

Crime and Violence Trends in Nairobi, Kenya

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Introduction:

This paper examines the phenomenon of youth crime in Nairobi especially in relation to youth gangs. The case pays special attention to the *Mungiki* movement and street families. It also examines some of the organized responses to crime of this nature.

As the administrative, political and commercial capital of Kenya, Nairobi is a significant trendsetter in the country. The city holds approximately 3 million residents, 10% of the Kenyan population. An additional 1.5 million persons from neighboring districts come to work in the city on a daily basis. In addition the industrial satellite towns; Mavoko, Thika, Ruiru, and Kikuyu depend on Nairobi's facilities such as water supply, schools and health facilities among other amenities for their survival. The city also provides services to a large population in the neighboring rural, peri-urban and urban areas of Kiambu, Kajiado, Machakos, and Thika districts.

The status of Nairobi as a national hub acts as a powerful magnet for people from rural areas in search of better opportunities, resulting in a great strain on the city's capacity to handle the influx. The growth of slums and mushrooming of unplanned and unauthorized settlements such as Kibera, Mathare and Mukuru kwa Njenga, within the city and its peripheries is a direct consequence of this migratory tide. Informal settlements are found in all the divisions of Nairobi. These settlements vary in size and density, are characterized by very poor environmental and health conditions, inadequate shelter, unemployment and insufficient services. Over 60% of the population of Nairobi resides in informal settlements.¹

The problem of crime in Nairobi is closely associated with but not limited to informal settlements due to various reasons such as:

- limited opportunities for gainful legal employment and consequently fertile grounds for the nurturing a sense of helplessness and hopelessness;
- often neighboring most affluent residential neighborhoods makes theft and robbery an attractive option for idle youths
- frequent eviction of the inhabitants from their residence pushing the poor into criminal activities;
- easy hideout for criminals as formal social control institutions are weak coupled with inadequate accessibility among others.

This is in line with the structural and organizational perspective that regards crime as a product of social change and its influence on behaviour in specific cultural, political, economic and social contexts. For example, forces existing in the deprived and demeaning conditions of living for the lower classes in society may push many of their

¹ APHRC, 2002.Nairobi

members into criminal behavior, resulting in increase in crime rates; *'Crime does not happen spontaneously. It grows out of an unequal and exclusive society and out of lack of institutional and social control'*².

The cultural perspective views delinquent behavior in groups among the lower classes as a protest against norms and values of the upper classes. Since lower class individuals are unable to achieve success legitimately they experience a cultural conflict, which is referred as status frustration, and often join in gangs and engage in behavior that is legally non-conformist. Therefore, crime has been viewed as sub-culture among certain groups that represent a value system directly opposed to that of the larger society.³

As with any other such urban area in the world, Nairobi has been a magnet for criminal opportunists who also seek to make their fortunes in the numerous opportunities provided in the city environment. Armed robbery, murder, mugging, carjacking, housebreaking, physical and sexual assault and other forms of serious crime are common. According to numerous surveys this is a constant cause of major concern for city residents. Other forms of offences include commercial and property crimes such as burglaries. Firearms trafficking, a consequence of civil wars in neighboring countries is a major contributor to delinquency and urban violence. The risks of a spiral of violence and insecurity leading to withdrawal of investment are especially evident in the Central Business District (CBD).

“These trends have posed enormous challenges to the City Council of Nairobi in terms of security concerns. This is manifested in gated neighborhoods, closure of the CBD District enterprises for window shoppers after office hours and installation of metal grilles, decayed and isolated street alleys and park spaces by evening, the avoidance of unlit areas of the street alleys and park spaces by evening, the avoidance of unlit areas of the city among others thereby leading to people’s self imposed curfew on a number of no go zones⁴”

According to Nairobi crime victimization survey and subsequent consultative process for the citywide Crime Prevention and Urban Safety initiative, the following were identified as the key priority community safety issues that need to be addressed in the city:

- Fear of crime;
- Personal crime;
- Property crime;
- Commercial crime;
- Violence against women;
- Youth crime (both victims and offenders)⁵.

² Stravou, UN-HABITAT United Nations human Settlements Programme, September 2002, Nairobi

³ KIPPRA, 2004 Nairobi

⁴ CCN Elijah Agevi, Advisor, Safer Nairobi Project (Nairobi Salama Newsletter-February 2006)

⁵ Stravou, UN-HABITAT, 2002) Nairobi

Why Nairobi is a Good Case Study on Crime

Development of Kenya is concentrated in specific pockets of the country mainly around major urban areas particularly in Nairobi.

As an important hub of local and international diplomacy and commerce, the city of Nairobi is an arrival point for many visitors. This makes issues of safety and security especially critical for its strategic positioning of great concern not just to residents of Kenya but also to the international community.

Nairobi is home to two specialised United Nations agencies: the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). The city also hosts a large number of multinational and trans-national corporations as well as several local and international agencies.

Nairobi as a strategic cog in Kenya's development, serves as the national economic and administrative headquarters generating a major proportion of the country's GDP. Nairobi's strategic location has made it an important regional hub for commercial, industrial, financial educational and communication being the largest centre in the Eastern African.

Foreign and local investment requires a safe environment. As shown by worldwide experience, investors are reluctant to assume risks where crime is prevalent and well-off citizens abandon areas that are perceived to be insecure and withdraw to safer locations. This has been the case in many American inner cities and in Johannesburg, South Africa. The real and perceived security threat in Nairobi is such that most residents live with a self-imposed curfew soon after nightfall.

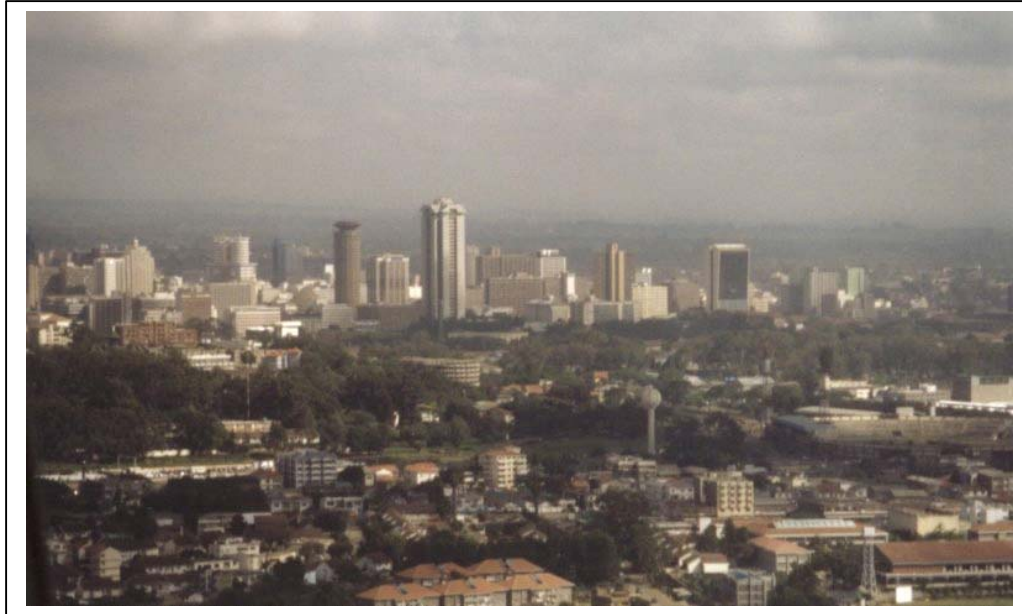
Nairobi is Eastern Africa's largest and in many respects most interesting city as it is still the safari capital of the Africa. The city boasts of internationally renowned tourist attractions; 17% of the city's total land area is covered by the Nairobi National Park a home to large herds of zebra, wildebeest, buffalo, giraffe, rhino, cheetah, and a large number of lions and other exotic animals all living wild within 20 minutes of the centre of town. There is also the National Museum of Kenya and Nairobi's Animal Orphanage. On various occasions there has been international alarm about Kenya being an unsafe tourist destination. An actual or perceived state of general insecurity could seriously undermine business in this lucrative sector.

Urban growth has been compounded by the associated increase in the demand for basic services, such as food, shelter, employment, water, transport, education, health and security. The deterioration of safety and security in Nairobi during the last decade has certainly caused a loss of investment confidence, a reduction in production and a re-allocation of investment.

Overall the city portrays rapid urbanization amidst deteriorating economic conditions and other related challenges. Some of the most noteworthy features of life in the city are insecurity and evident contrast in income and standards of living among city residents.

Background and Context

Figure 1: Nairobi Central Business District



Source: Nairobi Central Business District Association Library

Kenya lies across the equator on the East side of Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean for a distance of 608Kms. Kenya occupies an area of 583,646 sq kms, 5,334 sq kms of the area covers national parks and 11,230 sq kms is occupied by water.⁶ The country has 5 distinct geographical climatic regions varying from very fertile land to harsh arid areas namely: High Potential Zone, High and medium Potential zone, medium Potential Zone, Low Potential Zone and Semi Arid and Arid Zone.

The Kenyan population stands at over 30 million persons having risen from 11 million in 1969. Kenya has experienced rapid urbanization with the share of its urban population rising from 5.1 % in 1948, 7.8 % in 1962, 9.9 % in 1969,⁷ 15.1% in 1979, 18% in 1989 and 34.8% in 2000, a large proportion living in Nairobi.

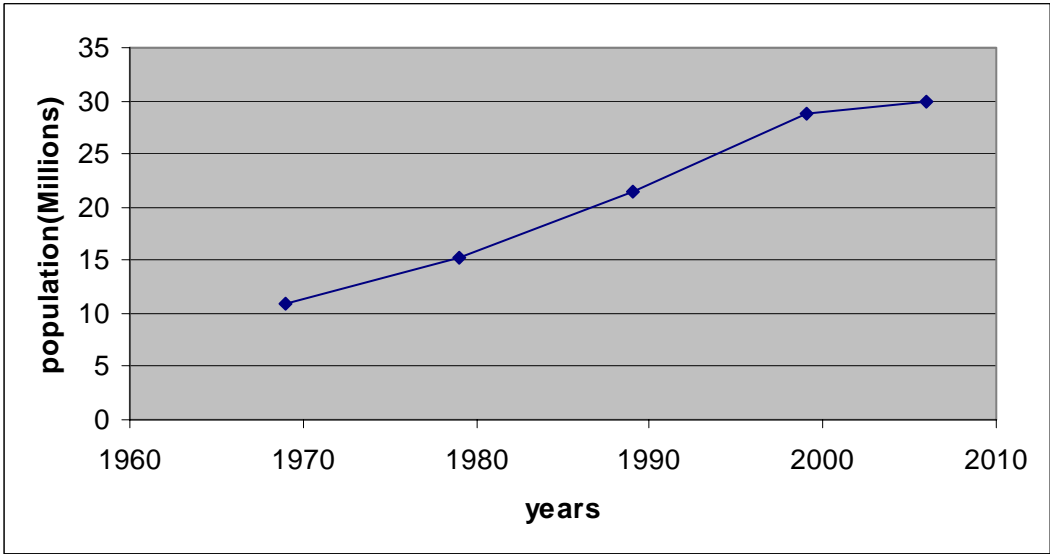
In 1948 Nairobi had less than 120,000 persons, in 1979 it had 827,775, and in 1989 1,345,700⁸ and currently it has a population of approximately 3 million persons, which comprises over 40% of the Kenyan urban population. Population projections trends indicate that the city will continue to grow at the same fast pace in the near future. Nairobi's growth rate of about 7% per annum is one of the fastest city growth rates in Africa. The rapid population growth has outstripped government and private sectors' capacity to meet the needs of the city residents, leading a large proportion of this urban population to live in slums and poverty stricken situations.

⁶ GOK: Central Bureau of Statistics 2005

⁷ World Bank 1999 CBS 1999

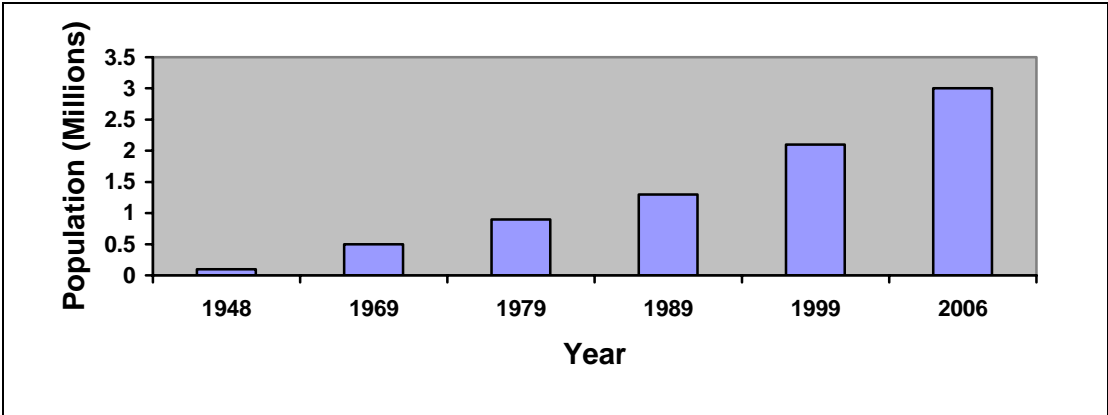
⁸ CBS, 2001

Figure 2: Trend of Kenya’s Enumerated Population (1969-1999)



Source: GOK Population Census

Figure 3: Trend of Nairobi’s Population (1948-2006)



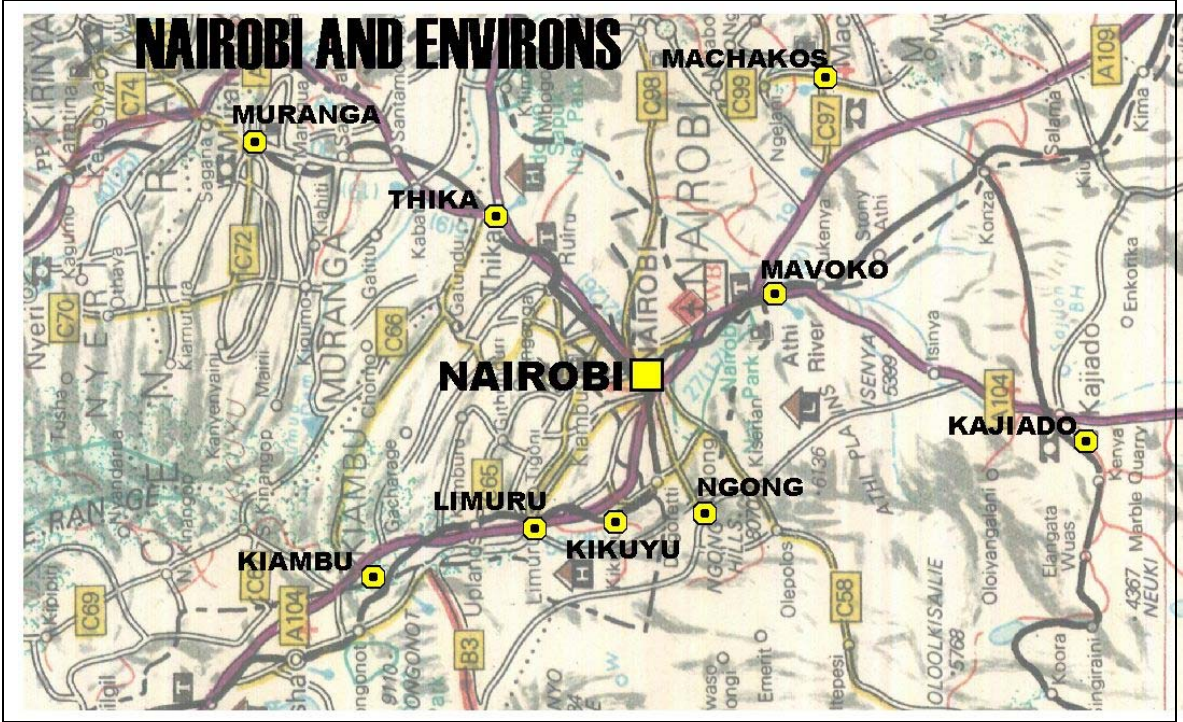
Source: GOK Population Census

The Urban Growth Context

Nairobi experienced rapid growth in its population because the initial pattern of urbanization encouraged over-concentration of the urban population in Nairobi and Mombasa (the 2nd largest city in Kenya). Since 1903, Nairobi Town, as it was then called, has risen from an uninhabited swampland to a thriving modern capital. Initially the centre was established in May 1899 as a railway depot to service the Kenya-Uganda Railway (KUR) from Mombasa enroute to present day Kisumu. When railway construction workers reached this area in 1899, they set up a basic camp and supply

depot, simply called 'Mile 327': 327 miles being the distance from the start of the railway line in Mombasa to the depot. The locals called this highland swamp Ewaso Nai'beri that in Maasai language translates to 'the place of cold water'.

Map 1: The City of Nairobi and its Environs

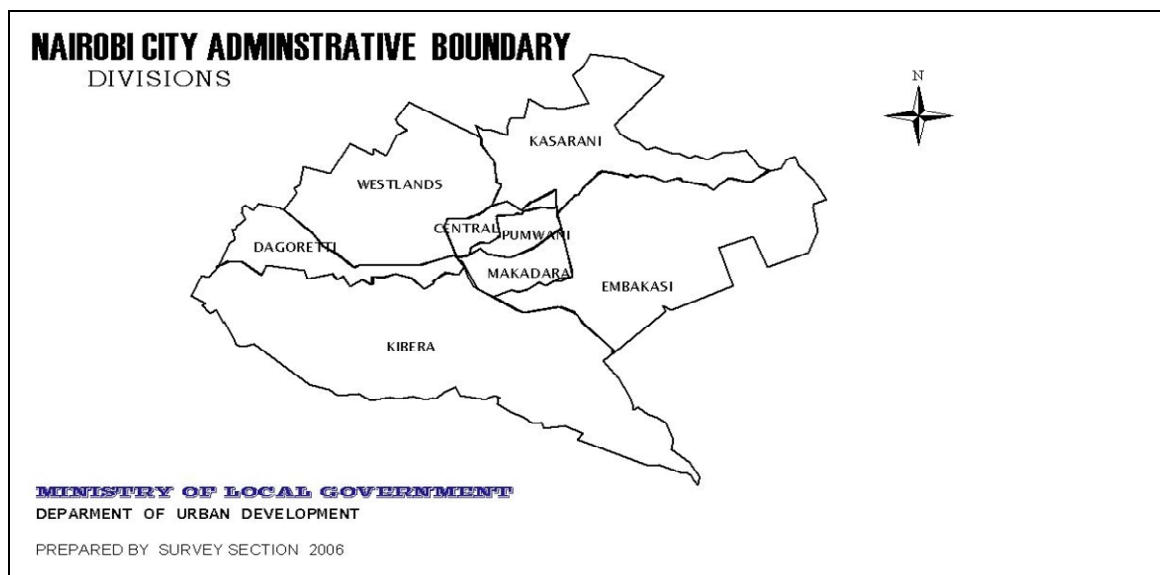


Source: Modified and Prepared by Ministry of Local Government Department of Urban Development Survey Section 2006

The camp became a rustic village, and then a shantytown. In 1903 this small railway depot was gazetted as a township with a population of about 10,000 people. It soon became an important centre for the colony attracting adventurers, hunters and travelers from all over the world. In 1907 Nairobi became the capital city of British East Africa; present day Kenya, covering an area of 3.8kms. In 1920, Nairobi’s size was 25 square km, in 1927; it had grown to 90 square km. In 1928, the Nairobi Township was upgraded to a Municipal Board. Nairobi was later granted city status on 20th May 1950 through a Royal Charter bestowed by Her Majesty the Queen during the British colonial administration. Nairobi officially became a city in 1950. Currently the area of Nairobi is 684 square km.⁹

⁹ UN, 1995

Map 2: Administrative Boundary of City of Nairobi



Administratively Nairobi was granted provincial status in 1963 and divided into 8 divisions (Dagoretti, Embakasi, Kasarani, Central, Westlands, Kibera, Makadara and Pumwani). These divisions are further divided into 46 locations, which are further divided into sub-locations. There is a Provincial Commissioner, a District Commissioner, and District Officers in charge of each of the administrative tiers, while Chiefs are in charge of locations. Assistant chiefs are in charge of sub-locations and they work with village elders appointed by the community. All the other administrative positions from the Assistant Chief upwards are appointments from the Office of the President, which is in charge of all levels of administration in the country. Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs wield enormous power at the location level, vested upon them by the Chief's Authority Act. The act gives chiefs and their assistant's authority to maintain the peace and resolve all conflicts among their subjects.

The City Council was established and mandated to provide basic social and infrastructural services to local communities within their areas of jurisdiction. In addition to the provincial administration system, City council of Nairobi is managed in accordance with the Local Government Act, Cap 265 of Laws of Kenya, normally under the guidance and supervision of the Ministry of Local Government. Composed of elected leaders (councilors), the council runs its services through departments and committee system. The members of the council elect the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor and Chairpersons of the various standing committees. In addition the council has the power to make and enforce laws and by-laws and raise revenues by charging fees on services provided to residents and their property.

The Challenge of Youth Crime

The phenomenon of crime needs to be addressed in its demographic, socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions, all of which have to be part of any comprehensive solution to the issue of crime. It is in this respect that the matter of youth crime needs to be given special attention.

The largest proportion of crime in Kenya is committed by youth making it imperative to address youth crime as a special focus of crime prevention efforts both as victims and offenders. As is the case all over the world persons who are most likely to offend are also at greatest risk of being victims themselves. For instance, the crime victimization survey found that 82% of young people who were arrested reported having been mugged.¹⁰

Youth crime is not only significant because of the population distribution of the country (approximately 25% of the population is aged between 15 and 25 years), but over 50 % of convicted prisoners in the country are aged between 16 and 25 years¹¹.

The case focuses on the issue of crime by youth gangs as a trend of growing significance in Nairobi. The case examines the socio-historical background of such crime and the way in which the city's crime control strategies can address this challenge. Two groups have been identified for illustrative purposes in this respect because of the large numbers of members involved and the complex dynamics underlying the two phenomena. These are the *Mungiki* movement and youth who live and work in the streets. While these groups are not necessarily criminal in all their interactions with the broader society, their association with crime, both real and perceptual, is such that they warrant special attention.

The *Mungiki* movement has been selected because it is in many respects one of the most significant youth groups in the country, both in terms of membership and impact on society. *Mungiki* youth stand out for their propensity for extreme violence and potential for developing into a highly disruptive force in society. Street youth gangs have a fairly well established genesis; their common bond is the need for cooperative action in order to survive in the streets. In recent years street youth have had a high profile in public discourse, especially in respect of disrupting security in the city. Street youth in particularly female street youth, also stand out as a highly vulnerable group in respect of crime victimization.

The *Mungiki* Movement

Mungiki in Kikuyu means a 'united people or multitude'. *Mungiki* is a complex social entity incorporating religio-cultural, economic and even political dimensions. The group came into the limelight in the late 1990s, when media reports highlighted groups of youths, donning dreadlocks, taking unusual oaths and engaging in traditional prayers that involved the taking of snuff. *Mungiki* then posed as a traditional religious group interested in re-introducing and promoting traditional way of life among the Kikuyu

¹⁰ Stravrou, UN-HABITAT, 2002 Nairobi

¹¹ Kenya Prisons Department, 2004

community. The group unmistakably drew its inspiration from the Mau-Mau fighters of Kenya's struggle for independence in 1950's against the British colonial rule. With time it has transformed itself into probably the most organized and feared crime group with deep anti-establishment and propensity for extreme violence. The group's criminal activities include violent confrontations with the general public and even law enforcement officers. On occasion they have engaged police in fierce running battles and violently raided police stations in bid to free arrested comrades.

The oppressor of the day (the "colonialist") that the group is supposed to be fighting is a debatable point. It can however be inferred from the group's activities that the state and its agencies, especially law enforcement agencies, as well as various symbols of western civilization, are part of the 'enemy'. Since the late 1990s, the sect has left behind a trail of blood in its rejection of the trappings of Western culture.

In March 2002 *Mungiki* were implicated in the massacre of 23 people in Kariobangi, Nairobi and also involved in stripping naked women wearing mini-skirts and trousers. In the same month after these clashes the government banned the sect. Later in December 2002 *Mungiki* followers burnt seven houses and killed two people in revenge in Kiambu district and three others in Nyahururu district for refusing to pay extra cess on potatoes. In January 2003, the sect was linked to the death of 23 persons in the outskirts of Nakuru. Thereafter in April 2003 over 50 armed *Mungiki* attacked a matatu crew in Kayole estate in Nairobi and killed five people in the same area. In 2005, a *Mungiki* deaths squad murdered 14 defectors for spilling their secrets in Nairobi. In addition they were implicated in vicious fight for control of Matatu terminus whereby police officers were killed in Dandora. In early January 2006 gunmen allied to the sect shot and injured a senior police officer and constable in Nairobi. Later in October 2006 the group was implicated in violent skirmishes in Mathare slums.¹²

In November 2006 there was a resurgence of *Mungiki* violence in Nairobi especially in Mathare slums, resulting in several deaths and scores being seriously injured and losing their property in general lawlessness. It was claimed that *Mungiki* clashed with another youth gang known as Taliban over 'taxation' monopoly¹³. The violent confrontations of November 2006 were a good pointer to *Mungiki*'s transformation into an organized crime group with considerably deep roots in its areas of operation. When law enforcement agents went to take control of the violence-rocked parts of the mayhem, hundreds of youth took to the streets of Nairobi to protest against interference with their freedom.

The following are some of the salient features of the movement, which need to be considered as part of any meaningful strategy of engaging with the group in a creative and systematic way:

Mythical Dimension

Drawing inspiration from the Mau-Mau rebellion, they sniff tobacco and keep dreadlock hairstyles. The group prays facing Mount Kenya, which they believe to be the home of

¹² Daily Nation, December 3, 2006

¹³ Daily Nation, November 7, 2006

their God, known as Ngai. Consequently, they have a potent support mobilization tool even though the origin of the sect is still shrouded in mystery. Thousands of young Kenyans, mostly drawn from Kenya's largest tribe, the Kikuyu flocked to the sect whose doctrines are based on traditional practices and rituals.

A large part of *Mungiki*'s appeal to disaffected youth is the solutions it seems to offer to their helplessness and hopelessness. *Mungiki* offers an atavistic vision for disillusioned Kenyan youth, characterized by practices that are hostile to certain aspects of western and Christian traditions such as forceful circumcision of women.

In September 2003, 13 sect followers including their National Coordinator converted to Islam. It is noteworthy that the group sought to affiliate itself to Islam, apparently to gain backing in its anti-Christian campaign, a move rejected by Kenyan Muslim leadership.

Mungiki has also often been referred to as a cult, owing to the quasi-religious prayer aspect of its activities, following the teachings of the movement's spiritual leader Maina Njenga who claims his role in *Mungiki* to be based on a mystical vision from God (Ngai) commanding him to unite the Kikuyu and fight foreign ideologies. He is now in jail on counts of violent crime, together with his former co-leader Ndura Waruinge who is out on bond.

Economic Dimension

In keeping with the behavior of other organized crime elsewhere in the world, *Mungiki* has been collecting 'fees' and 'taxes' from residents of various informal settlements in Nairobi and elsewhere in the country. The movement has a substantial and fairly successful economic dimension. While accurate information of the economic activities of the movement are not available, owing to the movement's secretive nature, several indicators point to the organization being engaged in lucrative 'business' activities. Among these activities are the management of *matatu* (public transport mini-buses) stages and levying illegal taxes and extorting protection money from large sections of the city's informal settlements. Working in a tight, disciplined manner, *Mungiki* has taken over the provision of security, water, electricity management of transport service in parts of the capital city. Those who resist are killed; those who comply resign themselves to a life of servitude and exploitation. In addition the sect has replaced administration chiefs and assistant chiefs in matters of arbitration of family dispute in the affected areas.

The turnover from these activities is difficult to tell without adequate research, but the amounts involved are very substantial as seen from the publicized revelations in the media about the palatial residences and luxurious lifestyles of the movement's leadership. In addition to these activities *Mungiki* is said to own several communal farms in the Nyandarua district of Kenya's central province. The money collected from various sectors by the gang is used as business loans and also used to bail out those arrested.

Political Dimension

One theory has it that *Mungiki* was formed in 1988 with the aim of toppling the government of former President Daniel arap Moi. The sect was, at one time, associated

with Mwakenya, an underground movement formed in 1979 to challenge the former regime.

The religious bit is just a camouflage. It's more like an army unit. Just like the government this organized gang of self-proclaimed society prefects has meted out punishment, including death, to those challenging its authority. They have managed to set up what can only be described as a parallel government complete with its own elaborate tax collection machinery and a judicial system to boot. Their leadership is a well organized chain of command whose real leaders are unknown even to the members.

In 1999 their national coordinator had announced that they had recruited members of the armed forces in their ranks. According to the press, they were even able to pelt police headquarters. This is a clear indication of the extent to which they have been infiltrated by the security services. Yet they have not been "neutralised" in the typical security-service approach. Perhaps powerful people would rather this did not happen because *Mungiki* plays a useful political purpose.

The *Mungiki* movement has an important political dimension, in part owing to the sheer numbers involved in the movement. While as noted above, membership is difficult to ascertain it is clear that the movement commands enough numbers to draw the attention of politicians in some constituencies such as Mathare, Kamukunji, Embakasi and Starehe where there are large numbers of *Mungiki* members. Consequently capturing the movement's votes is a clear attraction to politicians. This is a clear pointer to the likelihood of politicians enlisting *Mungiki*'s support so as to terrorize opponents into submission. For example, during the 2002 general elections in Kenya, *Mungiki* members thronged the streets of Nairobi to express solidarity with one of the candidate for presidency to succeed president Moi. The police stood by as the crude-weapon-wielding *Mungiki* members took charge of the central business district.

The involvement of *Mungiki* in the political process is mainly because of the more insidious aspect of the movement's political cum 'protection' dimension. There is a more insidious sense in which *Mungiki* is getting involved in the political process. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in the informal settlements where the group has controlled security arrangements, local residents actually benefited from improved security. The movement's rough form of justice appears to serve as a deterrent to criminals.

By 'taxing' residents of informal settlements and then 'providing security', *Mungiki* has in effect been functioning as a parallel government at the local level. Being able to step into a power vacuum whereby the state is unable to contain crime and crudely deliver a vital security service, at least from some local's perceptions. The entrenchment of such a situation has uncertain implications for the society and therefore calls for serious reflection and intervention on the part of government and concerned citizens. The issue should be viewed not as a matter relating only to *Mungiki*, but more importantly to the conditions in society that give rise to similar situations. Mob justice is such a case where citizens take the law into the hands due to an apparent vacuum but such circumstances increasingly lead to repression and are inefficient in the long term.

Street Families Phenomenon

In addition to the *Mungiki* movement, the growing population of persons living and working in the streets of Nairobi and other Kenyan urban areas is a matter of major security and general development concern for the affected areas. The growth and extended stay in the streets of this population has resulted in relatively well-defined behavioral trends for the population, which can be the subject of meaningful sociological study. Among the more noteworthy trends in the population of persons living and working in the streets is the emergence of street families. A street family is a social unit comprising a parent or parents and offspring that have made its home in the streets. There is however a looser sense in which the term ‘street family’ may be used and which is the sense used in this study.

‘Street family’ as used in this study refers to bands of individuals, mostly children and youth, who share a common identity from involvement in organized street survival activities within given operational territories. This latter understanding of street families is inclusive of the former because bands of boys and girls in street situations grow up, ‘marry’ and bring forth offspring within the street-life environment.

The issue of street families as an important factor in the city’s security is both real and perceptual. It is real to the extent that street families are involved in illegal activities such as drug peddling and prostitution as well as theft of mobile phones, vehicle lights, side mirrors and other valuables from pedestrians and motorists. Older street persons are also known to be involved in more serious crime such as muggings and rape. These survival activities include begging forcefully, pick pocketing and stealing, child prostitution, use and trafficking of drugs. Consequently the public generally perceives street persons as criminals, thieves, drug addicts and eyesores that should be removed from the streets. Citizens feel that most ills are the responsibility of criminals who were previously street children. The public has no mechanisms to respond to the manifestations and causes of crime by the street youth hence their fears and overgeneralizations. The Citywide Victim Survey responses indicated that the public perceived that 8.4% neighborhood crime and 30.1% crime in Nairobi is caused by street children and that eventually 57.1% of street children become criminals¹⁴.

Actual incidences of crime by street families, which many city residents have experienced, may however be magnified by perceptual challenges regarding street persons. The dirty and scruffy appearance of most street persons gives street families an aura of wickedness that may not be justified by their actual social impact. Such perceptions may however serve to push street families into crime and general anti-social behavior owing to the isolation and associated alienation it fosters.

Regardless of the actual vis-à-vis perceptual contribution of street families to city crime at present, the rapid growth in the population of street families implies increased pressure on persons living and working in the streets to turn to crime as a means of making ends meet. Statistics of this population growth trend will serve to illustrate the point.

¹⁴ Stravou ,UN (UN Habitat, 2002) Nairobi

It is estimated there were approximately 115 street children in 1975. By 1990 this number had grown to 17,000 and by 1997 over 150,000.¹⁵ In 2001 the number was estimated to be 250,000 street children countrywide¹⁶. With older street dwellers included, the total population of street persons was estimated at approximately 300,000. The bulk of such street dwellers are found in Nairobi, which at present has approximately 60,000 street persons.

Although the above statistics are only rough estimates, it is quite clear that there has been an explosive growth in the population of street persons, especially in the 1990s, and that it is highly likely that this will result in a significantly worsened security situation in Nairobi and other urban areas in the country. It is therefore imperative that the issue of street families is looked into as an important component of any meaningful national urban development strategy.

Plate 1: Street children in a Nairobi backstreet



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Conditions, Trends and Organised Responses

A crime victimization survey complimented by a snapshot study on violence against women and youth offender profile was conducted covering the whole city and presented at a stakeholders workshop organized by City of Nairobi in November 2004. The citywide victim survey, revealed that violent crime and delinquency is very high in the

¹⁵ Shorter et al: 1999

¹⁶ The Kenya Government Position Paper August 2001 at Mbagathi

city. For example, in the year 2000, 37% of all Nairobi residents were victims of robbery while 29% and 30% of all homes and commercial enterprises respectively were victims of burglary. Regarding the issue of violence against women, 27% of all women reported having been victims of various forms of abuse.

The survey also assessed the psychological dimension of the crime environment in the city, in which 75% of city residents reported feeling unsafe in their homes at night, while 54% and 94% reported feeling unsafe in the central business district during the day and at night respectively. 72% reported that they avoid travelling and working after dark.

The survey further showed that Nairobi's crime profile resembles that of major metropolitan areas in South Africa and Tanzania to the extent that robbery, burglary, theft and assault were prevalent in all cities. However, while robbery with violence was the crime mostly reported in Nairobi in the other cities non-violent crime was most prevalent.

The results of the citywide Victim Survey complimented information available on crime from the police and mass media. The crime surveys informed the citywide Crime Prevention and Urban Safety Strategy of February 2005 which was developed through a multi-sector and partnership approach coordinated by the City Council of Nairobi. The City Wide Conventions which are part of the process provide an opportunity for stake holders to review crime information and management techniques, review crime prevention pilot projects being undertaken, and develop a city led coalition of stakeholders on crime prevention and an engagement framework.

The Safer Nairobi Initiative

The Second Conference of United Nations on Human Settlements held in Istanbul in 1996 identified urban safety as a key element of urban planning and good governance. UN-HABITAT adopted the programme towards prevention, reduction and elimination of crime through partnerships and created the Safer Cities Programme.

The Programme has been spearheading the crime prevention approach in developing countries through city-level projects anchored in municipal councils. The overall objective of the programme is to promote a culture of crime prevention, strengthen local capacities and develop strong partnerships to address urban crime and violence.

In Africa, safer cities crime prevention projects have been initiated in the cities of Nairobi, Johannesburg, Dar es Salaam, Abidjan, Durban, Dakar, Yaoundé, Douala, Bamako, and Antananarivo. UN HABITAT provides technical support to the programme while UNDP provides monetary support. This Programme has linkages with UNDP Poverty Eradication and Governance Programme under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and other UNDP Programmes as is appropriate.

The Safer Nairobi Initiative dates back to April 2000 when the City Council of Nairobi requested UN HABITAT to provide technical support to the development of a citywide crime prevention strategy. Technical assistance by UN-HABITAT to the City of Nairobi commenced in April 2001 towards developing a community-based strategy for urban crime prevention and safety improvement initiatives in Nairobi through a multi-sector

and partnership approach coordinated by the city authorities. Nairobi has benefited from the technical support of international organizations key among them UN-Habitat and UNDP. UNDP gives monetary support to the initiative, while UN-Habitat's support is in the form of research, assessment of needs, technical input and advisory services, promoting community participation and capacity building in line with the theme "*Urban Safety for Better Governance*".

Main Partners

The main partners in the programme are Nairobi City Council, UN-Habitat, UNDP, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Internal Security particularly Provincial Administration, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and key civil society associations. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 6 October 2004 between the United Human Settlements Programme and the Republic of Kenya (Ministry Of Local Government) in Nairobi where the parties committed themselves to further the implementation of the citywide crime prevention strategy and set the basis for resource mobilization and replication to other local authorities in Kenya.

Methodology for Intervention

The Methodology for Intervention is broad based and consultative based on the Safer Cities Programme Approach as outlined below:

- Diagnosis of problem,
- Mobilisation and building a coalition of partners,
- Developing a crime prevention strategy (in this case the Nairobi Crime Prevention and Urban Safety Strategy).
- Develop and implementation of an action plan
- Mainstream and institutionalise the approach
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation

The strategy involves a two-year action plan based on the following four pillars namely:

- Better enforcement of existing laws and by-laws
- Improvement of urban design and environment
- Social oriented measures aimed at providing support to groups at risk including children, youth, women and street families
- Community empowerment

Major Activities of the Initiative

- A local diagnosis of insecurity: crime victimization survey, youth offender profile and violence against women study.

- A local safety and action plan formulated, adopted and under implementation.
- The establishment of an inter-departmental committee on Safety and Security within the city council spearheaded by the Mayor.
- Safety Audits conducted in key locations across the city
- Launch of Safer Spaces (two pilot projects on space upgrading at Jeevanjee Gardens and at Kibera Siranga Village) and Streets Campaign
- Formulation of quarterly newsletter on city safety and security update the 'Salama' Newsletter for public awareness and education.
- Establishment of local coordinating team and office within the City
- Progressive development of action oriented partnerships and broad based stakeholders consultations and review for crime prevention
- Training, exchange visits and exposure local and international tours city officers and councillors on crime prevention,
- Lighting up Nairobi slums and streets by City Council of Nairobi and partners.

Impact of the Safer Cities Initiative

The city of Nairobi has enhanced its beauty through adequate lighting, greenery and environmental design. In addition in bid to stem crime from the city streets, the council has embarked on decongesting the CBD streets. The hawkers were removed from the CBD to the margins. It is evident that parts of downtown Nairobi that have benefited from improved street lighting have had a highly visible increase in the volume of pedestrian traffic (especially women) and general commerce after nightfall, which is indicative of a greater sense of personal safety. This is a necessary step towards encouraging more social interaction of residents as they now enjoy enhanced feelings of safety as they commute to various transport nodes in the city.

While a comprehensive survey of the impact of these activities and initiatives has not been carried out, prima facie evidence suggests that at least some of the initiatives have had considerable success. For example, the lighting up of Mathare and Kibera slums has resulted in businesses staying open much longer than used to happen in the past, which has many positive spin-offs and which is indicative of an improved sense of security. Similarly the Safety Audit, which was carried, has helped the City Council of Nairobi to assess the perceptions and realities of safety situation in Nairobi particularly for women and how it can be improved.

The participatory process helps build and harness ownership of safety and security issues by city residents for posterity. In addition the crime prevention strategy has provided a framework for action and collaboration of various stakeholders in combating crime within the city.

Street Families Rehabilitation Programme

In an effort to address the challenge posed by street persons and the pressure from city residents for the government to act regarding the challenge, the Kenya Government established the Street Families Rehabilitation Trust Fund.¹⁷ The Trust's mandate is to coordinate rehabilitation activities for street families in Kenya, educate the public, mobilize resources and manage a fund to support rehabilitation activities, among other functions. The fund's board of trustees comprises eminent personalities drawn from the private sector, public sector and civil society, and works with and through a large variety of local and international organizations, including UNICEF, YMCA, the National Youth Service and local Universities.

The fund has made important progress in its mandate during the period of its existence. Among its key achievements include:

- Spearheading the establishment of affiliate committees in major towns to oversee local activities of the rehabilitation of street persons
- Overseeing capacity building initiatives among service providers in the provision of basic psychosocial rehabilitation services.
- Facilitating entry into school for rehabilitated street children.
- Facilitating the provision of vocational training for rehabilitated street youth.

Although important headway has been made in the period of the fund's existence, there is still plenty of work to be done before proper mechanisms for managing the challenge of street persons can be put in place. The task of establishing such mechanisms has three key requirements. These are:

Research and Development: The complex social dynamics involved in the street persons' phenomenon require a wide range of research and development activities in order to have a better understanding of the phenomenon and generate viable solutions for the street persons' programme. Among the aims of such research and development is the provision of accurate and up-to-date data for planning purposes, establishment of systems and procedures for quality service provision and capacity building for service providers

Programme Sustainability: A major challenge for the street persons' programme is the issue of systems to ensure the continuation of programme initiatives even after initial funding by government and various donors as street children and youth require full support for their day-to-day needs besides their formal schooling. Kenya's free primary education initiative has been a big help to the rehabilitation programme but adequate resources for daily needs must be provided for the programme's target population.

Exit & Prevention Strategy: The biggest challenge faced by the national programme for the rehabilitation of street persons may well be the lack of effective exit avenues. This has created a situation of extended dependency in the programme, leading to a blockage

¹⁷ Gazette Notice No. 1558 of 11th March 2003

in the flow of the exercise and undermining the viability of the entire rehabilitation exercise. A major reason for failure to develop effective exit avenues has been the difficulty experienced in securing prompt employment for ex-street youth who have completed vocational skills training. This is very significant because unlike youth from ordinary families who have completed their education, street youth have no home to go back to as they search for employment opportunities.

The other exit option, mainly for children, is family reintegration. While in principle this is most desirable, the reality is that many children are in the streets as a much preferable option to living with their families owing to various reasons such as domestic abuse, hopeless poverty, very ill parents orphaned children and other such factors. Making immediate or extended family reintegration a viable exit option for such children would require very involved and complex interventions. It is for these reasons that the rehabilitation programme needs to explore non-traditional exit options, and pilot these as part of its research and development initiatives.

The Street Families Rehabilitation Trust Fund is currently developing such initiatives. The proposed logical structure of the (PRIME) Model by African Institute of Community Research a partner organization of the Street Families programme is given below.

Level 1 – Primary Outreach Services: This involves the street mobilization process, in which children are identified, counseled and encouraged to join the rehabilitation process. Ideally this is done through a drop-in centre from where the street mobilization exercise can be coordinated.

Level 2 – Institutional Support Services: This involves primary and secondary care activities, which take place within an institutional setting. Primary care concerns detoxification, basic healthcare, nutrition support and assessments for the designing of personal reintegration plans. During this time clients are settled into their new lives outside the street setting. If success at this stage is achieved, the client proceeds to formal school or vocational training while still under institutional care.

Those who are unable to make it through either the primary or secondary care stage within the designated time are referred to a special care, which is a specialized facility to identify and address special challenges that clients may have. Those who successfully meet the expected standards within special care may proceed to the next stage of the reintegration/ rehabilitation process.

Level 3 – Secondary Outreach Services: This involves the exit stage of the program. In this clients are either reintegrated with the general society or taken to specialized care facilities outside the rehabilitation program. Reintegration involves family reunion, employment or other such process that removes the client from the care of the rehabilitation program and into the mainstream of society. Those who have particularly serious problems, such as psychiatric cases, are taken to specialized facilities (such as psychiatric hospitals) outside the rehabilitation program.

Plate 2: Nairobi Street Youth



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Conclusion:

Urban insecurity remains one of the major challenges to overall development in Nairobi as safety and urban development are intertwined and cannot be divorced from each other. Consequently for any meaningful development and revitalisation of local economic development to take place within the city the issue of urban violence has to be addressed.

The provision of security to its citizenry is one of the most basic functions of the state. In the modern state system this is done through a disciplined force of security professionals (the police) under the control of legitimate state authorities and in partnership with prosecution, prisons, and judiciary among others. Where the state fails in this basic function, alternative sources of security provision naturally come up to fill the security-provision vacuum. This appears to be the case with *Mungiki* in the group's function as "protector". This has been the challenge in stateless societies or very weak states and it is for this reason that nipping potentially disruptive groups such as *Mungiki* in the bud is crucial for the country's well being. Accordingly, law enforcement and other agencies that seek to address the *Mungiki* challenge need to develop approaches that have the subtlety to capture the many dimensions of the phenomenon.

Apart from the need to deal with groups that may undermine state structures the Nairobi experience demonstrates the need for decisive steps to address the challenge of socially and economically excluded groups such as street families. This however can only be done through local capacity development, management systems for improved public services and support for an enabling environment to increase private-sector-led growth

and revitalization of local economies. Such revitalization is necessary for poverty reduction so that crime is not viewed as one of the few options for survival.

The development of policing arrangements outside formal state structures is always an indicator of major weakness in the state system, and normally serves as a precursor to civil strife as private armies and militia struggle for supremacy. This has been the challenge in stateless societies or very weak states and it is the reason why nipping the *Mungiki* or other gang members is crucial for the country's well being. Private policing unless clearly spelt out, as a Neighborhood Watch group could be dangerous as in most cases it lacks socially accepted norms whereby the team could be rebelling against formal systems.

Besides law enforcement, the police need to identify and support individuals and organizations to effectively increase safety and security. The community is viewed as an asset in crime prevention and therefore should be motivated, supported, and empowered to direct issues of safety and security.

Crime prevention is an issue of governance and partnership through participatory and multi-sector approaches. Neighbourhood associations formed in many residential areas to handle local security issues, among other local level needs ought to be empowered so that they feel confident and own issues of safety instead of the vicious youth gangs.

Ideally, the local government is best suited to co-ordinate and facilitate the activities of other actors concerned with crime prevention as they are created and mandated to provide services to local communities within their areas of jurisdiction and have representation at the grass root level where they interact daily with the local populace who are victims and often perpetrators of crime.

No single actor (neither the city administration nor the state's criminal justice system) can manage issues of crime prevention hence the need for a collaborative and multi-disciplinary and participatory approach on urban safety and security for Nairobi. Safety should be considered a common good and therefore everybody's responsibility. There is need for adequate involvement of the communities, stakeholders and the private sector in the management of security and safety issues for the city.

In particular there is need to focus on groups at risk especially the urban poor. Poor people, especially women, youth and children, are the most severely affected by crime because they are vulnerable. In addition because they cannot afford to pay for private security provisions and in case of petty theft whatever item or money is snatched from them is crucial to their livelihood. As indicated above informal settlements where the majority of these people reside are generally characterized by lack of basic services and provisions, poor housing conditions among other inadequacies.

There also is need for local capacity development, management systems for improved public services, and support for an enabling environment to increase private sector led growth and revitalization of small-scale industrialization for poverty reduction so that crime is not viewed as an option for survival.

Crime prevention calls for tackling local causes of crime, perception of insecurity, fear of violence in a coordinated, inclusive, continuous and sustainable way.

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