



KIPPRA INSTITUTE for PUBLIC
POLICY RESEARCH and ANALYSIS

Policy Brief

Integrating public policy making to economic growth and poverty reduction

Improving the Security Situation in Kenya

Since the advent of the Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) in 2003, the government has indicated its commitment to tackle insecurity in an attempt to provide a favourable environment for economic growth. In the ERS, provision of better governance, improved security, and restoration of the rule of law are singled out as some of the important pillars for reviving the economy. Further, one of the goals in the Private Sector Development Strategy is to improve Kenya's business environment for existing and potential investors by designing additional measures to combat crime and insecurity. This follows the realization that crime and insecurity are a key constraint that has negatively impacted on the growth of private sector investment. The Kenya Vision 2030 also embraces matters of security under the political pillar, which is one of the three pillars the vision is anchored on. To achieve the vision, an enabling environment must be put in place for the private sector to grow investments. Insecurity affects the economy both in the short and long term since current and potential investors are affected due to the perceived security risk.

According to the international rating for law and order, Kenya is perceived as a high risk country despite the marginal improvements achieved in reducing crime. The major types of crime affecting society include: murder, violent robbery, burglary and carjacking. Although statistics show a declining trend in crime, with reported crime cases reducing by 4.2 per cent in 2006, serious waves of crime and violence continue to be experienced in the country. Crime in Kenya has of late become more sophisticated and sadistic. Organized crime by criminal gangs is on the rise. For example, in June 2007, 112 people including 11 police officers lost their lives in gang-related violence and police shoot outs. In Mt Elgon District, a dispute over land has

claimed many lives, turning the region into a killing field. Politics has been linked to the clashes and the violence has spread to neighbouring districts. Further, clashes over land and pastures have been witnessed in Trans Mara with banditry attacks and cattle rustling activities reported in parts of Rift Valley and Tana River. Incidents of violence have also recurred in Likia, Molo, Laikipia and Kuresoi areas. Incidents of crime in the recent past have also included human trafficking, drug abuse and child sex tourism.

This policy brief is based on various KIPPRA research papers on crime and its impact on investment. The brief draws heavily from KIPPRA Special Report No. 6 of 2004 on Security Risk and Private Sector Growth in Kenya: A Survey Report, by Rose Ngugi, and others.

Government Initiatives in Combating Crime

The government has taken various steps in combating crime. It has established a National Policing Committee to coordinate policy, governance, management and capacity building reforms within the police force. It has also created specialized units within the police force to deal with respective crimes. Also, the government has tried to boost the morale of the police force by reviewing their salaries, providing new vehicles, and channelling more resources towards provision of modern

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equipment to assist the police force in crime investigations, surveillance and intelligence gathering. These resources will also help in building more housing facilities in addition to recruiting more police officers.

The other major initiative has been the formation of community policing forums

to strengthen the police-community relationship. However, community policing has been hampered by the reluctance of the public to provide information to the police due to fear of revenge by the culprits—criminal gangs tend to retaliate on those suspected to have reported their activities to the police.

Partnership between the police and the private security industry in an institutionalized way for the purpose of sharing capacity has also commenced. In urban centres, for example, private security companies have capacity of vehicles and communication systems that could be used on patrols and rapid response if the police supplied armed officers to ride in the vehicles.

The government has also undertaken several judicial reforms since 2003 in an effort to curb corruption and streamline the criminal justice system. The judicial system is perceived as not effective enough in helping the police to curb crime.

Other efforts made include: amnesty on illegal firearms, removal of street children from the streets and taking them into rehabilitation centres, regular presence of police patrols on the streets, and training of Chiefs to enhance skills in combating crime within the provincial administration. Rehabilitation of criminals into law abiding citizens has also been undertaken by the Prisons Department.

Costs of Crime

Economic costs of crime include both direct and indirect costs associated with criminal

activities. When the authority fails to provide adequate security, consumers are forced to make their own provisions to prevent them from incurring costs of curing injuries, replacing destroyed and stolen property, and cost of lost time and opportunity. As such, crime has implications on business operations and consumption habits.

Businesses aim to maximize their profits and any risk factor that interferes with this objective impacts on the operations of the firm. Business operations are constrained by insecure environments arising from incidents of criminal activities. Consequently, businesses are unable to penetrate the market with their products, face limited time of business transaction, and lack motivation to make further investment. Costs of production go up as firms provide their own security infrastructure, replace damaged and lost property and also treat injured workers. Further, firms lose in terms of the production time when workers become victims of crime.

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According to the KIPPRA 2004 survey, firms spend an average of 7 per cent of

the total sales or about 11 per cent of the total costs in provision of security services (infrastructure and personnel). Similarly, the cost of capital increases since insecurity raises the risk-premium tagged on financial capital. Firms may also find themselves faced with additional taxation costs as the government raises funds to finance the delivery of security services. Insecurity, therefore, adversely affects economic growth by slowing down business growth, limiting employment creation, and hampering poverty reduction.

The non-business community also changes consumption habits when faced with unsafe environments. This ultimately constrains the achievement of the desired utility level. Although expenditure on crime increases individual satisfaction as safety is maintained, it makes consumers forgo consumption of other products to finance security services. This makes consumers settle for a lower utility level. Victims of crime may also experience damage or loss of property, which has implications on their ability to accumulate wealth. Further, as expenditure on security increases, the level of savings goes down.

Additionally, sustaining injuries or loss of life during attack has cost implications. The cost of injuries not only affects the victim but also the government in provision of health services. The higher the crime rate, the more the pressure to the healthcare system.

At macro-level, rising crime implies increased expenditure by the government, which has the responsibility of providing security services. This then implies

reduction of funds in such areas as provision of education, health services or infrastructure development.

Social costs in the context of crime can be largely understood as those foregone social desirables, opportunities and social preferences arising from encounter with crime or its perceived threats. In addition, society is forced to spend time and effort in

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responding to crime and also in maintaining law and order. The responses, reactions and coping strategies adopted by individuals to survive in the context of crime have effects that have direct social costs on individuals and the society at large.

The psychosocial effects of crime occur when the behaviour of individuals is influenced by the psychological attributes of crime, such as phobia (chronic fear of crime, and mob psychology, among others) and heightened state of insecurity among members of society. Severe psychosocial

effects posed by crime among a larger/ significant section of the society may have adverse social costs on any society.

Major Causes of Crime in Kenya

Poverty and unemployment

In Kenya, poverty and unemployment are the main causes of crime. The poverty rate in Kenya, at 46 per cent, is high. Most members of the productive group of the society are unable to secure employment in either the formal or informal sector. The youth completing college education are idle without jobs and therefore get tempted to engage in crime to meet their basic needs. The unemployed youth have therefore formed criminal gangs that engage in organized crime. Most of the criminals are well-educated, at least with secondary school education. They are often violent and merciless, a sign of despondency and hopelessness.

In residential areas, crime can be attributed to the escalating growth in urban population as a consequence of rural-urban migration in search of employment. This culminates in mushrooming of slums or other non-formal settlements, which are potential breeding grounds for criminal activities.

Corruption in the police force and the judiciary

The public has little confidence with the police force and the judicial system as far as crime prevention is concerned. Due to probably de-motivation and low morale, some police officers collude with criminals, who are sometimes former police officers, to

share stolen property and money. Criminals easily manipulate the police or the judiciary to get away with crime. Arrested criminals

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are sometimes released after bribing the officers in charge and are therefore never prosecuted. The consequences of corruption is lack of law and order, implying that when a person commits a crime and the law does not catch up, others are encouraged to commit crime because of low chances of being punished.

Lack of effective intelligence system within the police force

Over time, the police have been unable to gather intelligence information that would make them proactive in fighting criminal activities. Some criminal gangs have therefore existed for over a decade and have become deep-rooted.

Drug abuse and trafficking

The number of high school and college students taking and peddling drugs has been rising. Out of every 100 students, 28 abuse alcohol and drugs. About 77 per cent of non-student youth abuse alcohol and

drugs. Idle and unemployed youth engage in drugs to overcome frustrations. Under the influence of drugs, they have a high tendency to commit crime.

Lack of adequate crime research

Research is an important source of knowledge in management of crime in that it helps in understanding the dynamics of criminal activities and in mapping these activities.

Poor synchronization among various agencies

The role to be played by each public security agency is still not properly defined. This has led to counter accusations among these agencies, therefore weakening efforts to combat crime.

Proliferation of sophisticated arms

Kenya has faced a high proliferation of small but sophisticated arms, which are brought in at low costs by illegal immigrants and also citizens. This has complicated police efforts in fighting crime and has led to increase in violence.

Politics

Insecurity in Kenya can be attributed to political irresponsibility. The land clashes that the country has faced may be, to a large extent, as a result of political statements made by politicians for their own selfish gains. Politically-instigated violence increases during the national elections period.

Crime Management

Although the government has the sole responsibility of ensuring law and order, it has faced various constraints in curbing criminal activities. The society, together with private security service providers, have therefore taken various actions to ameliorate the situation. The security service industry has witnessed a lot of new entrants and growth in private security firms and community-based organizations since the 1990s. Security workers view security provision as a business like any other; it allows businessmen to diversify their income and creates employment opportunities for Kenyans, especially to the majority of retired policemen. Security provision services are also easy to start since they are not adequately regulated. However, private security providers are not the best alternative since they are driven by profit and may not be trusted to provide adequate security.

Nevertheless, concerted effort of all stakeholders, including consumers and providers of security services is necessary to curb crime. Areas of collaboration should include: sharing of security information, investigations and making arrests, awareness creation through public education, and provision of infrastructure. However, business rivalry, lack of trust among players, and criminal infiltration by some security agents can hamper collaboration efforts. While the relationship between private security providers and consumers of security is cordial, that of the police and consumers is still poor. There is a general mutual mistrust between the police and members of the public.

The media also has an important role in preventing crime by creating awareness and exposing criminal activities. However, at times, the media exaggerates insecurity and increases fear of crime through alarmist reporting. Sometimes, it gives an impression that criminals are winning. Some media reports are sensational and do not reflect the reality on the ground.

Policy Recommendations

Crime information management

Management of information on crime is critical in the fight against the vice. Crime is extremely sensitive and continued public education and sensitization is vital in changing the passive public attitude about crime reporting, to allay fears and feeling of apathy and resignation among the public, and to create a proactive and security conscious public.

Reforms for crime management

There is need for a crime management policy to provide a forum for collaboration and co-operation among the different stakeholders. A comprehensive reform programme needs to be put in place for effective management of crime, since piecemeal initiatives have not proved to be effective in combating crime.

The existing regulatory framework needs to be reviewed in order to capture and regulate the operations of private security providers.

Similarly, there is need to establish a National Policing Policy in order to define

the roles of the different public security agencies and thus eliminate conflict among these agencies.

Community policing should be strengthened to encourage participation of the public in crime prevention and control. In particular, there is need to screen members involved in community policing. Goodwill from the security agencies and continuous public education are needed to create vibrancy in community policing. At the moment, momentum seems to be going down.

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Reforming the police force is a viable strategy. However, the comprehensiveness of the reforms and the implementation should be a priority, taking into consideration accountability and adoption of crime prevention strategies. Recommendations of the National Policing Committee need to be acted on.

Reforming the judicial system is also vital so that the public does not feel that

criminals are winning. Judicial reforms so far undertaken have not yielded much. Determination of cases has been particularly slow.

Efficient resource allocation and utilization

The performance of the police is adversely affected by limited resource allocation and poor utilization. It is important that a careful evaluation is done to identify the security needs of the various sections of the population in order to ensure adequate coverage. Additional resources can be sourced/mobilized from all stakeholders, particularly in the private sector. Specifically, the following should be targeted:

- Achieving the ratio of police to population of 1:450, which is the international standard;
- Providing better salaries and benefits, including improved working and living conditions;
- Adequate training and advanced training to equip the police force with more and better skills;
- Adequate provision of better and sophisticated equipment, including firearms and vehicles in order to improve response to crime and hasten completion of investigations; and
- Strengthening the intelligence system to facilitate gathering of information.

There is a significant relationship between unemployment and crime, especially among the youth. Efforts towards creating income-generating activities should target the youth. The establishment of a Youth Enterprise Fund aimed at providing the youth with capital to start business is laudable. However, demand for jobs by the youth outstrips the resources allocated to the fund.

Promote co-existence among different communities

There is need to promote peace and harmony among Kenyan communities, especially those warring communities, in order to help curb the perennial tribal clashes in the country. Communities need to be educated on the benefits of a cohesive society and consequences of fighting. The provincial administration should take the lead in promoting peace and harmony. Anybody causing incitement should face the full force of the law.

Efforts to control possession of illegal firearms should be invigorated. Thorough screening and control of illegal immigrants is important since they are associated with the proliferation of illegal and sophisticated firearms through the borders. The proposed law to deal with illegal possession of firearms is therefore timely and should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

Research for development

It is imperative to support research for development in the criminal justice system to help understand the dynamics of criminal activities and help in mapping them. This will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with criminal activities. Research is an important source of knowledge in management of crime. In this regard, the National Crime Research Center should be given enough support in terms of capacity and other resources to be able to perform its functions.

About KIPPRA Policy Briefs

KIPPRA Policy Briefs are aimed at a wide dissemination of the Institute's policy research findings. The findings are expected to stimulate discussion and also build capacity in the public policy making process in Kenya.

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