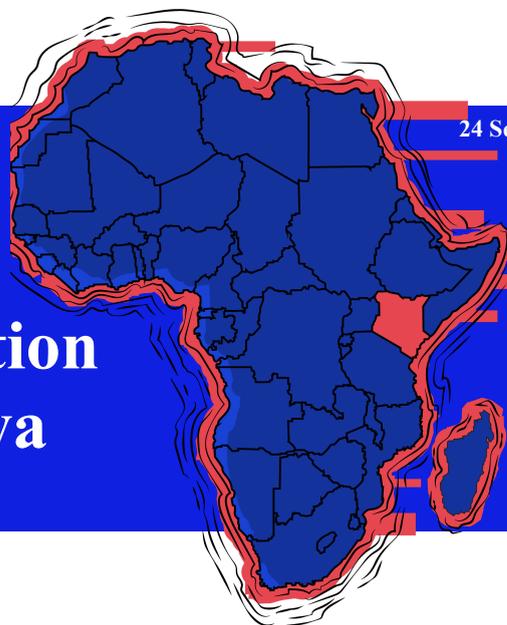


Pulse Report**Biweekly overview of information manipulation & interference in Kenya**

*This **PULSE Report** is a biweekly analysis of coordinated online hate speech, cyberbullying and trolling, information manipulation, and other online harms, as well as the abuse of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to target vulnerable communities or subvert public discourse in Kenya. It also identifies weaponised narratives and the key actors undermining information integrity. It analyses the tactics or techniques used to subvert or polarise local audiences.*

1. Executive summary

Between August and September 2025, security concerns, gendered stereotypes, and ethnic tensions in the Kenyan counties of Busia, Lamu, Mandera, and Mombasa were amplified on social media. In Mandera, which borders Somalia, the presence of Jubaland Forces – despite official denials – sparked protests and xenophobic posts on TikTok and X.

In Busia and Mombasa, female politicians such as Catherine Omanyo and Mwanahamisi Hamadi faced sexist attacks questioning their legitimacy as leaders. In Lamu, a TikTok video advocating for Bajuni leadership fuelled ethnically charged debates, highlighting how platforms like Facebook, TikTok and X can escalate local grievances into divisive narratives.

Notable narratives and incidents

A narrative is a technique for presenting or understanding a situation or series of events, promoting a particular viewpoint. Information manipulators develop ‘persistent’ narratives that play on emotions, fears, or pre-existing beliefs to inject an ideological spin on the facts, manipulate public perceptions, and exploit cognitive biases that shape public opinion.

- a. Somalis bring terrorism to Kenya:** The news that Jubaland Forces from Somalia were camping at a local school near the border sparked protests and xenophobic social media posts, despite officials denying the presence of the forces.

County radar: The notable emerging incidents or campaigns at the county level

This section provides a concise overview of notable incidents, campaigns, and insights into emerging trends and issues in the information landscape within the focus counties (Busia, Homa Bay, Lamu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru). It aims to inform readers about the emerging conversations shaping public discourse in these countries.

- a. Gendered attacks against female politicians:** In Busia and Mombasa, female politicians faced gendered and ethnic attacks on social media from late August to September 2025, with Busia’s Catherine Omanyo and Evelyne Ikwi receiving sexist and tribal comments, and

Mombasa's Mwanahamisi Hamadi facing sexualised remarks, reflecting broader challenges to women's leadership in Kenyan politics.

- b. Ethnic tensions flare in Lamu over leadership debate:** On 10 September 2025, a TikTok video of elder Famau Raya advocating for Bajuni leadership in Lamu gained 17,100 views, sparking online debates with ridicule, ethnic accusations against the Bajuni, and inciteful comments on voting and land conflicts.

Noteworthy tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs):

TTPs describe the behaviour and strategies threat actors use, focusing on the structured frameworks or infrastructure they use for executing cyberattacks. Using TTPs to diagnose information manipulation allows investigators to develop early warning systems. It also allows watchdogs to identify vulnerabilities in influence operations that can be used to disrupt the attack.

- a. Leverage existing narratives:** The Disinformation Analysis and Risk Management (DISARM) framework's TTP was evident in entrenched narratives portraying Somalis as outsiders and security threats, such as posts linking them to corruption scandals, warnings that 'we are surrounded by Somalis!', and calls for them to 'go back to Somalia' to amplify ethnic hostility around the Jubaland Forces' presence in Mandera.

2. Weaponised words: the narratives and incidents shaping public discourse

This section highlights amplified 'meta' narratives, citing specific examples and listing a selection of the most noteworthy incidents or narratives.

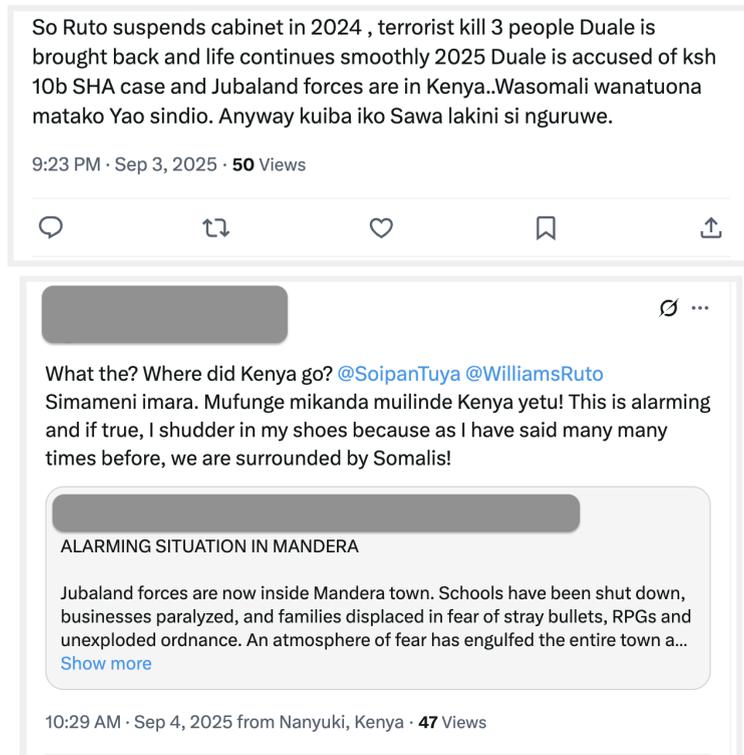
a. Somalis bring terrorism to Kenya

On 29 August 2025, governor Khalif [criticised](#) the presence of Jubaland Forces from neighbouring Somalia in Mandera county. According to Khalif, the forces, who are currently fighting against the Somali National Army, had set up camp at Mandera's Border Point One (BPO) primary school. Their training had led to the closure of the school. Residents of BPO village reportedly [protested](#) the presence of Jubaland Forces in their village on 29 August 2025. However, on 05 September 2025, interior cabinet secretary Kipchumba Murkomen stated that Mandera was safe and that no Jubaland Forces personnel were operating in Kenya. Murkomen accused the opposition of politicising the security situation in Mandera for political gain, even though pro-government leaders from Mandera had raised the same concerns.

The Jubaland Forces are an armed group led by Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed Islam, popularly known as [Ahmed Madobe](#). Madobe is the president of the semi-autonomous Jubaland state in Somalia and has been in constant armed fights with the Somalia forces. Madobe was a former militant and one of the founders of the extremist group al-Shabaab which he left to form the Ras Kamboni brigade. This has since morphed into the Jubaland Forces. Between 02 and 16 September 2025, there were 15,504 mentions of Jubaland forces' presence in Mandera on X. The mentions generated a total engagement of 74,700 and 3.09 million views.

An X [post](#) on 03 September 2025 said the cabinet secretary of health, Aden Duale's failed in the government, and insulted Somalis: 'Wasomali wanatuona matako Yao sindio. Anyway kuiba iko Sawa lakini si nguruwe' (from Swahili meaning 'The Somalis see us as their butts, don't they? Anyway, stealing is okay, but not like a pig.'). The post received 49 views and no engagement.

On 04 September 2025, a [quote post](#) responding to Mandera senator Ali Roba’s X [post](#) criticising the presence of Jubaland Forces in Mandera called on president William Ruto and defense cabinet secretary Soipan Tuya to stand up and defend Kenya. The post said: ‘I shudder in my shoes because as I have said many many times before, we are surrounded by Somalis!’ implying that the Somali community is a danger to other Kenyan communities. The post received two engagements and 46 views.



Screenshots of X posts verbally attacking the Somali community ([top](#), [bottom](#))
(Source: CfA using X)

On 12 August 2025, a TikTok [video](#) with the caption: ‘Somali National Army attack Kenyan Town as hunt for Jubaland Forces intensifies’ explained the alleged presence of Jubaland Forces in Mandera. One of the comments in the video verbally attacked the Somali community saying: ‘wachukue yote wasomali warudi kwao’ translating to: ‘they should take it all [Mandera County] so that they [Somalis] can go back to Somalia.’ The comment received 74 likes.

3. County radar: Notable emerging incidents or campaigns from the county level

This section provides a concise overview of notable incidents, campaigns, and insights into emerging trends and issues in the information landscape within the focus counties. It aims to inform readers about the emerging conversations shaping public discourse in these counties.

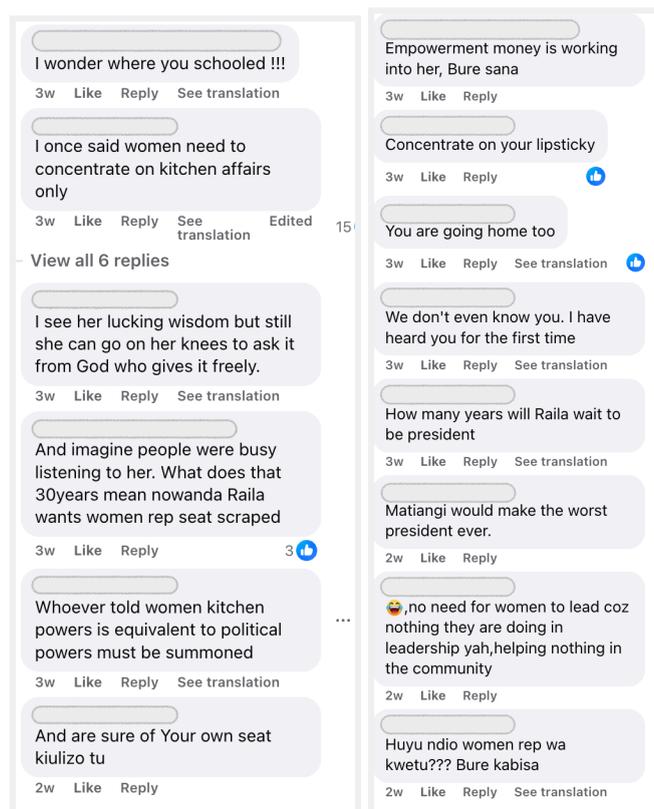
a. Gendered attacks against female politicians

i. Busia

On 30 August 2025, during a speech at a funeral, Busia woman representative [Catherine Omanyoo](#) said 2027 presidential aspirant [Fred Matiang’i](#) should wait for 30 years because president Ruto had just

begun his work and would need more time. In response, Matiang'i stated that the challenges facing Kenyans could not wait that long to be addressed.

Mentions of Omanyo 30 year remarks garnered about 13,665 views and 1,565 reactions on Facebook, while on X, there was [one](#) mention that drew 1,716 interactions. Approximately 75% of the comments were on Matiang'i's bid for the 2027 presidency. The remaining 25% criticised Omanyo, questioning whether she herself would secure another term and made derogatory sexist comments. Some users argued that women belong 'in the kitchen' rather than in leadership. One commenter wrote: 'And you, how old are you? You should be busy playing with your grandchildren now instead of starting a war with the next president of Kenya, the 6th. Wantam [one term] is real and will sweep even you.' Another comment stated: 'They say a woman looks beautiful when her mouth is shut.' The comments reflect the gendered backlash women in Kenyan politics often face, reducing their participation to domestic roles and undermining their legitimacy in public office.



Sample [comments](#) on Omanyo's remark on Matiang'i
(source: CfA using Facebook)

On 06 September 2025, Facebook group [@Bunge la Busia County](#) made a [post](#) rallying support for Evelyne Ikwi, a 2027 woman representative aspirant for Busia County. About 94% of the comments on the post were neutral, with some expressing support for Ikwi's candidacy while others pledged support for rival aspirants such as Omanyo and Florence Mutua. However, 6% of the comments were negative, containing derogatory remarks. One user claimed that Ikwi was 'not ugly enough to be a leader', implying that attractive women cannot lead or sustain political positions. Other comments noted that at least she is Luhya, subtly contrasting her with Mutua, who is Kamba. Others argued, however, that Ikwi could not speak Luhya, casting doubt on her ethnic authenticity and reinforcing tribal undertones in the conversation.



Sample [comments](#) about Ikwi's political aspirations
(source: CfA using Facebook)

CfA and Siasa Place will continue to monitor these conversations.

ii. Mombasa

On 31 August 2025, the Facebook account [@Hisia Kali Likoni](#) celebrated the political branding of Mwanahamisi Hamadi, a Swahili news anchor for Citizen TV, as she officially declared her bid for the Likoni parliamentary seat. The [post](#) read: 'Ni rasmi sasa Likoni ni Mwanamke Bomba 2027,' echoing Hamadi's campaign slogan, which translates to 'It is now official, Likoni has a Great Woman 2027.'

About 95% of the comments were neutral, with users expressing support for Hamadi as well as for other aspirants, including the current MP, Mishi Mboko. The remaining 5% were negative, containing sexualised and demeaning remarks. One user argued that Likoni had lacked capable leaders ever since voters began electing women politicians. Another questioned the use of the word 'bomba' which, while meaning 'great' in the slogan, can also mean 'pipe' in Swahili. In this context, the commenter twisted the slogan to carry a sexual insinuation, suggesting Hamadi might rely on sexual favours to secure the seat. These reactions reflect a [persistent pattern](#) of undermining women in politics, particularly in coastal Kenya, where strong religious and cultural norms often frame women's leadership as illegitimate or inappropriate.



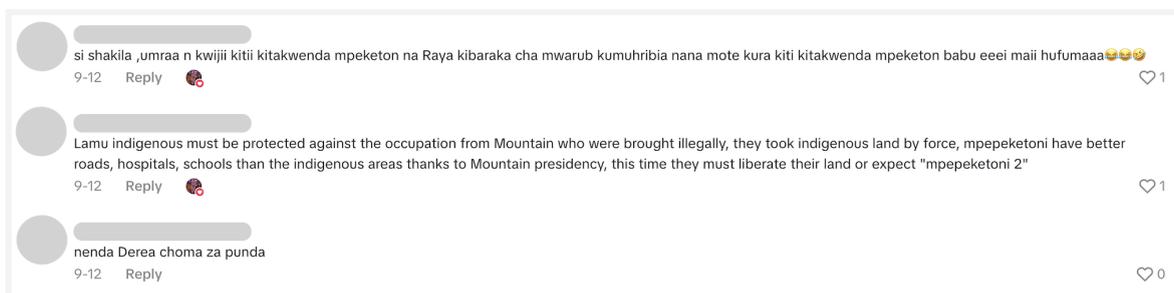
Sample [comments](#) on Hamadi's MP aspiration (source: CfA using Facebook)

CfA and Siasa Place will continue to monitor these developments.

b. Ethnic tensions flare in Lamu over leadership debate

On 10 September 2025, a video posted by the TikTok account [Kenyan Observer](#) showed elder Famau Raya [breaking down](#) in tears as he called for Lamu's leadership to remain with the Bajuni community. The clip garnered approximately 17,100 views and 452 interactions. The reaction thread devolved into ridicule of his age and credibility, with many dismissing him as too old for politics or mocking him for crying.

Others escalated the discussion into ethnic and religiously charged narratives, accusing the Bajuni of selfishness, portraying Kikuyu and Murima as outsiders, and invoking territorial grievances over land and development. Some comments suggested ethnic block voting and even warned of conflict if indigenous communities were not prioritised.





*Screenshots of TikTok comments under the Famau Raya video show ethnic incitement.
(Source: CfA using TikTok)*

4. Tactics and techniques: unveiling the actors' modus operandi.

This section outlines the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used by actors in the identified narratives. It focuses on strategically disseminating content and coordinating its online presence.

a. Leverage existing narratives

The DISARM framework defines [this tactic](#) as the use of pre-existing themes to shape how audiences interpret new information, ensuring disinformation aligns with their worldview to maximise believability and impact. In Kenya, longstanding narratives portraying Somalis as outsiders and security threats were exploited during the August to September 2025 discourse on the presence of Jubaland Forces in Mandera.

For instance, the 03 September [X post](#) highlighted Duale's failures, blending the corruption narrative with ethnic scapegoating. On 04 September 2025, a [quote post](#) responding to senator Roba's criticism of the Jubaland Forces called on Ruto and Tuya to defend Kenya, stating: 'I shudder in my shoes because as I have said many many times before, we are surrounded by Somalis!' implying that the Somali community itself posed a danger to other Kenyan communities.

Similarly, a [TikTok video](#) alleging Somali National Army activity in Mandera drew comments such as 'wachukue yote wasomali warudi kwao' ('they should take it all so that Somalis can go back to Somalia'), amplifying exclusionary narratives that Somalis do not belong in Kenya.

5. Conclusion:

The exploitation of Facebook, TikTok and X has amplified divisive narratives, from xenophobic attacks targeting Somalis amid the Jubaland Forces controversy to sexist assaults undermining female politicians like Omanyo and Hamadi. These incidents, coupled with ethnically charged debates in Lamu, reveal how information manipulators leverage existing societal tensions to polarise communities and erode information integrity.

Employing tactics such as exploiting pre-existing narratives exacerbates local grievances, posing significant risks to public discourse and social cohesion. Ongoing monitoring by Code for Africa and its partners remains critical to countering these threats and fostering a more resilient digital information ecosystem in Kenya.

*This report was written by Code for Africa (CfA) iLAB investigative data analysts **Nirali Patel, Dorcas Solonka, Moffin Njoroge, Agape Karashi, and Ivy Masese**. The report was reviewed by iLAB investigations manager **Jacktone Momanyi**, and edited by iLAB chief copy editor **Leizl Eykelhof**. The research was overseen by CfA iLAB editor **Athandiwe Saba** and commissioned by CfA editor-in-chief **Justin Arenstein**.*

Do you know of incidents of suspected information manipulation, coordinated influence operations or other forms of disinformation or weaponised toxic content that you think we should investigate? Share your leads with us, securely, on ilab@codeforafrica.org.



*This report contributes to a growing knowledge base that documents African-focused information manipulation, influence operations, and weaponised disinformation. The knowledge base is curated by the **African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO)**. The research in this specific report was produced by analysts attached to ADDO member Code for Africa (CfA), including CfA's **CivicSignal** media monitoring lab, its **iLAB** forensic investigation unit, and its **PesaCheck** fact-checking team.*

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