

CRIME & VIOLENCE *city case studies*

Nairobi: Crime and the city

Over the last two decades, violent crimes such as armed robbery, murder, mugging, car-jacking, housebreaking, physical and sexual assault have been on the increase in Nairobi, Kenya, the home city of UN-HABITAT. Other offences include commercial and property crimes such as burglaries. Firearms trafficking – a consequence of civil wars in neighbouring countries – is a major contributor to crime and violence in Nairobi.

Criminal youth gangs are increasingly becoming a growing phenomenon in the city. The largest proportion of crime in Kenya is committed by youths, and over 50 per cent of convicted prisoners in the country are aged between 16 and 25 years. This makes it imperative to address youth crime as a special focus of crime prevention strategy.

This problem is best illustrated by looking at the case of the *Mungiki* movement and tens of thousands of youth who live in the streets. While these groups are not necessarily criminal in all their interactions with the broader society, their association with crime is such that they warrant special attention.

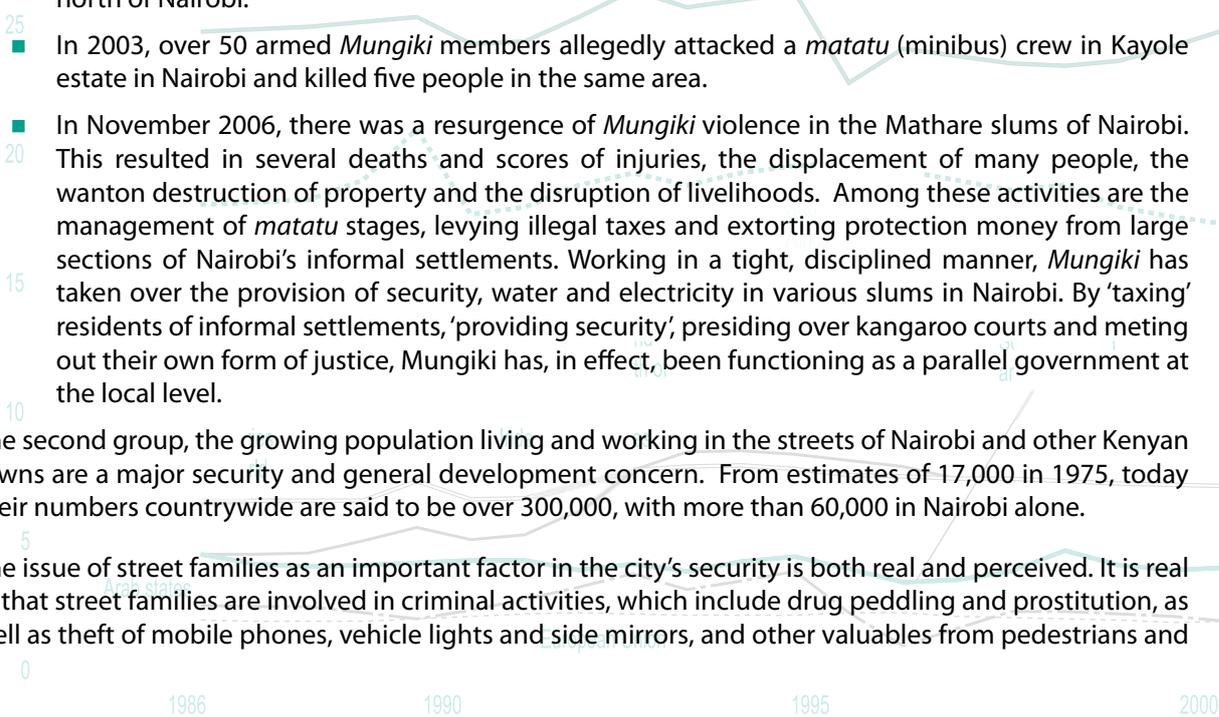
The *Mungiki* movement, said to number up to two million, is one of the most significant youth groups in Kenya in terms of its propensity for extreme violence and the potential for developing into a highly disruptive force in society. They came into the limelight during the late 1990s, posed as a traditional religious group, and even claimed inspiration from the Mau-Mau movement of Kenya's struggle for independence from Britain during the 1950s. Today they are considered the most organized and feared criminal group, with deep anti-establishment characteristics. The following examples put the violence unleashed by the movement into perspective:

- In March 2002, *Mungiki* were implicated in the massacre of 23 people in Kariobangi (Nairobi) and attacking women in mini-skirts or trousers.
- In January 2003, the movement was linked to the death of 23 people in the outskirts of Nakuru, north of Nairobi.
- In 2003, over 50 armed *Mungiki* members allegedly attacked a *matatu* (minibus) crew in Kayole estate in Nairobi and killed five people in the same area.
- In November 2006, there was a resurgence of *Mungiki* violence in the Mathare slums of Nairobi. This resulted in several deaths and scores of injuries, the displacement of many people, the wanton destruction of property and the disruption of livelihoods. Among these activities are the management of *matatu* stages, levying illegal taxes and extorting protection money from large sections of Nairobi's informal settlements. Working in a tight, disciplined manner, *Mungiki* has taken over the provision of security, water and electricity in various slums in Nairobi. By 'taxing' residents of informal settlements, 'providing security', presiding over kangaroo courts and meting out their own form of justice, *Mungiki* has, in effect, been functioning as a parallel government at the local level.

The second group, the growing population living and working in the streets of Nairobi and other Kenyan towns are a major security and general development concern. From estimates of 17,000 in 1975, today their numbers countrywide are said to be over 300,000, with more than 60,000 in Nairobi alone.

The issue of street families as an important factor in the city's security is both real and perceived. It is real in that street families are involved in criminal activities, which include drug peddling and prostitution, as well as theft of mobile phones, vehicle lights and side mirrors, and other valuables from pedestrians and

Per 100,000 inhabitants



motorists. More serious crimes include rape, murder, and vehicle hijackings. The Kenya government has set up a Street Families Rehabilitation Trust Fund to help rehabilitate them.

Port Moresby: World's most dangerous city?

Port Moresby, the capital city of Papua New Guinea is infamously known for being the worst city in which to live in the world. Crimes against women are endemic, says the *Global Report for Human Settlements 2007*.

The main types of crimes committed in Port Moresby, in order of frequency are burglary, petty crime, assault, car jacking, drug dealing, property crimes, rape, violence and vandalism. About 48 per cent of crimes in this city involve a high level of violence, compared to other cities in a country where violence is used in 25 to 30 per cent of crimes. Some city suburbs are considered so dangerous that even the police are reluctant to visit them.

The use of violence in crime creates a feeling of fear among the population. Nearly one quarter of crimes committed involve the use of weapons such as guns, knives, swords or blades. Young teenage boys in the 15-20 age bracket are the main perpetrators. The most common types of first offences are pick pocketing, shoplifting and bag snatching. The widespread drug and substance abuse, especially among the youth, often contributes to increased levels of criminal activities and street brawls.

Apart from the types of crime noted above, domestic violence, particularly against women, is endemic. Gang rape and assault on women are rapidly increasing. However, most communities and households view violence against women as a private matter and therefore very few victims report them. Consequently, very few cases are prosecuted even though domestic violence is considered a crime.

The impact of crime and violence on Port Moresby affects the entire country, the large developing nation in the Pacific region. The cost of crime in terms of its impact on tourism, security and health services is enormous.

The causes of these escalating levels of crime are attributed to factors such as poor economic opportunities, ineffective law enforcement, and a general decline of traditional cultural practices that help keep law and order.

It is estimated that the formal sector provides fewer than 10 percent of jobs in the country. Migration to Port Moresby and internal urban growth have contributed to the expansion of squatter settlements. But the authorities have failed to give due recognition to squatter settlements in the city or provide basic services and support to enable the migrants to integrate within the city. This has, in part, given rise to discontent and resentment of authority, and the flourishing of organized gang activity, which provides support and 'employment' opportunities for many migrants in the city.

Law enforcement and the criminal justice institutions are largely unable to cope with the level of criminal activities due to lack of equipment and poor training, which contribute to the perception of them being considered unprofessional and incapable of stemming the tide of criminal activities in the city.

The complexity of the causes and types of crime show that policies and programmes aimed at addressing crime and violence in Port Moresby should foster a strong partnership between the government, NGOs and the community. The international community also has a key role to play in providing better training and equipment, and in supporting partnership approaches.

In addition, there is the need to systematically approach crime reduction and prevention from a holistic framework with maximum support from the grassroots level. The challenge facing the city with regard to dealing with crime and criminal behaviour is enormous, but not insurmountable. It requires strong commitment and collective determination to tackle the problem and to instill confidence among residents, investors and tourists alike.

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