



Received: 05-09-2025
Accepted: 15-10-2025

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

The Roles of the Local Leaders and the Community Groups in Fostering the Citizen Collaboration in Counter-Terrorism Efforts in Lamu County, Kenya

¹ Humphrey Murerwa, ² Dr. Mutonyi Gerald Peter

¹ Masters Student, Department of Security, Diplomacy and Peace Studies, Kenya

² Lecturer, Department of Security, Diplomacy and Peace Studies, Kenya

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2025.5.5.5134>

Corresponding Author: Dr. Mutonyi Gerald Peter

Abstract

Kenyans have been living in perpetual fear of where and when the next terror attack might strike. But the roles of the local leaders and the community groups has been lauded as an approach that ensures success of programmes and counter-terrorism operations can be one of them. Therefore, the study undertook to examine the role of local leaders and community groups in fostering citizen collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts. The Social Contract and Community Policing Theories, were used. The study utilized a mixed-methods research design, conducted in Lamu County with a target population of adult residents. A multistage sampling approach was employed, starting by clustering the study area into regions. Purposive sampling was then used to select the specific constituencies and wards, after which the population was divided into three homogeneous clusters: village elders and nyumba kumi elders were purposively sampled, the general public of the

local community members were systematically random sampled. Using questionnaires and interview guides, the researcher collected data for this study. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data and the descriptive statistics, including means and averages, were used for the quantitative data, which was also visualized in pie charts, tables and graphs. The findings of the study were: local leaders are crucial for counter-terrorism, providing intelligence and building partnerships. The study concluded that, the community-based strategies, led by local leaders, are indispensable for counter-terrorism. The study recommended that, to sustain security, formally recognize and strengthen the roles of local leaders and community groups, a structured training program for Village Elders and Nyumba Kumi Leaders is recommended to improve intelligence handling skills.

Keywords: Local Leaders, Community Groups, Citizen Collaboration, Counter-Terrorism Efforts, Local Intelligence, Building Partnership, Sustainable Security, Information Sharing, Community Policing Initiatives

1. Introduction

Terrorism, as a complex and evolving threat, often involves ideologically motivated violence aimed at instilling fear, disrupting societies and to achieving political, religious, or ideological goals. The global nature of modern terrorism requires an adaptive and coordinated response, where the counter-terrorism operations must not only address immediate threats but also focus on long-term prevention, such as tackling the root causes of radicalization and fostering international cooperation. According to Mansour-Ille, (2021) ^[16] the counter-terrorism operations are coordinated actions carried out by governments and the security agencies to prevent, deter and to respond to terrorist activities. These operations encompass a range of activities, including intelligence collection and the law enforcement operations, military interventions and the policy measures focused on disrupting terrorist networks and safeguarding national security. The scope of the counter-terrorism operations can vary from domestic initiatives focusing on local threats to international collaborations addressing global terrorism.

The effectiveness of the counter-terrorism operations is influenced by various factors, including the legal structure with the application of technology and the level of interagency cooperation (El Khoury, 2023) ^[8]. While these operations are crucial for national security, they must be balanced with the protection of human rights and civil liberties. Overly stringent measures can lead to public dissent and may inadvertently fuel extremist sentiments. Therefore, a comprehensive approach that integrates security measures with community engagement and reverence for human rights is essential for the success of counter-terrorism efforts. In this regard, the roles of the local leaders and the community groups is crucial in fostering the local leaders and the

community groups collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts, as active participation from the public fosters trust, improves intelligence-sharing and also strengthens community resilience against extremist ideologies, ultimately making security efforts more effective and sustainable.

In the context of counter-terrorism, the roles of the local leaders and the community groups is vital for building trust between communities and authorities, enhancing the effectiveness of security measures, and fostering resilience against extremist ideologies. Engaged the local leaders and the community groups are more likely to notice and report unusual activities, providing law enforcement with critical information. Moreover, such engagement helps build trust between communities and authorities, which is essential for the successful implementation of counter-terrorism strategies. Some studies have shown that communities with higher levels of engagement are more prepared to prevent radicalization and react to potential threats (Otieno, 2019)^[21]. Therefore, recognizing the benefits of the roles of the local leaders and the community groups, it is crucial to establish inclusive, trust-based frameworks that empower communities to contribute meaningfully to counter-terrorism efforts.

In the United Kingdom, the local leaders and the community groups engagement is integral to counter-terrorism operations, exemplified by initiatives like Project Servator. Launched in 2014, Project Servator is a collaborative strategy that involves police working closely with local communities to encourage vigilance and reporting of suspicious activities (Marchment & Gill, 2025)^[17]. This strategy intends to build trust, increase public knowledge, and create a more resilient society against potential terrorist threats. Marchment and Gill (2025)^[17] argued that, the initiative employs a combination of visible and covert policing methods, including the deployment of specially trained officers, to deter and detect criminal activity. By fostering a partnership between law enforcement and the public, Project Servator seeks to make communities safer and more secure. While initiatives like Project Servator highlighted the effective local leaders and the community groups engagement in counter-terrorism, little research exists on its applicability in Lamu County, Kenya. Given Lamu's unique security challenges, most studies focused on the military responses rather than the structured the local leaders and the community groups participation.

In Nigeria, the local leaders and the community groups engagement in counter-terrorism is exemplified by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), established in 2013 in Borno State to combat Boko Haram insurgents. Comprising local volunteers familiar with the terrain, the CJTF collaborates with the Nigerian military, providing intelligence and participating in operations (Ashindorbe, Afatakpa, & Owonikoko, 2021)^[1]. While their involvement has been pivotal in reclaiming territories, challenges persist, including allegations of human rights abuses and the need for proper oversight to prevent exploitation and ensure accountability. While Nigeria's CJTF demonstrates the role of the local leaders and the community groups engagement in counter-terrorism, little research explored its applicability in a context like Lamu County, Kenya. Existing studies have emphasized the state security interventions, underscoring the need to examine organized the local leaders and the

community groups and community involvement in the counter-terrorism efforts.

In Burkina Faso, Demuyck (2021)^[7] argued that, the civilian militias formalized under the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP) in early 2020 have been mobilized to protect communities from extremist groups like Ansarul Islam and Islamic State affiliates. While these militias have been effective in providing immediate security, their rapid expansion to nearly 100,000 members without consistent monitoring has resulted in inadequate training, corruption, and human rights violations (Demuyck, 2021)^[7]. The Burkinabe government's challenge remains in balancing the immediate security benefits of these militias with the long-term risks posed by their lack of regulation and potential to undermine state authority. While Burkina Faso's VDP militias highlighted the role of the civilian engagement in counter-terrorism, little research has examined how similar models could be applied in Lamu County, Kenya.

Like many other African nations, Kenya has experienced the impacts of terrorism. In response, the government has implemented a range of measures, including enacting legislation, constructing a border barrier between Kenya and Somalia, proposing the repeal of the 2006 Refugee Act and the closure of refugee camps, initiating programs to prevent and counter violent extremism, and promoting community-based policing (Kamau, 2021)^[12]. Nevertheless, despite these interventions, terrorism and violent extremism continues to undermine the security of Kenya. Kamau (2021)^[12] thus asserts that terrorism will persist as a challenge for Kenya unless its counter-terrorism strategy is effectively refined and adjusted. While Kenya has implemented various counter-terrorism strategies, limited research has examined the role of the structured local leaders and the community groups engagement in these efforts, particularly in Lamu County. Existing studies have focused on the state-led interventions, highlighting the need to explore the community-driven approaches to enhancing security against terrorism.

A study by Breidlid (2021)^[2] examining Kenya's counter-terrorism strategies highlighted the government's adoption of Western-style surveillance models, delegating security functions to both state agencies and select civil society actors. The study found that Kenya has reinforced the institutionalization of radicalization as a concept closely linked to Islam through official policies, reports, and public statements. Analyzing policy documents and interviews, Breidlid (2021)^[2] illustrated how these definitions shape counter-terrorism discourse and practice. However, the study also revealed that, the Kenya's hardline security measures, particularly those targeting Muslim communities, have paradoxically fueled further radicalization. This underscored the need to reassess the counter-terrorism approaches like the local leaders and the community groups engagement to avoid exacerbating the very issues they seek to resolve. These studies focused on the government interventions and radicalization drivers, but they overlooked how the local leaders and the community groups contribute to the counter-terrorism efforts. This study, therefore, sought to scrutinize the effectiveness of the local leaders and the community groups engagement in the counter-terrorism operations in Lamu County.

2. Materials and Methods

The locale of the study was the Isiolo-Meru border region. It is located in the central part of Kenya, and being a strategic and significant area due to ethnic communities with different cultural, economic, and political interests, such as the Borana, Meru, and other pastoralist groups. This area has also been subject to inter-ethnic conflicts, particularly due to competition over resources like water and grazing land.

A Mixed-Methods Research Design was the best approach for studying the local leaders and the community groups and Counter-Terrorism Operations in Lamu County, as it combined both quantitative and qualitative methods, allowing for a comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the research problem. According to Creswell (2015) [5] the Mixed-methods research (MMR) is usually the best research methodology as it incorporates multiple methods to address the research questions in an appropriate and principled manner. It involved collecting, analyzing, interpreting and then reporting both the numerical trends (quantitative data) and the in-depth explanations (qualitative data).

For the quantitative methods, the structured questionnaires provided statistical evidence on the extent of the local leaders and the community groups engagement, perceptions and the key influencing factors. For the qualitative methods, the interviews, offered a rich, descriptive insights into the personal experiences, challenges and motivations behind the local leaders and the community groups participation or reluctance. Therefore, a Mixed-Methods Research Design was ideal as it integrated the statistical evidence and the personal narratives, ensuring a balanced, evidence-based approach to understanding and improving the local leaders and the community groups in counter-terrorism operations in Lamu County.

The study was conducted in Lamu County. It covers an area of six thousand, two hundred and fifteen square kilometers and is one of the forty-seven counties of Kenya, which were established in two thousand and thirteen after Kenya's eight provinces were subdivided into forty-seven counties. Lamu County is notable for its diverse experiences with the security operations and is home to both the local and the foreign military installations, making it an exemplary location for studying the counter-terrorism operations. Lamu County is made up of ten county wards: Mkomani, Shella, Faza, Kiunga, Basuba, Hindi, Hongwe, Bahari, Mkunumbi and Witu. However, the results from this study should be cautiously considered as a representation of other parts of Kenya.

The target population for this study were the local community members of Lamu who were aged nineteen years and above and who understood the concept of counter-terrorism operations. The approximate number of the people aged nineteen years and above in the county was sixty-nine thousand, three hundred and seventy, which represents forty-eight-point two percent of the population, according to City Population, twenty nineteen (City Population, 2019) [3]. The study adopted a multistage sampling technique to determine the sample size and identify the respondents. A multistage sampling was a practical approach for dealing with such a large population as it breaks down the population into stages, progressively narrowing the sample until the final selection was made. This method often combines simple random sampling with other approaches

like stratified or cluster sampling to improve efficiency and representation (Theresa & McBurney, 2012) [26].

In this particular study, two constituencies were purposively selected. This selection accounted for 100% of the total county wards, ensuring a complete coverage for the purposes of the research. While Gay and Diehl (1992) [9] recommended sampling 20% of a population (n) compared to the overall total (N), the researcher opted to sample the entire target area. This decision was supported by Martin and Bateson (1986) [18], who argued that increasing the sample size enhances the statistical power of a study.

Second, 2 county wards were purposively sampled, that is 20% of the total constituencies. Gay & Diehl, (1992) [8] recommended 20% for a small number of n compared to the general N. They were Mkunumbi with land area of 1366.1 (km²) and Basuba with land area of 1708.7 (km²). They were selected because they were the ones having the largest area sizes and hence offering the best site for diversity. They were also in high population density areas, which mostly experience counter-terrorism operations. This made them the appropriate samples as they were rich in the information needed to address the objectives.

Third, clustering was used to group the target population into three homogenous groups: the village and nyumba kumi elders and the general public. Kriegel, Kröger, and Zimek (2012) [14] stated that, clustering involved arranging a set of objects in such a way that the objects in the same group (called a cluster) were more similar to each other than to those in other groups (clusters).

1. Ten village elders were purposively sampled as our respondent. Gay and Diehl (1992) [8] recommended using 20% of the sample size (n) relative to the total population size (N) for the comparison.
2. Ten nyumba kumi elders were purposively sampled as our respondent. Gay and Diehl (1992) [8] recommended using 20% of the sample size (n) relative to the total population size (N) for the comparison.
3. The general public of the local community members for every 6th member of the general public were systematic random sampled as our respondent. A total of 384 were needed (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) [13]. Systematic random sampling was a type of sampling method in which sample members from a study population get to be selected according to a random starting point Nth number (Crossman, 2017) [6].

Krejcie & Morgan (1970) [13] (appendix III) produced an easy reference table for determining the sample size. No calculations were required to use the table. The target population of 69,370 fell under N 75,000. Therefore, the sample size was 382 or more. The distribution of the sample size was as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Sampling and Sample Size

Population Strata	Target Population	Sample Size
Village elders	57	10
Nyumba Kumi elders	42	10
Local community members	<100,000	382
Total	<100,000	402

The mixed methods approach was used in this study, with questionnaires collecting quantitative data, whereas one-on-one interviews gathered qualitative data.

- a. Questionnaires (Appendix I): Questionnaires were administered utilizing both the 'closed-ended' questions

(questions that mainly had rating scales) and the 'open-ended' questions (where respondents were given an opportunity to write their opinions or feelings about the response). Research questions guided the construction of the questionnaire so that all areas could be addressed. The questionnaires were administered with the help of the research assistants. The respondents were more truthful while responding to the questionnaires regarding such controversial issues due to the anonymity of the responses. The participants were allowed to complete the questionnaires by themselves.

- b. Interviews (Appendix II): One-on-one interviews were conducted with the: village elders and the nyumba kumi elders. Interviews were an effective data gathering tool because they minimized the problem of unanswered questions and gave room for further probing.

The study relied on the data gathered from the primary sources and specifically, the local community members who were expected to have firsthand knowledge and the understanding of the local leaders and the community groups n engagement practices within the region. The questionnaires were the principal data collection tool for the local community members. These questionnaires were administered with the assistance of trained research assistants. The assistants were present during the exercise, providing clarification and guidance as the respondents filled in their answers, ensuring accuracy and consistency.

One-on-one interviews were also conducted with the selected respondents, specifically the village elders and the Nyumba Kumi elders. These interviews were designed to collect in-depth qualitative insights and were audio-recorded to preserve the integrity of the responses and allow for thorough analysis. The study employed both the qualitative and the quantitative data analysis techniques. For the qualitative data, a thematic analysis approach used. This involved the identification, examination and the recording of patterns and themes within the data. The findings were then organized and presented under the key themes and categories. To enhance authenticity and provide context, direct quotations from respondents were incorporated where appropriate.

For the quantitative data, the analysis focused on the descriptive statistics. Tools like percentages, averages and the means were used to summarize and interpret the data. Additionally, visual aids, particularly the pie charts were utilized to clearly present the trends and the distributions. To ensure a thorough analysis of the findings, both the qualitative and the quantitative data were triangulated. This integration helped to explore the relationships between the local leaders and the community groups n engagement and the counter-terrorism operations, adding depth and reliability to the conclusions drawn.

3. Results and Discussion

The researcher dispersed 382 questionnaires for the Local community members and had 20 interview guides for the Village elders and Nyumba Kumi elders. A total of 359 questionnaires were completed and returned, while 23 were discarded due to incomplete information, resulting in a 94% response rate of the total questionnaires distributed. Additionally, 16 interview guides were completed and returned, reflecting a 80% response rate of the targeted sample for that instrument. In total, 375 responses were obtained out of 402 sampled participants, equating to a

93.2% response rate. This exceeds the recommended adequacy range of 33% to 66%, as suggested by Hagaman and Wutich (2017) [10]. Furthermore, Baguley (2004) noted that, by the increase of the sample size it enhances the statistical power of the results and findings. The response rate of the various clusters of respondents on the relationship between the citizen engagement and enhancing counter-terrorism operations in Lamu county is as illustrated below (figure 1).

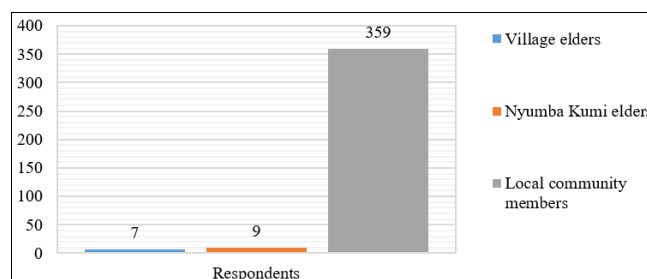


Fig 1: Respondents' Response Rates

The Village elders had a total of 7 responses, which formed 70% of that cluster entire sample population. The Nyumba Kumi elders had a total of 9 responses, which formed 90% of that cluster entire sample population. The local community members had a total of 32 response, which constituted 88.9% of that cluster total sample population. Therefore, 375 respondents out of 402 respondents participated in this study, which was 93.2%. This meets Gay & Diehl, (1992) [8] requirement that recommends for 20% of a sample size (n) relative to the overall population (N).

The research also sought to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Comprehending these traits was crucial, as they are known to influence the respondents' views and attitudes (Robertson & Watts, 2016) [23]. Accordingly, the socio-demographic variables assessed included gender, age and the educational attainment. Respondents were instructed to specify their gender by inserting a mark close to the applicable choice given (male or female). The answers are as shown below (figure 2).

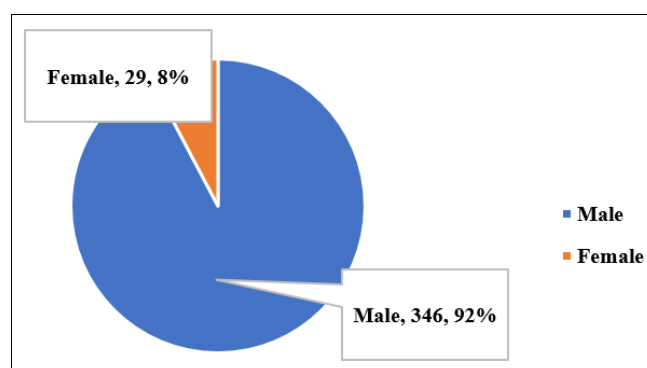


Fig 2: Respondents' gender in each Cluster

Figure 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents, with 29 (8%) females and 346 (92%) males. This can be because, in many Kenyan communities, the traditional socio-cultural norms and the gender roles limit women's participation in public life and also in leadership positions. As Mutungi and Mavole (2024) [20] stated, entrenched patriarchal norms, restrictive family structures and the

cultural practices are acknowledged as barriers that continue to limit women's advancement into the decision-making positions in Kenya. Also, the women frequently face structural barriers, including limited mobility and the greater domestic responsibilities. And as Sangita and Rakhade (2024) [25] argued, the role of the women has been confined in a very narrow sense by the society at large and the patriarchal mindset in particular. These factors reduce their opportunities to participate in the community forums, civic activities, and leadership structures that are central to studies on security and counter-terrorism.

After presenting and examining the gender demographic characteristics of the participants, this section concentrated on the presentation and analysis of the research objective. The participants were asked to mention the various roles of the local leaders and the community groups in fostering citizen collaboration in the counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu county, Kenya. The findings are displayed below (Table 2):

Table 2: Roles of The Local Leaders and The Community Groups in Fostering the Citizen Collaboration in Counter-Terrorism Efforts in Lamu County

Role of The Local Leaders and The Community Groups	Rating by Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Providing local intelligence	349	93.07%
Building partnership for sustainable security	283	75.47%
Facilitating information sharing	197	52.53%
Engaging in community policing initiatives	126	33.60%

As indicated in the findings above in table 2, most of the participants rated that providing local intelligence was the most important role of the local leaders and the community groups in fostering citizen collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu County, represented by 349 (93.07%). This was followed in the second position by building of partnership for sustainable security, which was cited as crucial for sustainable collaboration, represented by 283 (75.47%). In the third position, the participants highlighted the importance of facilitating information sharing among stakeholders, represented by 197 (52.53%). Lastly, it was engaging in community policing initiatives, which help strengthen the local security networks, represented by 126 (33.60%).

The participants were asked to make comments on the mentioned various roles of the local leaders and the community groups foster citizen collaboration in the counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu county, Kenya. The subsection below discusses the various comments from the participants.

a. The Provision of Local Intelligence to the state security on Terrorism Activities

The provision of local intelligence is a key component in supporting the state's efforts to identify and respond to any potential terrorist threats. The local actors, due to their close connection with the community, serve as very valuable sources of information that can enhance the effectiveness of security operations. Their contributions can help to strengthen early warning systems and in facilitating timely interventions, thereby making local intelligence an essential element in the overall counter-terrorism framework within

the county. A Nyumba Kumi elder interviewed explained...

"As the Nyumba Kumi elders, we are the eyes and the ears of the community. We get to see and hear and happenings, also we receive information from the residents about any suspicious movements and activities that could threaten our security. We then get to pass this intelligence to the police and other security agencies promptly. Our close relationship with the people allows us to detect early signs of radicalization and extremist behavior, which have helped the security agencies to respond quickly to prevent attacks. This collaboration between the community and the security forces is vital in keeping Lamu safe from terrorism."

A Village elder respondent had this to say...

"A shopkeeper once overheard conversations about transporting suspicious packages through the local matatu stage. He discreetly informed his community policing group, who escalated the tip-off to the police who then set up checkpoints and intercepted a bus carrying explosives intended for use in a terrorist plot. The collaboration between the citizens and the security agencies averted a potential tragedy."

The local intelligence provision is a fundamental role played by the local leaders and the community groups in enhancing counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu County. As articulated by the Nyumba Kumi elder, these leaders act as the "eyes and ears" of their communities, gathering critical information on suspicious activities and promptly relaying it to the state security agencies. Their unique position within the community enables them to detect early warning signs of terrorist threats that might otherwise go unnoticed by the formal security structures. For instance, during one the interviews a discussion came up of how a local fisherman noticed unfamiliar boats docking at odd hours along a remote shoreline. He shared this information with his Nyumba Kumi elder, who relayed it to the local police. Security agencies acted swiftly, intercepting the group and discovering several weapons and radicalization materials. The timely sharing of the local intelligence prevented a planned attack on a nearby market. A similar instance involved a herder who, during his daily routine, observed an unfamiliar group setting up a makeshift camp deep within a KWS forested area known for its banditry. Sensing that something was amiss, he discreetly alerted his village elders who, in turn, informed the Chief. This led to a targeted security operation that successfully disrupted a planned attack to a nearby town. Such grassroots intelligence has been crucial in enabling timely interventions and preventing potential attacks, thereby strengthening the overall security framework in the region.

The Nyumba Kumi initiative, has empowered the local elders to be able to coordinate security at the neighborhood level, thereby exemplifying how the community involvement can complement the existing official counter-terrorism measures. According to Mutahi, Höglund and Elfversson (2024) [19] by fostering trust and open communication channels between the residents and the security forces, the local leaders are in a position to facilitate the flow of information necessary for effective threat

management. Their intimate knowledge of the community dynamics and social networks, has allowed them to identify individuals who would otherwise be vulnerable to radicalization or be involved in extremist activities. For example, during one of the interviews, it was mentioned on how a Nyumba Kumi elder noticed a sudden change in behavior in a certain young man who had been unemployed for a long time. The young man started receiving expensive gifts and also showed signs of adopting to extremist ideologies. The elder quietly engaged with the family, which led to a discussion with the local chief about the youth's vulnerability to radicalization. This proactive approach allowed the authorities to intervene, provide the youth with counseling and offer a vocational training opportunity, thereby disrupting the recruitment attempt.

In one of the discussions, it was mentioned on how some community youth leaders once observed a sudden increase in gatherings led by an outsider who was offering financial incentives to the unemployed youths. Sensing that something amiss, they reported their concerns to the local chief, who in turn shared with the security committee. Investigations that followed revealed an attempt to recruit some young people into extremist groups. The authorities intervened, conducted awareness sessions and provided support to the at-risk youths, in so doing effectively disrupting the recruitment network. A similar scenario involved local women's groups who noticed an unfamiliar woman visiting homes and disseminating some extremist materials under the guise of a religious outreach. The women's groups reported this to their local leader, which allowed the security agencies to swiftly investigate and neutralized the recruitment attempt without causing any widespread alarm in the community. Such a proactive approach to intelligence gathering enhances the state's capacity to disrupt any terrorist operations before they escalate.

Moreover, the collaboration between the local leaders and the security agencies has underscored the importance of the citizen participation in national security. The Nyumba Kumi elder's statement highlighted how the community members are not passive recipients of security measures but very active contributors to the safety of their environment. This partnership fosters a sense of shared responsibility and collective vigilance, which is essential in areas like Lamu County that face complex security challenges. Hossain *et al.*, (2025)^[11] had recommended that, the involvement of the local actors in intelligence provision also helps to bridge gaps in resource constraints faced by the formal security agencies, ensuring a more comprehensive surveillance network. For example, in one remote area, the local police force had a limited number of patrol vehicles and officers to cover the wide expanse of land. The community, led by the local chief, organized a volunteer watch program where the residents used their personal knowledge of the terrain and their communication networks to monitor movements and report any suspicious activities. This collaborative effort effectively expanded the surveillance capabilities of the security forces, ensuring that no area was left unmonitored and thereby enhanced the overall security coverage of the region.

The effectiveness of the local intelligence provision has depended largely on the trust and cooperation established between the local communities and the security agencies. The local leaders, such as the Nyumba Kumi elders, are

playing a critical role in building this trust by acting as intermediaries as they are the ones who understand both the community's concerns and the operational needs of the security forces. Their ability to communicate intelligence in such a culturally sensitive and timely manner enhances the responsiveness of counter-terrorism efforts. As in one instance, a resident allegedly noticed new faces frequenting an abandoned house but did not report it, believing it was not his concern. Weeks later, the house was found to have been used as a hideout for planning attacks. This scenario not only can it help to improve the accuracy of threat detection but it can also encourage greater community engagement in security initiatives.

In conclusion, the provision of local intelligence by the community leaders and groups has been a cornerstone of counter-terrorism collaboration in Lamu County. The Nyumba Kumi elder's perspective illustrated how the local actors have contributed indispensable knowledge and vigilance that has supported state security operations. By fostering citizen collaboration through intelligence sharing, the local leaders have helped to create a resilient security environment capable of addressing the evolving threats posed by terrorism. This role has underscored the critical intersection of the community involvement and the formal security mechanisms in safeguarding peace and stability in this delicate region.

b. Building Diverse Partnerships to Strengthen Sustainable Security Networks

This section presents information in relation to the second most mentioned role of the local leaders and the community groups in fostering the citizen collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu county, Kenya. The local leaders and the community groups play a pivotal role in fostering citizens' collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts by promoting the development of diverse and inclusive partnerships. Through building broad-based alliances that engage different sectors of the society, they can help to create a robust and sustainable security network. These partnerships can enable communities to pool resources, share crucial information and also get to coordinate collective actions, thereby enhancing the capacity to identify and address potential security threats. These collaborative approaches can be fundamental to building resilience and maintain long-term peace and stability in a region. In the words of a Nyumba Kumi Elder respondent...

"Our role is to unite the different groups within the community, both the youth, women, traders and the security personnel and encourage them to collaborate closely. By bringing these diverse voices together, we get to create stronger, more effective security networks that are able to respond quickly to threats. These partnerships are key to sustaining peace and ensuring that everyone feels responsible for our community's safety."

Local Community Member mentioned the following to say...

"When all members of the community, including the leaders and the security officers, come together and openly share information, it builds trust and creates a strong foundation for cooperation. This collective effort makes it easier to identify and prevent potential

threats before they can happen and it helps us to feel safer in our day-to-day lives knowing that everyone is watching out for each other."

The findings indicate that, building diverse partnerships has played a significant role in fostering security networks in Lamu County. The Nyumba Kumi elder explained that, their role involved uniting various segments of the community like the youth, women, traders and the security personnel to work collaboratively towards common security objectives. On the ground, this was evident through the mentioned regular community meetings where the elders coordinated with the youth representatives and business owners to discuss various security threats, such as the increasing movement of unknown individuals and suspicious activities near their trading centers. For instance, a local market traders' member, using their communication networks, successfully identified a new individual who was attempting to sell counterfeit goods in the market and was also cunningly promoting extremist propaganda. The association's leadership reported the individual to the security agencies, who were able to intervene and disrupt the radicalization attempt before it gained traction. This inclusive approach has ensured that, various multiple perspectives are considered, enabling early identification of potential threats and empowering the community to act collectively. As Saaida (2023) ^[24] demonstrated, such collaboration can strengthen a community's ability to respond to several immediate dangers and foster a shared sense of responsibility for maintaining peace and safety for everyone.

The involvement of different community groups was found to enhance the effectiveness of security networks by leveraging a wide range of knowledge and resources. For example, in some rural villages near Lamu, women's groups noticed shifts in the social behavior or families affected by extremist ideology, prompting them to report these observations to the Nyumba Kumi elders who then liaised with the local police. These collective reports led to coordinated patrols and awareness campaigns. The Nyumba Kumi elders' role was critical in synthesizing information from the diverse groups and mobilizing unified responses promptly. And Yegon (2020) ^[27] had demonstrated how the grassroots partnerships can help to bridge gaps that the formal security agencies alone struggle to fill. And therefore, it has created a more adaptable and resilient system to counter evolving security threats.

The data from the local community members emphasized the importance of open communication and mutual trust in fostering security cooperation. In typical neighborhood markets across Lamu County, several community members have reported that, they shared their concerns about unfamiliar visitors and unusual gatherings with the trusted local leaders and security officials through several informal channels. Such interactions have promoted transparency and reassured the residents that their safety concerns were being taken seriously. One participant had noted that this ongoing dialogue has greatly improved the community's confidence in the security agencies and encouraged the residents to report several suspicious activities without fear. A discussion by Li and Liu (2021) ^[15] emphasized a culture of openness that reinforces the entire security network and strengthens cooperation between the citizens and the authorities.

Further analysis of the data also revealed that, the shared responsibility cultivated through these partnerships encouraged proactive security measures rather than reactive responses. Active community participation has increased the likelihood of early signs of radicalization and any criminal activities being detected and addressed promptly. For instance, in a remote area where there is a limited police presence, the community, under the guidance of the elders and the leaders, established a rotating patrol system where small groups of male volunteers monitored different parts of the village on a nightly basis. This was a direct result of their partnership with the security agencies, which had provided them with the basic training on what to look for and how to report sightings safely. This proactive measure helped to deter most criminal activities and provided a constant, vigilant presence that supplemented the formal security forces. The strong foundation of cooperation mentioned by the community members has ensured that the security networks operated efficiently, with all the stakeholders both the formal and the informal being aligned in their objectives and actions. This unity was identified as being critical to sustaining long-term peace in areas experiencing complex security challenges such as Lamu County.

In conclusion, the perspectives from the Nyumba Kumi elder and the local community member illustrated the vital role that diverse partnership plays in establishing sustainable security networks in the area. By bringing together the various community groups and fostering transparent communication, it has created a collaborative environment where the security challenges have been more effectively managed. These partnerships have improved the capacity for the early detection and the rapid response and thereby promoted a collective mindset toward safeguarding that coastal community. Overall, this integrated approach has been essential in strengthening resilience and maintaining stability in the coastal county of Lamu.

c. Facilitating Timely and Transparent Information Sharing Among the Security Stakeholders

This section presents information in relation to the third most mentioned role of the local leaders and the community groups in fostering the citizen collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu county, Kenya. The local leaders and the community groups can be instrumental in fostering citizen collaboration within the counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu County by encouraging communication and trust amongst the security stakeholders. This can be due to their active engagement and deep-rooted presence in the community. Their involvement can ensure that all parties ranging from the community members to the formal security agencies feel connected, supported and also represented in the broader security initiatives. This collaborative dynamic can be essential in ensuring that the counter-terrorism strategies reflect the unique needs and perspectives of the local population in a region. A verbatim from a Village Elder interviewed was that...

"As the elders, we act as a bridge between the people and the authorities. When we speak, the community listens. We encourage open dialogue and that is what makes the people more willing to share information without fear"

A Nyumba Kumi Elder interviewed respondent had this view...

"In our Nyumba Kumi meetings, we emphasize that security starts with trust. If the people can get to trust their neighbors and the police, then they will be able to talk freely. That trust does not come from nowhere but it is built through the daily engagements and showing the people that we are all on the same side"

The verbatim accounts from the key community figures in the county, highlighted the practical ways in which the local leadership have been strengthening the facilitation of timely and transparent information sharing. For example, the village elder's statement, underscored the centrality of trust and communication. Such leaders occupy a respected position, enabling them to encourage the exchange of information that might otherwise be withheld due to fear or mistrust of the authorities. This proactive information sharing, facilitated by the trusted local leaders, aligns with the Social Contract's theory aim of fostering a stable society where the citizens, in exchange for their collective security, willingly contribute to the public safety, rather than merely submitting to the authority. Furthermore, this approach embodies the core tenets of Community Policing theory, as it leverages the local relationships and builds trust to empower the residents as the active participants in intelligence gathering, moving beyond the traditional enforcement to a collaborative model of crime prevention. Their endorsement of open dialogue has reduced several barriers and thereby cultivated a culture where the community members are feeling comfortable reporting any suspicious activities and sharing intelligence to the relevant to security stakeholders.

Similarly, the Nyumba Kumi elder emphasized, the intentional and ongoing efforts required to foster trust, particularly in such a region and the communities that have previously experienced strained relations with the law enforcement. Through consistent interpersonal engagement and reinforcing the message that security is a shared responsibility, the Nyumba Kumi elders have been nurturing the conditions necessary for a sustainable citizen participation in the security matters. A common scenario discussed in the study was how these leaders has organized the inter-community soccer tournaments and the local trade fairs. During these events, they had actively engaged with the young people and the traders, ingeniously integrating security awareness messages into their conversations. This consistent, low-pressure interaction has helped build some personal rapport and trust, making it easier for the citizens to approach them later with sensitive information about any new individuals or suspicious activities.

Therefore, the effectiveness of these local leaders and the community groups in building trust has been rooted not only in their social standing but also in their continual presence and participation in the community life. Their long-term investment in the well-being of the community has fostered a sense of belonging and accountability, which the formal security agencies often lack. This ongoing involvement has enabled them to detect emerging threats early and mobilize the citizens to collaborate proactively with varying security efforts. For example, in one village, a local chief had a strong relationship with the youth, often mentoring them on different career paths and organizing on community clean-

up drives. When a few young men began showing signs of radicalization after interacting with an outsider, other youth felt comfortable sharing their concerns with the chief. The chief was then able to involve the families and the religious leaders in an intervention before the situation escalated, thereby preventing a formal security incident. Without this established rapport, mistrust and detachment could hinder some vital communication channels and thereby reducing the overall effectiveness of counter-terrorism initiatives.

These observations reveal that, the community-based counter-terrorism strategies are most effective when grounded in strong, mutually reinforcing relationships between the citizens and the authorities. As Pul (2024) ^[22], the local leaders and the community groups serve not only as facilitators of communication but also as the guarantors of the social cohesion. Their ability to represent the community's interests and articulate their local grievances to the security agencies in the long run contributes to a more responsive and contextually appropriate interventions. Furthermore, by enhancing the legitimacy of the security initiatives, these actors are helping to reduce the likelihood of alienation and therefore promoting more voluntary information-sharing, both of which are the key components in an effective counter-terrorism context.

In conclusion, the involvement of the local leaders and the community groups in Lamu County's counter-terrorism efforts has been pivotal in promoting the citizens' collaboration through trust-building and open communication. Their embeddedness within the community has granted them very unique influence and credibility, enabling them to mediate between the formal security structures and the population. These collaborative partnerships not only have they strengthened intelligence gathering but, they have also ensured that the security strategies are reflecting the lived realities of those most affected. As validated by the verbatims, fostering a culture of trust and active engagement has been essential for the community's centered security initiatives.

d. Engaging their Communities through Policing Initiatives to Enhance Security Collaboration

This section presents information in relation to the last-mentioned role of the local leaders and the community groups in fostering the citizen collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts in Lamu county, Kenya. The local leaders and the community groups play a crucial role in fostering citizen collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts by engaging their communities through the policing initiatives. Their actions can encourage participation and cooperation among the community members and to contribute to strengthening relationships with the security agencies, or maybe not. A Nyumba Kumi Elder interviewed had this to say...

"In Nyumba Kumi, we know everyone in our clusters and we watch out for anything that's unusual. We are able to quickly share any concerns with the local leaders or police. We also hold community meetings to encourage everyone to take part in our security efforts. This close cooperation at the grassroots has strengthened our fight against several threats and has helped to keep our neighborhoods safe."

A Village Elder interviewee said the following...

“As a Village Elder, I help our community understand the importance of working with security agencies. When we explain why sharing information protects our families, people feel safer reporting suspicious activities. By bridging the gap between the police and the community, we have built trust that is encouraging collaboration and has helped to keep us safe.”

The role of the local leaders and the community groups in engaging their communities through policing initiatives has been pivotal in enhancing security collaboration, particularly in the vulnerable areas to threats of Lamu County. The verbatims from the Village Elder and the Nyumba Kumi Elder underscored the foundational importance of trust and the active participation in community policing. Both elders highlighted how their leadership has fostered openness and timely sharing of security information, which has been crucial for early warning and collective action against threats such as terrorism, and other crimes like burglaries. Their testimonies have demonstrated how the community engagement goes beyond just mere compliance, to active collaboration that has strengthened the public safety.

What has also come out clearly is that, community policing initiatives in Lamu have increasingly relied on the involvement of the respected local figures who have built bridges between the security agencies and the residents. As the Village Elder mentioned, the emphasis on explaining the reasons for cooperation has helped to dismantle fear and the mistrust, thereby enabling the community members to feel safe when reporting any suspicious activities. For example, in one village, a resident observed a stranger taking photographs of a local school and the main road. The resident, having attended several meetings where the elders had explained the importance of reporting suspicious activity, overcame his initial fear of being a "snitch" and discreetly reported the matter to an elder. This timely report allowed the security agencies to investigate the individual and avert a potential security threat without causing panic. This reflects findings from Clubb, Davies and Kobayashi (2024) ^[4] who stressed that trust-building and transparent communication are indispensable for any effective counterterrorism efforts. The local leaders, therefore, not only have advocated for collaboration but also created an environment where the community's voice is valued and acted upon.

Similarly, the Nyumba Kumi Elder's account highlighted the grassroots nature of the community policing, where the neighbors actively monitor their localities and promptly share any intelligence with the authorities. This neighborhood-level vigilance has represented a practical model of the community policing that has supported national security objectives by decentralizing responsibility and enhancing more proactive reporting. For instance, a Nyumba Kumi elder in a village bordering the ocean noticed a new, unfamiliar boat captain repeatedly engaging with a few local youths who had been previously identified as being vulnerable to radicalization. The elder, in coordination with the other nine household leaders in the cluster, monitored the situation and quickly reported their collective observations to the police. This immediate intelligence led to an investigation that disrupted a recruitment attempt by a terror group.

The Nyumba Kumi model has encouraged the community members to take ownership of their security through some

small, organized units, reinforcing the idea that security is a shared responsibility, not just a state function. This collective commitment to the local security, has been exemplified by the Nyumba Kumi model, echoing the Social Contract's premise that the citizens willingly cede certain individuals' liberties in exchange for the collective protection and order that an engaged community provides. Furthermore, by empowering the residents to be active participants in intelligence gathering, this initiative perfectly encapsulates the Community Policing's emphasis on co-production of safety, moving beyond the reactive enforcement to proactive, trust-based prevention.

The synthesis of these verbal accounts with documented initiatives in Lamu have revealed that, the collaboration between the local leaders, community groups and the security agencies is multifaceted. It has involved the regular dialogues, community meetings and the joint activities such as sports tournaments, which have built some social cohesion and helped in the reduction of barriers between the citizens and the law enforcement. Such measures have complemented the formal policing by creating trusted platforms where information has been flowing freely, thereby improving prevention and rapid response to most security threats. Moreover, the local leaders have played a critical role in mobilizing the community participation to sustain these efforts.

Therefore, the practical experiences of the Village and Nyumba Kumi elders have illustrated that a successful community policing initiative depends on the inclusive engagement, trust and clear communication facilitated by the local leadership. Their roles in sensitizing their communities and liaising with the security agencies exemplify how policing initiatives can be locally legitimized and more effective. Enhancing these partnerships further through by the supply of resources, capacity building and having institutional support can solidify most security collaboration and get to contribute to lasting peace and stability as in our context in Lamu. The effectiveness observed in these community-led initiatives, where the local leaders are mediating collaboration, demonstrates a practical application of the Social Contract principles, as the citizens actively engage in maintaining societal order for everyone's mutual benefit rather than by merely being subjects of a distant authority. Moreover, this approach has profoundly embodied Community Policing by centering the law enforcement efforts around the specific needs and the active participation of the community, thereby fostering shared responsibility for the public safety.

4. Conclusion

Based the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, the Local leaders and community groups in Lamu County are indispensable to the counter-terrorism because they serve as a vital bridge between the population and the security agencies, primarily by providing the local intelligence and facilitating information sharing. The success of this integrated approach is rooted in the trust these actors possess, enabling them to foster a culture of shared responsibility and create a highly effective grassroots security framework.

5. Recommendation

Based the findings of the study, the study recommended to formally recognize and strengthen the pivotal role of local

leaders and community groups in the security framework in the County. This would involve moving beyond the informal partnerships to institutionalizing and providing some official support for their roles in intelligence provision and community policing. To achieve this, the various security agencies and the policymakers would invest in the programs that can build the capacity of these local actors, providing them with the necessary resources and creating more structured, yet flexible, collaborative platforms.

6. Acknowledgement

I appreciate my mentor Dr. Gerald Mutonyi, of the Department of Security, Diplomacy and Peace Studies, at Kenyatta University for his mentorship. I also acknowledge the whole fraternity of the school of law, arts and social sciences at Kenyatta University for their effort in modelling security studies.

7. References

- Ashindorbe K, Afatakpa F, Owonikoko S. Civilian Joint Task Force and Nigeria's counter-terrorism operation: A critique of the community-based approach to insecurity. *African Security*. 2021; 14(1):1-20. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.1998977>
- Breidlid T. Countering or contributing to radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya? A critical case study. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 2021; 14(2):225-246. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2021.1902613>
- City Population. Lamu County in Kenya, 2019. https://www.citypopulation.de/en/kenya/admin/coast/05_lamu/
- Clubb G, Davies G, Kobayashi Y. Transparent Communication in Counter-Terrorism Policy: Does Transparency Increase Public Support and Trust in Terrorism Prevention Programmes? *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 2024; 37(4):531-549. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2024.2322489>
- Creswell JW. *A concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. Sage Publications Ltd, 2015.
- Crossman A. Understanding purposive sampling: An overview of the method and its implications, 2017. <https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-sampling-3026727>
- Demuynck M. Civilians on the front lines of (counter-) terrorism: Lessons from the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland in Burkina Faso. *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism Policy Brief*, 2021. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.19165/2021.2.08>
- El Khoury CA (Eds.). *Countering the Financing of Terrorism*. USA: International Monetary Fund. Retrieved Feb 20, 2025, from: <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400204654.071> (2023).
- Gay L, Diehl P. *Research Methods for Business and Management*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.
- Hagaman K, Wutich A. How Many Interviews are Enough to Identify Metathemes in Multisited and Cross-cultural Research? Another Perspective on Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) Landmark Study. *Field Methods*. 2017; 29(1):23-41. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X16640447>
- Hossain ST, Yigitcanlar T, Nguyen K, Xu Y. Cybersecurity in local governments: A systematic review and framework of key challenges. *Urban Governance*. 2025; 5(1):1-19. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ugj.2024.12.010>
- Kamau JW. Is counter-terrorism counterproductive? A case study of Kenya's response to terrorism, 1998-2020. *South African Journal of International Affairs*. 2021; 28(2):203-231. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2021.1924252>
- Krejcie RV, Morgan DW. Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*. 1970; 30(3):607-610. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- Kriegel H-P, Kröger P, Schubert E, Zimek A. Outlier detection in arbitrarily oriented subspaces. In *2012 IEEE 12th International Conference on Data Mining (ICDM)*. IEEE, 2012. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICDM.2012.21>
- Li Y, Liu Q. A comprehensive review study of cyber-attacks and cyber security: Emerging trends and recent developments. *Energy Reports*. 2021; 7:8176-8186. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.egy.2021.08.126>
- Mansour-Ille D. Counterterrorism policies in the Middle East and North Africa: A regional perspective. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 2021; 103(916-917):653-679. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383121000655>
- Marchment Z, Gill P. A comparison of Project Servator and routine stop and search outcomes in the city of London. *Security Journal*. 2025; 38(13). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-024-00461-1>
- Martin P, Bateson P. *Measuring behaviour: An introductory guide*. Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Mutahi P, Höglund K, Elfversson E. Policing and citizen trust in Kenya: How community policing shapes local trust-building and collaboration. *African Affairs*. 2024; 123(492):303-328. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adae018>
- Mutungi MK, Mavole JN. Reframing gender roles: The cultural dynamics shaping women's engagement in community development projects in Kenya. *International Journal of Social and Development Concerns*. 2024; 23(10):131-146. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15105279>
- Otieno PO. Role of the intelligence community in counter-terrorism: A case study Kenya [Master's thesis, University of Nairobi]. University of Nairobi Repository, 2019.
- Pul H. Rethinking community response against violent extremism. *Social Science Research Council*, 2024.
- Robertson T, Watts E. The importance of age, sex and place in understanding socioeconomic inequalities in allostatic load: Evidence from the Scottish Health Survey (2008-2011). *BMC Public Health*. 2016; 16:126. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4746832/>
- Saaida M. Local ownership and community-based approaches to peace building. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*. 2023; 10:66-71. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10837339>
- Sangita D, Rakhade A. Barriers in women's upward mobility in our society. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*. 2024;

11(12):a386-a420.

<http://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2412034.pdf>

26. Theresa W, McBurney D. Research Methods, 8th Ed. Cengage Learning. Belmont, 2012.
27. Yegon LJ. Community policing as a national security strategy in East Africa: Comparative study of Kenya and Tanzania [Master's thesis, University of Nairobi]. University of Nairobi Research Archive, 2020.