

Lessons Learned from Engaging the Private Sector in Kenya

By Kristen O'Connell and Sara Tomo

Engagement of and partnership with the private sector has been the objective of development and even security fields for the past decade. The case of prevention of violent extremism (PVE) is no different. However, there are very few cases in which this happened. Research reveals that conflict and terrorism have a significant economically negative effect on growth, including the shift in the economic activity from spending investments to higher government spending¹. Hence, there is extraordinary potential for the private sector to support prevention of violent extremism (PVE) programmes. However, public-private partnership in PVE is still challenging, given the sensitivity around this subject, but also the lack of a common understanding of how private sector can be involved and contribute to security efforts more generally, and PVE specifically. Having engaged the private sector successfully in Kenya, GCERF can now share five of the most valuable takeaways from the experience.

By partnering with the private sector, a whole-of-society approach to PVE will ensure sustainable, locally led solutions are in place in vulnerable regions. The private sector can play a crucial role in addressing some of the causes of violent extremism (VE) like unemployment, poverty, and literacy.

From the business perspective, local enterprises are some of the most affected by terrorist attacks. Community hostility and radicalisation has a significant negative impact on local business operations and consumerism. This was the case in Kenya where 14 per cent of direct foreign investment reduces are due to terrorist incidents taking place in the country on annual basis². That is to say, the relationship is mutually beneficial.

GCERF defines the private sector as corporations, for-profit businesses, private foundations, and wealthy individuals.

When GCERF began working with the private sector in Kenya in July 2019, there were already existing efforts underway, which must be acknowledged. For example, some private Kenyan entities were and still are members of the Multi-Agency Taskforce that is charged with the responsibility of rehabilitating and reintegrating (R&R) returned foreign terrorist fighters (RFTFs) from Somalia. Other companies worked in collaboration with the government to

¹ Blomberg, S.B., G.D. Hess, and A. Orphanides. 2004. The macroeconomic consequences of terrorism. *Journal of Monetary Economics* 51 (5): 1007–1032.

² Abala DO. "Foreign Direct Investment and Economic Growth: An Empirical Analysis of Kenyan Data.". In: DBA Africa Management Review. Vol. 4.; 2014.

address the drivers of radicalisation from different angles. For example, Dandora company, a private institution for learning, supported at-risk youth with vocational training and capacity building in PVE.

Government efforts to decentralise efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE) have also found success, such as the inclusion of private sector representatives in County P/CVE Engagement Forums (CEFs)³ for the implementation of County Action Plans (CAPs). However, the potential for further engagement and improved coordinating mechanisms remains, and the toolkits focused on this are few and far between.

Beginning in July 2019, in recognition of the increasingly important role the private sector must play in addressing the drivers of violent extremism, GCERF piloted an accelerated grant period in Kenya with an additional requirement of co-funding by a private sector entity.

During this grant period, from July 2019 to September 2020, GCERF worked with the private sector to invest USD 300,000 in Garissa, Isiolo, Lamu, Mombasa, Nairobi, Nyeri through three organisations: Arigatou International, Lamu Youth Alliance, and Legal Resources Foundation Trust. With the support of 11 private entities, constituting around 40 per cent of the programme funding, they implemented activities to build social cohesion and a sense of purpose for around 16,000 direct beneficiaries and another 54,000 indirect beneficiaries. Activities included business and entrepreneurial training; youth extracurricular activities; PVE awareness-raising in prisons, and with mothers, teachers, and faith leaders.

The pilot project offered clear, actionable lessons so that GCERF and other organisations might better facilitate private sector engagement for beneficiary organisations. These learnings are detailed below but in brief: (i) a clear definition of the private sector must be agreed and presented; (ii) capacity building on private sector engagement is essential; and (iii) time and attention is needed to engage, negotiate, and develop contributions from the private sector.

³ The Government of Kenya (GoK) has developed local Action Plans on P/CVE in each county/district level, based on their respective needs and gaps. These County Action Plans are aligned with the National P/CVE Strategy and Action Plan and are established to support localization of P/CVE efforts and monitoring in the ground. In addition, the GoK has also established P/CVE Engagement Forums for each county, which are composed of different stakeholders, including local authorities, religious and community leaders, women representatives, civil society, private sector, and others. These forums are co-chaired by the County Governor and Commissioner and oversight by a civil society representative, called the CSO lead. The objective of these forums is to coordinate and support implementation of P/CVE efforts locally and through a whole-of-society approach.

Lessons Learned:

- 1) **Define private sector:** Funding focused on engaging private sector in PVE must explicitly define what the private sector is. There is no agreed definition of the private sector, with many similarly mandated organisations using their own nuanced definitions. In the case of Kenya, this resulted in some contributions from actors such as INGOs. These varying definitions can create confusion when developing projects that aim to engage these entities. A clear definition, agreed by all PVE actors at the least, will offer clear direction and aid efforts to engage the private sector.
- 2) **Acknowledge the limitations of private sector involvement in PVE:** The private sector should not be a replacement for government support; instead, it should be an additional resource, offering support that complements or fills in gaps left by government work. There has been a rapid maturation of private sector philanthropic efforts in the past decade, but there are still limits to what private entities can and are willing to do. In addition, for smaller organisations like those that GCERF works with, attracting private sector contributions can be challenging: (1) it requires a high level of administration and advocacy; (2) it involves time-consuming and costly bureaucracy which organisations may not have the time or training for; (3) some private sector entities have strict branding requirements that may conflict with programming requirements; and (4) particularly with sensitive programming like PVE, it can be undesirable for private entities looking for external goodwill through their support.
- 3) **Engage local business associations:** Collaboration with local business associations and chambers of commerce was one of the most successful approaches to engaging private sector in PVE, compared with individual entities. These associations have greater resources and can provide access to a broader network, including industries such as extractives and tourism, and the risk of associating with PVE programmes becomes lessened or shared. The success of beneficiary efforts to leverage private sector support might be amplified when they are facilitated through an association.
- 4) **Invest in the capacity building of private sector actors:** There is a significant gap in training to private sector actors on VE and the role they can play in preventing it. Skills development of private sector staff on such topics as mediation, dialogue, and conflict resolution is important to ensure a collective local approach to tackling issues related to social cohesion and marginalisation. Given the cyclical patterns of conflict, liberally dispersed PVE skills offer a clear opportunity to create a more peaceful social environment. In short, private sector actors may become PVE actors themselves with the right training.

- 5) **Promote media and PVE:** Media plays a significant role in shaping narratives, with the ability to create a positive or negative sentiment amongst communities. In Kenya, the media is working deliberately to aid in prevention efforts, working closely with the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), the Ministries of Interior and Defense, and the National Police to understand and counter terrorist ideologies and narratives. Reporters covering terrorism and crime have taken part in in-depth trainings on PVE and countering extremist narratives. Further, local organisations can act as partner for media groups, particularly those who broadcast in local communities, by offering expertise on the local context and ensuring the correct information and resources is broadcast.

Engaging with the private sector has been a goal of the security and humanitarian sectors for years. Doing so for PVE is no different, albeit with vastly smaller resources and frameworks. A strong example, from which the concrete lessons above can be drawn, is that of GCERF's work in Kenya. It offers a solid base from which PVE actors can continue enabling local partners to engage with private sector. These lessons can be applied by GCERF and other PVE actors, but they also point to important considerations for global, national, and local actors working to engage the private sector in development efforts, particularly in PVE.

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