNMENT ACTION IDENTIFIED AS FINAL MOTIVATION TO JOIN ORGANIZATION

**MODEL 3** TREATMENT: POSITION = FIGHTER

- Joined the organization with friends
- Hate is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Fear is emotion that best captures decision to join
- Described position in organization as 'Tax collector'
- Described position in organization as 'Intelligence'
- Described position in organization as 'Fighter'
- Were you aware of any initiatives to prevent people from joining?
- Received at least 6 years of religious schooling
- Identified religion as a reason for joining
- Specific other government action that motivated you to join the organization?
- Married?
- Period between introduction and joining the organization <=month
- At what age did you become aware that you should participate in the organization?











*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

REGIONAL BUREAU FOR AFRICA