Appendix II: Report on Meeting with women from Diani Location

Date 3rd October 2016 (02.00-4.00PM)

Venue: Red Cross, Ukunda

Team:

1. Prof. Hamadi Iddi Boga- TTUC Team Leader
2. Yusuf LuleMwatsefu- HURIA
3. Omar Boga- Area MCA

Background

The activities in Kwale have required the need to build trust between the Government and the Community. In discussions with National and County Government Officials a need to engage the affected community directly had been expressed. It was agreed that this would be multi-step involving (i) meeting with elders from affected areas (ii) Meeting with youth from affected areas (iii) Meeting with women from affected areas.

32 women attended the meeting.

Objective

To explore ways in which the problem of radicalization and violent extremism can be solved in Diani Location especially Bongwe

To identify challenges fueling radicalization in the area and finding common solutions

To explore what role women could play in tackling the issue of radicalization in the area

NB: most of the women invited were victims, with their children, family members having either been abducted or killed or disappeared

Briefing

1. The women were briefed on the challenge of radicalization in the area with narratives tracing the issues all the way from Kaya Bombo, Mlungunipa and MRC and now Al-Shabaab.
2. They were also briefed how this is impacting on the economy of the Coast region
3. That although the Government was trying its best, it could not solve the issue alone and the community must do its part.
4. The area MCA narrated to them the many bodies whose postmortem he has had to attend, how one of the victims was shot by unknown assailants and his body was left for almost 6 hours with school kids viewing. That must push the community to action for this to end.
5. Those with reports of Human rights violations by authorities to engage HURIA for the issues to be followed up.

Feedback
1. Acknowledged that there is a problem in the community of MRC and al-Shabaab returnees.
2. One woman narrated about a brother who had been renditioned from Somalia to Ethiopia and then he came back, was peaceful, but was harassed by police continuously until he just took off never to be seen again. The family has not known peace. Other brothers are regularly being harassed because of the alleged sins of one person who had even repented and is no longer at home.
3. Another woman lamented about a nephew who had been abducted by Probox and has not been seen ever since.
4. The complained that Police were not enforcing the law, they were abusing it with impunity. Youth arrested over flimsy excuses are forced to pay bribes to be freed by the Probox Team.
5. The Probox should be withdrawn. They have become a menace unto themselves. Thieves have now taken advantage of this, using Proboxes to hijack people and extort families (many conspiracy theories and stories were told).
6. A mother narrated about how his son who was very religious moved to the Ujamaa area (Likoni) where he kept on moving from one mosque to the other and working in the quarry. Eventually he came to say to her “Someone should be buried where he dies” a phrase which she at the time did not understand. Eventually her son disappeared for several month before he called back to say he was in Mogadishu Somalia and then they lost communication. The young man eventually died there and was buried there, true to his prophecy. It is painful for mothers and sheikhs must also take the blame. She singled out a known cleric (also deceased) as having been the one who called one of the relatives to inform her of the son’s death.
7. The women insisted on a meeting between the women, elders and the youth even in the absence of the Government to iron out in house issues. They lamented that fathers had left all the burden to women to feed and raise children.
8. They were ready for a meeting with the Government to discuss these issues and find solutions, but the police must follow the law...in Swahili they said (Polisi hawafanyi kazi kisheria)
9. They suspected there is a list being used to track down people with the Probox.
10. Address the historical issues. Why are these things recurring? They always originate elsewhere and end up being consumed in Ukunda. Leaders should give explanations and counter narratives.
11. Crime level has gone high. MPESA, shops, bodaboda etc.
12. Police were at time framing innocent people, which makes people angry.

Conclusions

Generally they accepted there is a problem, but they feared to say more than they knew for fear of victimization. Methods being used by law enforcement agencies were exacerbating the situation. Since the issue of violence is recurrent in Kwale, they lamented that the government has never gone to the root of the problem always treating symptoms while the issue continues to grow. The need for an intra-digo dialogue was emphasized. (Gabishwe! Adigoabishe) (Let it be discussed. Let the digos have a conversation)