Countering Anti-Gender Narratives in Kenya's Digital Spaces

A practical tool for designing ethical and culturally grounded counter-narratives.

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RIGHT HERE RIGHT NOW

MEZA YETU

This document is a strategic toolkit designed to strengthen the capacity of practitioners interested to navigate Kenya's rapidly shifting gender discourse and facilitate the design of effective counter-narratives that challenge existing dominant narratives which are harmful to marginalised groups. It has been created following RNW Media's and Meza Yetu's Exploratory Research of Anti-Gender Narratives in Kenya's Digital Media Spaces.

The toolkit provides a structured design framework for crafting counter-narratives that are grounded in evidence, culturally fluent, and emotionally aware. Recognising the complexity of the digital landscape, it guides users in developing interventions that are ethically responsible, structurally anticipatory, and sensitive to platform dynamics, audience segmentation, and narrative fatigue. The design framework, template and included case studies presented have been designed to guide advocates to build long-term narrative infrastructure that protects the dignity of feminist and queer movements in Kenya.

To read the research report that led to this work, please visit www.rnw.media

*While developed for the Kenyan context, the principles within this toolkit can also be applied to other narrative shift work; however, context must be heavily applied to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

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Introduction

The design framework, template and accompanying guide aim to strengthen the capacity of practitioners, civil society organisations, and community-led movements to design effective, ethical, and context-aware counter-narratives within Kenya's rapidly shifting landscape of gender discourse. Kenya's digital ecosystem is saturated with coordinated moral panic, transnationally informed rhetoric, and emotionally engineered content. These dynamics create conditions in which rights-based messages struggle to gain traction. Practitioners require tools that are empirically grounded, culturally resonant, and strategically attuned to the environments in which they work.

This guide builds on **RNW Media's and Meza Yetu's exploratory research on anti-gender narratives in Kenya,** which analyses digital coordination patterns, rhetorical framings, emotional triggers, and amplification ecosystems across platforms such as Telegram, X, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Google Search. The findings confirm that anti-gender narratives operate as a form of power infrastructure: they are timed, strategically recalibrated, emotionally saturated, and shaped by both local actors and transnational ideological imports.

Drawing on this research, the templates adapt and extend established international frameworks from organisations such as *Transgender Europe (TGEU), ILGA-Europe, and the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR),* alongside counter-messaging and narrative power-building approaches developed within feminist, queer, SRHR, and digital rights movements across East Africa. These global resources offer valuable methodologies, but require contextual translation to fit Kenya's cultural, political, and digital terrain. This guide provides that translation.

The design framework and template outlines how to craft a counter-narrative that is; grounded in evidence rather than reaction, culturally fluent and locally resonant, emotionally aware and ethically responsible, structurally anticipatory rather than purely responsive, sensitive to platform dynamics, audience segmentation, and narrative fatigue. We also include an accompanying "How to Use" module.

The template and module serve as a resource for practitioners and frontline workers navigating complex digital harms and seeking accessible, actionable tools rooted in Kenya's lived realities. They support practitioners not only in countering harmful narratives, but in building the long-term narrative infrastructure required for feminist and queer movements to thrive despite backlash.

What Counter-Narratives Are and What They Are Not

Counter-narratives has become a catch-all term for many different kinds of communication interventions. Globally, the term covers work led by grassroots collectives, youth movements, community organisers, feminist networks, digital rights advocates, NGOs, and government communication units. These initiatives range from large-scale public campaigns to small, communitybased interventions shared within encrypted WhatsApp groups. Some focus on building alternatives and positive messaging, others on dismantling harmful framings. Their diversity reflects the environments in which they operate.

Counter-narratives are not a single method, slogan, or campaign. They are a strategic communication intervention designed to disrupt harmful narratives that shape public attitudes, institutional behaviour, and policy outcomes. In the Kenyan context, they respond to a narrative environment characterised by moral panic, misinformation, semantic distortion, transnational ideological imports, and coordinated digital amplification.

Across global practice, counter-narratives take many forms. They range from government-led public information campaigns, to community-based storytelling, to grassroots feminist responses on TikTok, to coalition-led coordination during surge events. Some are highly visible and public-facing; others operate within encrypted channels or community dialogues. Their diversity reflects the environments in which they emerge and the audiences they seek to influence.

Within this project, counter-narratives are grounded in three principles:

They are rooted in evidence.

↘ A counter-narrative does not react impulsively to harmful content. It is based on empirical research, an understanding of the narrative ecosystem, and a clear sense of what is at stake.

They are culturally fluent.

↘ A counter-narrative must resonate with the emotional, linguistic, and social realities of Kenyan audiences. It cannot rely on abstract global framings or rights language that fails to land in everyday life.

They strengthen agency rather than simply correcting misinformation.

↘ A counter-narrative is not a fact sheet. It is an intervention that restores dignity, context, and emotional clarity to conversations distorted by moral panic.

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What Counter-Narratives Are

Counter-narratives are strategic communication tools that challenge or deconstruct harmful narratives and replace them with grounded, culturally resonant, dignity-affirming alternatives.

Within Kenya's gender and SRHR landscape, counter-narratives matter because backlash is systematic, adaptive, and emotionally engineered.

Counter-narratives intervene in that system by shifting meaning and restoring context to reduce harm.

What Counter-Narratives Are Not

Counter-narratives are not rebuttals or corrective fact sheets. They do not repeat harmful claims in order to refute them, and they do not centre the language, emotion, or logic of anti-gender actors.

They are not reactionary statements issued in moments of panic, nor are they attempts to persuade individuals committed to spreading disinformation.

Counter-narratives do not rely on abstract rights language that fails to resonate emotionally, nor do they attempt to resolve structural failures through messaging alone.

They are not quick fixes, viral slogans, or one-off posts. They resist the temptation to mirror the adversarial tone of backlash, and they avoid amplifying toxicity by engaging on terms set by opponents.

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Ethical Considerations

Ethical practice is the backbone of counternarrative work. In Kenya's gender and SRHR ecosystem, backlash is emotionally engineered, digitally coordinated, and often targeted at marginalised people. Every counter-narrative must therefore prioritise safety, agency, and care.

↘ Do no harm

Avoid repeating harmful claims or exposing identifiable individuals to risk. Prioritise messaging that reduces fear, stigma, and digital vulnerability.

↘ Consent and Agency

Use lived experience only with informed, ongoing consent. Ensure storytellers maintain full control over what they share and how it circulates.

↘ Emotional Safety

Craft messages that lower panic rather than escalate it. Avoid tones that shame, mock, or provoke defensiveness in communities.

↘ Digital Security

Use secure tools, protect personal data, and minimise identifiable traces in public-facing content. Consider anonymous or composite storytelling where safety is a concern.

↘ Cultural and Religious Sensitivity

Respect Kenya's cultural and faith diversity while upholding dignity and equality. Use shared values such as care, fairness, and community responsibility.

↘ Avoid Amplification of Harmful Frames

Do not repeat or centre toxic slogans, even when debunking them. Lead with alternative meaning instead of reacting to harmful narratives.

↘ Care for Practitioners

Acknowledge the emotional toll of narrative work and build in rest, debriefs, and support. Protect staff and volunteers during surge events and online escalation.

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Counter-Narrative Design Framework & Template

This framework and template draws on a hybrid methodology that integrates global best practices with our Kenya-specific research. To design a template that is both rigorous and contextually grounded, we adapted the structural elements of established counter-narrative frameworks, including Hedayah's "How-To Guides," which outline a nine-step process for developing strategic communication interventions.

While some of these guides were originally created to counter violent extremism, their underlying principles- audience clarity, message construction, emotional analysis, dissemination strategy, and impact assessment- translate effectively into gender-narrative work when revised through a feminist and SRHR lens.

Our methodology, therefore, uses the structure of global counter-narrative design while rejecting the securitised framing. We reinterpreted each step in light of our research on anti-gender narratives in Kenya, including surge logics, emotional payloads, amplification ecosystems, rhetorical engineering, and the lived experiences of feminist and queer communities. The resulting templates reflect this synthesis: they retain the strategic discipline of global models while being fully rooted in Kenya's narrative landscape, digital ecosystem, and cultural realities.

1 Understand and assess the relevant push and pull factors

2 Identify the target audience

3 Identify the explicit or implicit harmful narrative

4 Set clear goal and objective of the counter-narrative

5 Determine an effective messenger

6 Develop the content and logic to the message

7 Identify the medium(s) where the message will be disseminated

8 Develop a strategy for dissemination

9 Evaluate and assess the impact of the counter-narrative

Allchorn, W. (2020). Building a Successful Radical Right Counter-Narrative Campaign: A How-To Guide. Hedayah Center.
www.hedayah.com/resource/2020dec16_carr_howtoguide_final_double-spread/

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This framework translates global counter-narrative architecture into Kenya's gender and SRHR context. It maintains the strategic clarity of the nine-step CVE model while grounding every phase in the realities revealed through our research: surge rhythms, emotional engineering, religious framing, digital amplification ecosystems, institutional hesitation, and transnational ideological imports.

Each step is designed to help practitioners build counter-narratives that are ethical, culturally fluent, and resilient across platforms.

The underlying logic of the push–pull–enabler framework lies in understanding what drives people toward harmful narratives and what draws them deeper into them, which is highly relevant to gender backlash ecosystems. We do not use the extremism framing or its assumptions. Instead, we adapt the analytical structure to make visible the emotional, cultural, institutional, and digital dynamics that our research identifies in Kenya.

In our context, push factors capture the pressures, fears, and insecurities that make audiences susceptible to anti-gender narratives. Pull factors explain what makes these narratives attractive, comforting, or emotionally satisfying. Enablers describe the digital, political, and institutional conditions that accelerate these narratives and give them reach, legitimacy, or authority. This reframing allows us to identify the vulnerabilities, emotional levers, and amplification systems that any counter-narrative in Kenya must anticipate and respond to.

Push factors/Structural motivators	Pull factors/Individual incentives	Enablers/Systems, Platforms and Actors
In our research, push factors are not drivers of radicalisation. They are the structural and emotional pressures that push communities toward believing or circulating anti-gender narratives. These include: **Economic anxiety, Cultural insecurity, Religious pressure, Social shame, Norms around sexuality, gender roles, and family expectations create deep-seated anxieties.** These pressures do not "radicalise" people; they make certain narratives feel emotionally protective or clarifying.	Pull Factors are the attractions, rewards, and emotional comfort. In our findings, pull factors explain why anti-gender narratives feel compelling or "make sense" to audiences. They include: **Moral certainty, Identity affirmation, Community belonging, Emotional simplicity, Moral panic offers simple explanations for complex issues, Symbolic power where anti-gender narratives allow people to feel informed, virtuous, or morally superior.** Pull factors explain why harmful narratives spread quickly even without factual accuracy. They offer emotional reward.	In **Kenya** these include: Telegram channels and WhatsApp groups where misinformation circulates unchecked. TikTok's algorithm, which prioritises short, emotionally charged content. **Political actors,** who use anti-gender rhetoric to distract from governance failures. **Religious leaders,** who frame gender issues as spiritual battles. **Media houses,** which platform sensational claims without accountability; **Transnational conservative networks,** whose materials are localised and repackaged as Kenyan culture.

Counter-Narrative Template

SECTION A: IDENTIFYING THE NARRATIVE

Write a concise summary of the anti-gender narrative you want to counter. Do not repeat the harmful slogan or message verbatim. Capture only: a) its core claim b) its implied threat c) the emotion it activates and d) the group it targets.

Example format: "This narrative claims that… which creates fear/shame/confusion by implying that… and targets…"

DRIVERS OF THE NARRATIVE (PUSH–PULL–ENABLERS)

Use this section to understand why the narrative resonates and how it spreads. List the relevant ones for your specific narrative.

Push Factors (pressures/vulnerabilities):	Pull Factors (attractions/comforts):	Enablers (amplifiers):
• economic stress • cultural insecurity • religious pressure • information gaps • social shame • institutional silence	• moral certainty • belonging • identity affirmation • emotional simplicity • protection narratives	• WhatsApp prayer chains • TikTok algorithms • political speeches • religious broadcasts • media sensationalism • transnational conservative networks

SECTION B: AUDIENCE MAPPING

Define the specific audience this counter-narrative is meant for.

Primary Audience: Who is most affected, confused, or vulnerable?	Secondary Audience: Who else influences this group? Parents, youth, teachers, church leaders, journalists?	Audience Emotions: What feelings shape their engagement? Fear, shame, outrage, confusion, pride, fatigue?	Audience Values: What cultural, religious, or social values matter to them?

What change do you want to see in this audience?
Shift could be; shame → dignity or outrage → curiosity. Write one clear transformation

SECTION C: MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Craft your message using this 4-part structure:
1. Anchor your message with truth: What is the grounded, factual, lived reality you want to centre?
2. Tie it back to the culture: What Kenyan idiom, shared value, or familiar narrative makes this message feel recognisable?
3. What emotion counteracts the fear/shame/moral panic being exploited? (Examples: reassurance, dignity, safety, calm, solidarity)
4. What does this message help the audience understand or feel able to do?

Next, choose a credible, safe, culturally resonant messenger for this audience: possible messengers could be teachers, CHV, caregivers.

SECTION D: FORMATS AND DISSEMINATION

↘ **Choose the most effective and safe platforms.**
Does your community prefer: Digital platforms, Community radio/TV, or offline dialogues?

Choose formats that align with audience habits and risk levels.

↘ **Pre-Test for Safety and Resonance**

Run a mini-test with 3–8 people from the target audience.

• emotional reaction
• tone (not defensive or shaming)
• clarity and culural fit risk of backlash
• risk of misinterpretation
• safety for the messenger

SECTION E: IMPLEMENTATION AND LEARNING

Dissemination Strategy- Define how and when the message will be released. Include:

• timing (avoid peak moral panic moments if unsafe)
• sequence (solo message or mini-campaign?)
• partners (youth groups, SRHR orgs, radio stations)
• safety precautions (moderation, content warnings, privacy)

Monitoring and Adaptation-Track the effect across 1–8 weeks. Based on findings, revise the message or format. Examples of what you can monitor:

• emotional temperature (has panic reduced?)
• tone of replies
• platform behaviour
• misinformation surges
• audience engagement
• unintended consequences
• internal team wellbeing

How to use this template

1 Start with one narrative at a time

Focus on a single harmful narrative to avoid confusion and dilution. Countering multiple narratives at once weakens clarity, emotional impact, and safety.

2 Work through the steps sequentially

Each step builds the strategic logic of the counter-narrative and ensures ethical grounding. Skipping steps increases the risk of creating messages that misfire or unintentionally amplify harm.

3 Co-Create with communities

Use the template collaboratively with youth, feminist groups, CHVs, artists, and organisers to ensure cultural resonance. Lived experience strengthens accuracy, emotional tone, and safety.

4 Document each step

Record key decisions as you work through the template to support transparency and team alignment. Documentation also helps refine future responses as narratives shift.

5 Adapt for surge moments

During periods of moral panic, use a shortened process that focuses on clarity, grounding, and safety. Prioritise one message, test it quickly, and release it through the safest channels.

6 Revisit and evolve the message

Narrative environments change rapidly, so review the message regularly to assess tone, reach, and unintended effects. Adjust the counter-narrative as audience sentiment and digital conditions evolve.

This template was tested and refined through a facilitated co-creation workshop with practitioners. Participants applied the template to anti-gender narratives identified in the research, thereby stress-testing the framework against lived experience, emotional realities, and safety considerations. Insights from this process informed the case studies that follow.

Counter-Narrative Case Study 1

COUNTER-NARRATIVE 1: "CSE WILL CORRUPT OUR CHILDREN AND CULTURE"

This narrative claims that CSE sexualises children and erodes Kenyan culture, creating fear by implying that parents are losing control and that schools are being infiltrated by foreign agendas. It targets parents, teachers, and faith communities. The narrative relies less on factual claims and more on moral panic, particularly around childhood innocence and cultural loss.

DRIVERS OF THE NARRATIVE (PUSH–PULL–ENABLERS)

Push Factors (pressures/vulnerabilities):
- Anxiety about rapid social change and perceived erosion of cultural norms
- Limited access to clear, age-appropriate information about CSE content
- Low trust in state institutions and education systems
- Fear that parents are losing control over children's moral formation

Pull Factors (attractions/comforts):
- Moral certainty and a sense of protection
- Belonging to faith-based or parentled communities
- Validation of identity as a "good parent" or cultural guardian

Enablers (amplifiers):
- Parent and church WhatsApp groups
- Sensational media framing
- Faith leaders and political actors linking CSE to broader culture-war narratives
- Misinformation cycles that reward outrage and urgency

SECTION B: AUDIENCE MAPPING

Primary Audience:
Parents and care givers particularly those engaged in faith communities and school governance spaces, who are exposed to high volumes of moralised messaging about children and education.

Secondary Audience:
Teachers, CHVs, faith leaders who are influenced by parental pressure and who often act as informal validators of narratives

Audience Emotions:
Fear, anxiety, protectiveness, moral alarm, and suspicion of external influence.

Audience Values:
Child safety, parental responsibility, cultural continuity, faith, and community cohesion.

What change do you want to see in this audience?
Fear driven moral panic → grounded understanding that CSE is manadated to provide children's well being and supports families.

SECTION C: MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Craft your message using this 4-part structure:
1. Kenyan children face real risks, and CSE gives them knowledge to stay safe.
2. CSE in Kenya is age-appropriate, culturally contextualised, and focused on health, safety, and dignity.
3. CSE supports, not replaces, parental guidance.
4. CSE helps families talk openly and reduces vulnerability to harm.

Next, choose a credible, safe, culturally resonant messenger for this audience:
Parents, community health volunteers, and educators who are already trusted within local school or faith-adjacent spaces.

SECTION D: FORMATS AND DISSEMINATION

↘ **Choose the most effective and safe platforms.**
Does your community prefer: Digital platforms, Community radio/TV, or offline dialogues?

Community dialogues, radio discussions, and short explanatory messages circulated through parent WhatsApp groups.

↘ **Pre-Test for Safety and Resonance**
Run a mini-test with 3–8 people from the target audience.

- Avoid repeating explicit myths or sensational claims, even to debunk them.
- Avoid technical or rights-heavy language that alienates parents.
- Prioritise reassurance and relational tone over correction or confrontation.

SECTION E: IMPLEMENTATION AND LEARNING

Dissemination Strategy- Define how and when the message will be released.

Prioritise slow, relational dissemination through trusted community channels rather than mass campaigns.

Introduce messages through existing conversations where concerns already circulate, rather than launching parallel messaging spaces.

Monitoring and Adaptation-Track the effect across 1-8 weeks. Based on findings, revise the message or format. Examples of what you can monitor:

Track shifts in tone within parent and community groups, noting reductions in alarmist language and increased requests for clarification.
Adjust messaging if misinformation mutates or if new moral panic frames emerge.

Counter-Narrative Case Study 2

COUNTER-NARRATIVE 2: "LGBTQ+ RIGHTS ARE A WESTERN THREAT TO OUR CULTURE"

This narrative claims LGBTQ+ identities LGBTQ+ identities and rights are framed as foreign imports that undermine African culture, religion, and the family. The narrative depicts queer inclusion as moral decay, often linked to fears of recruitment, social contagion, or cultural betrayal, and positions resistance as a defence of Kenyan identity. It targets youth, parents, and religious audiences.

DRIVERS OF THE NARRATIVE (PUSH–PULL–ENABLERS)

Push Factors (pressures/vulnerabilities):
- Strong religious and moral frameworks that emphasise fixed norms around sexuality and gender
- Colonial legacies that associate "Africanness" with rigid moral boundaries
- Limited public discussion of African histories of gender and sexual diversity
- High social costs associated with nonconformity and exclusion from community life

Pull Factors (attractions/comforts):
- Moral certainty and clarity in apolarised environment
- Belonging within faith-based or culturally conservative communities
- Validation as a defender of tradition, faith, and national identity

Enablers (amplifiers):
- Social media outrage cycles and imported culture-war narratives
- Selective religious messaging circulated through sermons and WhatsApp groups
- Influencers and political actors framing LGBTQ+ issues as donor-driven agendas
- Algorithmic amplification of sensational and polarising content

SECTION B: AUDIENCE MAPPING

Primary Audience:
Faith-aligned community members and socially conservative audiences who encounter LGBTQ+ issues primarily through moralised or sensational framing.

Secondary Audience:
Community leaders, educators, and local opinion shapers who may not actively oppose LGBTQ+ rights but feel pressure to conform to dominant moral narratives.

Audience Emotions:
Fear of moral decay, anxiety about social change, confusion, and concern about cultural loss.

Audience Values:
Faith, community cohesion, respectability, moral order, and social belonging.

What change do you want to see in this audience?
From foreign threat and moral & cultural panic → recognition of shared humanity, dignity, and coexistence within Kenyan communities.

SECTION C: MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Craft your message using this 4-part structure:
1. Gender diverse people have always existed within our communities in Kenya and Africa.
2. African cultures have long traditions of coexistence and shared humanity.
3. Inclusion does not weaken families; violence does.
4. Respecting diversity strengthens community safety.

Next, choose a credible, safe, culturally resonant messenger for this audience:
A faith-grounded figure who speaks about compassion and dignity, such as a youth fellowship leader, choir member, or CHV who is known in the church BUT is not a formal clergy person.

SECTION D: FORMATS AND DISSEMINATION

↘ **Choose the most effective and safe platforms.**
Does your community prefer: Digital platforms, Community radio/TV, or offline dialogues?

Moderated community dialogues, opinion pieces, and reflective storytelling formats, carefully curated short-form videos or audio stories with anonymity protections.

↘ **Pre-Test for Safety and Resonance**
Run a mini-test with 3–8 people from the target audience.

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SECTION E: IMPLEMENTATION AND LEARNING

Dissemination Strategy- Define how and when the message will be released.

Use low-temperature, values-based dissemination that integrates messages into broader conversations about dignity, community, and care, rather than positioning them as direct rebuttals to anti-LGBTQ+ claims. Avoid moments of heightened moral panic.

Monitoring and Adaptation-Track the effect across 1–8 weeks. Based on findings, revise the message or format. Examples of what you can monitor:

Monitor shifts in tone within community discussions, noting reductions in dehumanising language and increased openness to coexistence narratives.
Adjust messaging if donor-delegitimisation or recruitment-based claims intensify.

Counter-Narrative Case Study 3

COUNTER-NARRATIVE 3: "GENDER EQUALITY IS UN-AFRICAN AND DESTROYS FAMILY VALUES"

Gender equality and feminist advocacy are framed as foreign impositions that undermine African culture, disrupt family structures, and weaken social order. The narrative positions women's empowerment as incompatible with tradition and portrays shifts in gender roles as a threat to stability, morality, and national identity. It targets families, policy-shy institutions, and older generations.

DRIVERS OF THE NARRATIVE (PUSH–PULL–ENABLERS)

Push Factors (pressures/vulnerabilities):
- Economic insecurity and limited social mobility that heighten anxiety about change
- Nostalgia for the perceived past social order and clearly defined roles
- Low trust in political institutions and externally funded civil society
- Rapid social and generational change without corresponding economic security

Pull Factors (attractions/comforts):
- Sense of order, certainty, and predictability
- Validation of traditional authority and hierarchy
- Moral clarity in moments of social uncertainty
- Belonging within communities that frame resistance as cultural defence

Enablers (amplifiers):
- Political rhetoric invoking culture, tradition, and nationalism
- Donor-delegitimisation narratives portraying gender work as foreign-driven
- Media framing that equates feminism with family breakdown
- Community-level gossip networks and WhatsApp groups that reinforce suspicion

SECTION B: AUDIENCE MAPPING

Primary Audience:
Community leaders, elders, parents, and locally influential figures who shape norms around family, culture, and gender roles.

Secondary Audience:
Local politicians, religious leaders, and media commentators who amplify or legitimise narratives about culture and social order.

Audience Emotions:
Anxiety, fear of disorder, resentment toward perceived external interference, and concern about loss of authority or relevance.

Audience Values:
Family cohesion, social stability, respect for elders, cultural continuity, and collective wellbeing.

What change do you want to see in this audience?
From gender equality as cultural disruption → gender equality as a source of stability, fairness, and shared responsibility within families and communities.

SECTION C: MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Craft your message using this 4-part structure:
1. Gender equality strengthens Kenyan families and communities by promoting fairness, shared responsibility, and economic resilience.
2. Kenyan history includes strong women leaders in trade, community life, and governance.
3. Equality is about balance, not erasure.
4. When women and men contribute with dignity, families become more stable, not weaker.

Next, choose a credible, safe, culturally resonant messenger for this audience:
Respected elders, women community leaders, and locally trusted figures with lived experience of shared responsibility within families.

SECTION D: FORMATS AND DISSEMINATION

↘ **Choose the most effective and safe platforms.**
Does your community prefer: Digital platforms, Community radio/TV, or offline dialogues?

Community dialogues and barazas, local radio discussions and call-in shows, story-based messaging grounded in everyday family experiences.

↘ **Pre-Test for Safety and Resonance**
Run a mini-test with 3–8 people from the target audience.

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SECTION E: IMPLEMENTATION AND LEARNING

Dissemination Strategy- Define how and when the message will be released.

Introduce counter-narratives through existing community conversations about family wellbeing and economic survival, rather than through explicit feminist branding.

Prioritise gradual, relational engagement over campaignstyle dissemination.

Monitoring and Adaptation-Track the effect across 1–8 weeks. Based on findings, revise the message or format. Examples of what you can monitor:

Begin with insights from pre-testing to refine tone and messenger choice before broader release. Monitor community discussions for shifts away from "order versus chaos" framing toward language emphasising fairness and shared contribution.

Adjust messaging if donor-delegitimisation claims intensify.

Counter-Narrative Case Study 4

COUNTER-NARRATIVE 4: "MEN AND BOYS ARE UNDER ATTACK BY FEMINISM"

This narrative claims feminism gender equality initiatives are framed as having gone "too far," harms men and boys by over-empowering girls, leaving men and boys marginalised, silenced, or deprived of opportunity. The narrative positions women's empowerment as a zero-sum gain and casts men as the new victims of social and economic change. It targets men, boys, religious groups, and policymakers.

DRIVERS OF THE NARRATIVE (PUSH–PULL–ENABLERS)

Push Factors (pressures/vulnerabilities):
- High unemployment and economic precarity among young men
- Blocked social mobility and unmet expectations of provider roles
- Erosion of traditional status markers without viable alternatives
- Limited public discourse addressing men's emotional and economic vulnerability

Pull Factors (attractions/comforts):
- Recognition of grievance and validation of frustration
- Sense of belonging within masculinist or grievance-based communities
- Clear attribution of blame for complex structural problems
- Restoration of perceived dignity through oppositional identity

Enablers (amplifiers):
- Online masculine influencers and alpha traditional podcasters
- Algorithmic amplification of resentment and polarisation
- Media narratives framing gender equality as competition
- Peer-to-peer reinforcement through social media and informal networks

SECTION B: AUDIENCE MAPPING

Primary Audience:
Young men facing economic insecurity, limited employment prospects, and social pressure to perform traditional masculinity.

Secondary Audience:
Peer networks, youth leaders, media commentators, and community figures who shape norms around masculinity and success.

Audience Emotions:
Frustration, shame, resentment, loss of purpose, and anxiety about relevance and future prospects.

Audience Values:
Dignity, respect, economic security, belonging, and recognition of effort and contribution.

What change do you want to see in this audience?
From resentment and zero-sum thinking → hope, shared responsibility, and expanded possibilities for dignity and contribution.

SECTION C: MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Craft your message using this 4-part structure:
1. Men face real economic and social pressure that gender equality did not create.
2. Kenyan communities value dignity through contribution, responsibility, and mutual support.
3. Empowerment expands opportunities; it does not erase them.
4. Supporting girls strengthens boys' futures, household stability, and community wellbeing.

Next, choose a credible, safe, culturally resonant messenger for this audience:
Peer mentors, youth leaders, and male allies with lived experience of navigating economic precarity and shared responsibility.

SECTION D: FORMATS AND DISSEMINATION

↘ **Choose the most effective and safe platforms.**
Does your community prefer: Digital platforms, Community radio/TV, or offline dialogues?

- Peer-led discussions and small group forums
- Podcasts and short-form video content
- Informal digital spaces where young men already exchange views

↘ **Pre-Test for Safety and Resonance**
Run a mini-test with 3–8 people from the target audience.

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SECTION E: IMPLEMENTATION AND LEARNING

Dissemination Strategy- Define how and when the message will be released.

Embed counter-narratives within broader conversations about work, purpose, and future aspirations rather than positioning them as explicit feminist responses.

Prioritise dialogue and storytelling over declarative messaging.

Monitoring and Adaptation-Track the effect across 1-8 weeks. Based on findings, revise the message or format. Examples of what you can monitor:

Begin with insights from pre-testing to refine tone and framing before wider release. Monitor whether language shifts from blame toward problem-solving and shared futures. Adjust messaging if resentment narratives intensify or migrate platforms.

Putting the Counter-Narrative into Practice
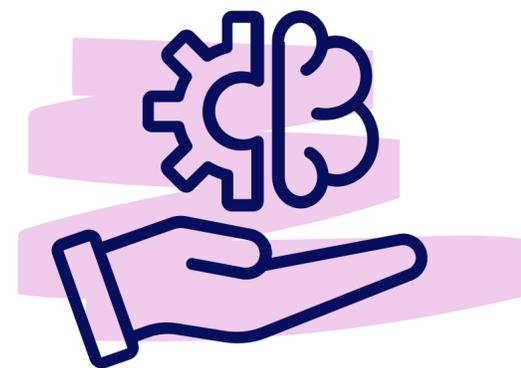
The strength of a counter-narrative lies in its message and in the communities that shape it. This template supports that work, as a living tool. Practitioners can return to it as narratives shift, communities offer new insights, and Kenya's digital environment evolves.

Its purpose is clarity, safety, and resonance. The work continues through practice, care, and collaboration.

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