

Research Findings on City/Street Crimes In Nairobi: Some Lessons for UN Volunteers

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The study on which this paper is based, focused mainly on crime and street families in the Eastlands area of Nairobi City, and in particular, the socio-demographic aspects relating to crime. Beyond personal characteristics, efforts were made to establish the residents' perception of crime, as well as causes of crime, characteristics of criminals, commonest victims of crime, tolerance and management of crime. Other key variables included the role and social credibility of those involved in controlling crime, and other socio-economic activities undertaken by people on the streets.

Research Findings on City/Street Crimes In Nairobi:

Some Lessons for UN Volunteers⁵

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Background

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Methodology

The Nairobi City Eastlands suburbs covered by the study included Majengo, Shauri

Moyo, Ofafa Jericho, Ofafa Maringo, Mbotela and Eastleigh. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling were used in sample selection. For data collection, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were utilized, incorporating primary and secondary data sources. 350 residents and 50 FGD(Focus Group Discussion) participants comprising police officers, provincial administrators, managers of rehabilitation centres for the destitutes, street children and street families were interviewed. The qualitative data was manually analysed, while SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Scientists) was used for the quantitative data.

Findings

The major study findings were as follows:

Crime

Crime Perception and Economic Status of the residents

The residents are well conversant with the legal definition of criminal behaviour and see crime as a major problem in their suburbs. The most common crimes in the area included:

- House break-ins, sometimes involving attacks on families. Some are forced break-ins and while others are by use of master keys to gain entry is quite common.
- Robberies, assault (particularly stabbing the victims with knives), theft from persons, petty crimes, mugging.
- Car-jacking, theft of motor vehicle parts and thefts of assorted items from parked motor vehicles.
- Drug use and peddling, bhang smoking.
- Rape and defilement.
- Theft by servant, commonly done by househelps.
- Brewing of illicit alcohol and drunkenness.
- Other crimes include prostitution and pick-pocketing
- Police harassment as a major concern among the residents.

Poverty was found to be widespread among the residents of Eastlands. Slightly over one-half (55.4%) of the sample earned less than Ksh. 5,000 per month, while less than one-third (29.3) earned between Ksh. 5,000 and Ksh. 10,000. Given that most of the respondents lived with their own families, a monthly income of less than Ksh. 5,000 implies livelihood situations below the poverty line. Poverty is a well-known cause of criminal behaviour, likely to be associated with the high and increasing rate of crime as well as the incidence of street families in Nairobi.

Causes of crime

- Crime was seen as a means to some end rather than an end in itself
- Poverty and its consequences were seen as the major causal factors, as seen through unemployment, idleness and peer influence/pressure
- Institutional and structural deformities:
- Poor institutional collaboration and laxity of institutional partnerships, hence conducive to repetitive criminal behaviour, as some of the perpetrators of crime begin to feel protected from some quarters.
- Politics also plays a role in exacerbating criminal tendencies among the youth. Participants argued that politicians (e.g. councillors) support criminal activities of certain jobless youth. The youth in question enjoy this kind of protection as

part of the politicians' security networks used to run various errands, often being used to harass political opponents.

- Crime has also been made difficult to deal with by the housing arrangements in the estates. Low housing rents attract criminals into the areas in question, where the city council houses and dwellings are affordable for the unemployed youth and their retired parents, among other low-income earners. The increasing practice of putting up extensions and other illegal rental structures has also tended to provide extra space for incoming residents, who are either unemployed or operate transient occupations, some of which include criminal activities for survival. The unplanned constructions also allow criminals to escape easily while being pursued by law enforcement agents.

- Ineffective criminal justice system results in some offenders being released under dubious circumstances, even after they have been convicted of an offence, without punishment. At times, police officers write to oppose release of some offenders on bail, but the law courts do not always respect this. Police officers get very discouraged when this happens. In a number of instances, the police come across and actually arrest some of the criminals, only later, to find that the same offenders are supposed to be in jail, are out without serving their jail terms. This puts at risk the lives of the police officers and other security agents concerned, as the more hardened and arrogant criminals, once out this way, tend to break the law with impunity, often threatening vengeful action against the police officers.

Crime Vulnerability

- Criminals include both resident and non-resident persons. Some of the resident criminals live with their close relatives, making it difficult to point them out without antagonizing the community members for revealing such identities.

- Night walkers, drivers, people working in night shifts and women in general were among the most vulnerable to crime.

- A new crime activity trend is emerging in whereby the criminals start their operations at 5.30 a.m. until 6.30 a.m. when (they believe) that the police officers on patrol are on their way back to their stations. The primary crime targets during these hours are mainly traders leaving home to open up their business premises in the early hours of the morning.

Crime trends and remedial action

- Criminal activities have increased with the deteriorating performance of the national economy, peaking from the 1990s and worst by the year 2000.

- There is good evidence of joint interest in combating crime through regular police patrols, supported by community based physical and information network support, e.g. through vigilante groups in neighbourhoods. But the vigilante groups are increasingly becoming unpopular themselves due to lack of transparency.

- People in general have little confidence in the effectiveness of the law enforcement efforts in controlling crime.

Security measures in managing crime

Two methods were currently found to be in use in fighting crime in Eastlands, viz: police and community-based methods. Police based methods included police patrols (which varied in intensity from time to time) and organized raids on criminal hideouts by police officers. The community-based measures entailed making private security

arrangements by residents. This method involves employment of watchmen by the residents jointly, use of vigilante groups, erection of fences and better lighting around the neighbourhoods, as well as reinforcing of house doors and gates.

In terms of effectiveness, the police-based measures in managing crime were rated as ineffective by 81% of the respondents, who said they had little or no confidence in the police in fighting crime. The reasons cited were:

- Police take bribes, thereby compromising their responsibilities.
- Police face many difficulties that reduce their efficiency in fighting crime.

The difficulties facing police in fighting crime have to do with:

- Inadequacies in areas of transport services and facilities, poor physical infrastructure, which is well known to all of us in Nairobi. Manpower numbers are also proportionately low, given population increases and the vastness of the areas of coverage for each police station.
- Criminals appear to have acquired more sophisticated tools and are becoming increasingly more elusive to deal with.
- City planning and congestion/overcrowding including illegal structures have provided a variety of additional hideouts for the criminals, making it also difficult for the police to effectively use their regular logistical operations under routine arrangements.
- Dwindling public trust and support, whereby, in some cases community members withhold crucial link information from police officers, was noted as a major bottleneck against police operations.
- Lack of commitment among police officers most of whom are poorly paid and thus demoralized by their terms of service.

The community policing strategy, through the use of vigilantes in fighting crime, is also not effective, mainly because it is poorly organized and replete with corruption and misuse by political and other elements of patronage in the neighbourhoods, hence in themselves seen as problematic. As such, they could threaten the very security of the residents that they are intended to safeguard.

Crime and Street Families

- Poverty was still seen as a major link to criminal behaviour and existence of street families, especially when linked to poor educational attainment, leading to low economic achievement.
 - Survival or livelihood activities for the street families include sale of waste paper, scrap metal and other materials to be recycled; begging; stealing; garbage scavenging and all types of casual labour for pittance.
 - Street families do not see themselves as a security threat, but everybody else sees them as both a threat to security and a health hazard.
- + Street children view many businessmen as their saviours and friends and the "Maasai" and other watchmen as their greatest enemies.
- For the bigger/adult street people, the police are seen as the greatest enemies, the main reason being that the bigger street people mature, later in life, into hardened criminals or engage in criminal activities, especially at night.
 - Not all street people engage in crime.

Suggested Rehabilitative Measures

- Poverty reduction takes priority as a common attraction towards rehabilitation

of street families.

- Other suggestions to alleviate the plight of the street families included promotion of educational services, peaceful co-existence among communities, general urban public, the law enforcement agencies on the one hand, and the street families on the other.

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- . Promotion of more centres to host the street children.
- Reducing the cost of education.
- Strengthening, refocusing and enforcement of government policy on the welfare . . . and rights of the children in general and street children in particular. '
- Making government institutions / probation institutions more conducive/attractive for effective handling of the needs of children.

Recommendations

The recommendations are categorized into short- and long-term:

Short-Term

Police-focused

(a) Improving the welfare of the police officers:

- Government to improve remuneration package for the police.
- Government to ensure formulation and implementation of a realistic insurance scheme for the police force.
- Government to recruit additional police officers to reduce work pressure on those currently in the police force.
- Improvement of the morale of police officers:
- Government to improve remuneration package.
- Government to ease the pressure of work facing police officers through additional recruitment.
- Government to ensure promotion on merit.
- Government and private to provide adequate equipment for use by police officers on duty. These include vehicles, money for fuel, computers, computer software, telephones, and fax machines.
- Government and private sector to facilitate training on use of modern electronic equipment for communication, data storage and analysis.
- Government to improve housing conditions for police officers.
- Private sector to complement government efforts in provision of quality housing for police officers.
- Improving the already dented image of the police force in the eyes of the public through training of the police officers in public relations.
- There is need to sensitize the media on the importance of highlighting the positive aspects of the police role in combating crime.
- Involve the media in sensitizing the general public on the importance and positive aspects of police role.

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(b) Adequate transport and communication facilities for police officers:

- Government to provide adequate vehicles to all police stations.
- Government to repair malfunctioning and stalled vehicles in various police stations.

- Government to make adequate budgetary allocation to cover fuel costs for all police stations.
- Private sector to complement government efforts in ensuring adequate provision of transportation and communication facilities:
 - Donate vehicles to police stations.
 - Donate communication equipment to police stations.
 - Donate fuel to police stations.
- (c) Government and private sector to jointly facilitate donor and other institutional support for the police force:
 - Donor support to improve housing.
 - Donor support to improve technology transfer to the police force.
 - Donor support to improve transport.
 - Donor support to facilitate training of police officers, the public and private sector.
- (d) Adherence to the established police professional and operational activity regulations:
 - General public, civil service and the private sector to minimize interference with operations of the police officers in execution of their official duties.
- (e) Minimize harassment of police officers:
 - Senior government officers to respect role of the police.
 - General public to change their negative attitudes towards the police and treat the police officers with respect.
 - Private sector to respect the role of the police.
 - All stakeholders (government, public, private sector, and donors) to forge partnerships in training and sensitization minimize public hostility against the police.
- (f) Improved administration of justice:
 - The law courts to be more transparent in the administration of justice.
 - Law courts and police force to improve exchange of information on offenders to speed up the administration of justice.
 - Government to enhance adherence to professional ethics for the judiciary and police force in handling crime.
 - The public and private sector to support the government in efforts to improve the administration of justice.

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- The media to support government efforts in enhancing transparency in the administration of justice.
- Civil society to be involved in community empowerment with regard to human rights e.g. through civic education on legal and other aspects of human rights, and also holding of consultative stakeholder workshops and educational seminars.

Community-focused

- (a) Community empowerment on their role regarding security enhancement within the neighbourhoods through:
 - Change of community attitudes:
 - (Communities and neighbourhoods to accept direct responsibility

in promotion of security within their estates.

- Community to understand and accept the fact that security matters are not an exclusive police domain.

- Community to trust and work with the police, Provincial Administration, and local authorities in security promotion within the estates.

(b) Promotion of community-based policing efforts through vigilante groups:

- Increased recognition and support of the vigilante groups dealing with security issues in the neighbourhood.

- Adoption of well-organized and systematic_ recruitment procedures in composition of the vigilante groups to ensure effective performance in crime management.

- Instill discipline and effective coordination of the vigilante activities so as to ensure trust among both vigilante members and the communities.

- Work out acceptable and realistic incentive structures including remuneration options for the members of the vigilante groups.

- For vigilantes to operate effectively, we recommend that:

- Neighbours in the estates should be acquainted with each other.

- Residents should change their attitudes and accept direct responsibility in promotion of security.

- The government and private sector to undertake educational and sensitization activities to promote the concept of community policing within the neighborhoods/residential estates.

- Government, through the provincial administration and local authorities, and private sector to jointly work with communities to ensure transparency in the recruitment of the youth as members of vigilante groups.

- Government and private sector to organize educational seminars on

65 management of vigilante groups to improve the management capacity of communities.

- Government to formalize the existing and emerging vigilante groups in the residential estates through their registration with the provincial administration, e.g. all vigilante groups to be registered with the chief's office and police stations in the neighborhood and their members to be issued with security identity cards for use while on duty.

- Provincial administration, police, and private Sector to organize educational visits/tours for communities to residential estates within Nairobi where vigilante groups are known to be operating successfully.

(c) Overall promotion of participatory crime prevention and management approaches through crime focused awareness creation meetings involving various stakeholders, e.g. local administration, police, community leadership and the private sector.

Rehabilitation-related

(a) Government, through the Children's Department, to improve tracer efforts to establish the family origins and backgrounds of street children. This will facilitate

understanding of the factors explaining the children's present circumstances/
being on the streets:

- Document the children's family profiles in terms of incomes, education, marital status and experiences, property ownership, ethnic origins, geographical mobility/migratory and employment status.
- Where possible, government and other stakeholders to join efforts in contacting and involving the parental or guardian families in the rehabilitation efforts.
- Government and other stakeholders to jointly formulate a realistic policy addressing the problem of street families.
- Government, private sector, and communities to establish an effective mechanism for monitoring and controlling the influx of children into the city streets.
- Government and private sector to undertake thorough documentation of the pull factors that attract the children into the city streets.
- Government and private sector to undertake a thorough documentation of the life styles of the street families. This will inform formulation of appropriate rehabilitation strategies.

(b) For those already on the streets, the following remedial actions are recommended:

- Government and private sector to support identify and support income generating opportunities for members of the street families:

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- The private sector to engage street family members in garbage collection activities.
- Government, private sector, and civil society to engage street family members in environmental conservation and pollution control activities within the city and its environs.
- Government and other stakeholders to undertake joint efforts to salvage school aged children through:
 - Taking them to school.
 - Taking them to rehabilitation centres for character reform and education.

(c) Education:

- Government to provide free and compulsory primary education.
- Review the existing school curriculum to make learning more attractive to the children.

(d) Improve the quality of care provided by the existing rehabilitation institutions:

- Government and private sector to facilitate sourcing of funds to support existing rehabilitation centres. Adequate availability should help to improve the overall quality of care provided by the rehabilitation centres.
- Government and private sector to establish working relationships with both government and non-government supported rehabilitation centres to improve the quality of care provided. Examples of non-government supported rehabilitation centres include Magodo Children's Home, Mary Immaculate Street Children's Rehabilitation Centre.

(e) Stakeholder collaboration efforts in the rehabilitation of street families should be strengthened through:

- Brainstorming workshops involving government officers, business community representatives, donor representatives, and community representatives.
- Formulation of action plans during the brainstorming workshops for participatory implementation by all the stakeholders.
- Establishing trust and cordial working relationships in joint ventures involving government, business communities, police force, donors, and communities.
- Government, private sector, civil society, and donors to facilitate fund raising to support efforts in the rehabilitation of street families.

Long-Term

(a) Enhanced poverty reduction efforts. This is important given that our secondary and primary data indicate that poverty is a major cause of crime and street family phenomena. Efforts towards poverty reduction should include:

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- Provision of a conducive business environment by the government.
- Good governance at all levels (involving government, private sector, and communities) to facilitate equitable distribution of resources.
- Formulation and implementation of appropriate policies to improve the performance of the economy through joint efforts by government, private sector, and donor community.
- Fundraising efforts by government, civil society, and private sector through consultative alliances with donor community.

(b) Increased employment opportunities especially for the youth and other vulnerable groups:

- Government to formulate policy that promotes creation and expansion of employment opportunities for the youth.
- Government, with input from the private sector, to undertake periodic reviews of the school curricula to make them responsive to employment needs of the youth.
- Government, private sector, and donor organizations to team up in creation of income-generating opportunities tailored to meeting economic and social needs of specific youth and other vulnerable categories of the population.

(c)

(d)

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Good governance:

- Creation of sustainable institutional capacities that ensure equitable distribution of resources through joint ventures involving Government, private sector, communities, donors, and civil society.
- Government, in conjunction with the private sector, civil society, and donors to institute and support creation effective mechanisms similar to KACA (Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority) to monitor and ensure compliance with the existing laws dealing with crime and insecurity.
- Promotion of community participation in crime prevention and security management efforts through awareness raising and sensitization campaigns undertaken jointly by law enforcement agents, civic authorities, private sector,

government, and the media. i

Effective collaboration on crime prevention and management through:

- Joint action by the government, private sector, and communities to formulate viable framework for effective implementation of community policing in Nairobi
- Creation of harmonious working relations involving the police, private sector, the media, and the wider public to improve the dented image attributed to police officers.
- Improving the working relations between all government institutions dealing with crime and law enforcement with a view to ensuring trust and accountability in the administration of justice.