
URBAN VIOLENCE IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

A research report on root causes, risk factors and preventive strategies



Summary

February 2018



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Acknowledgments

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The authors,
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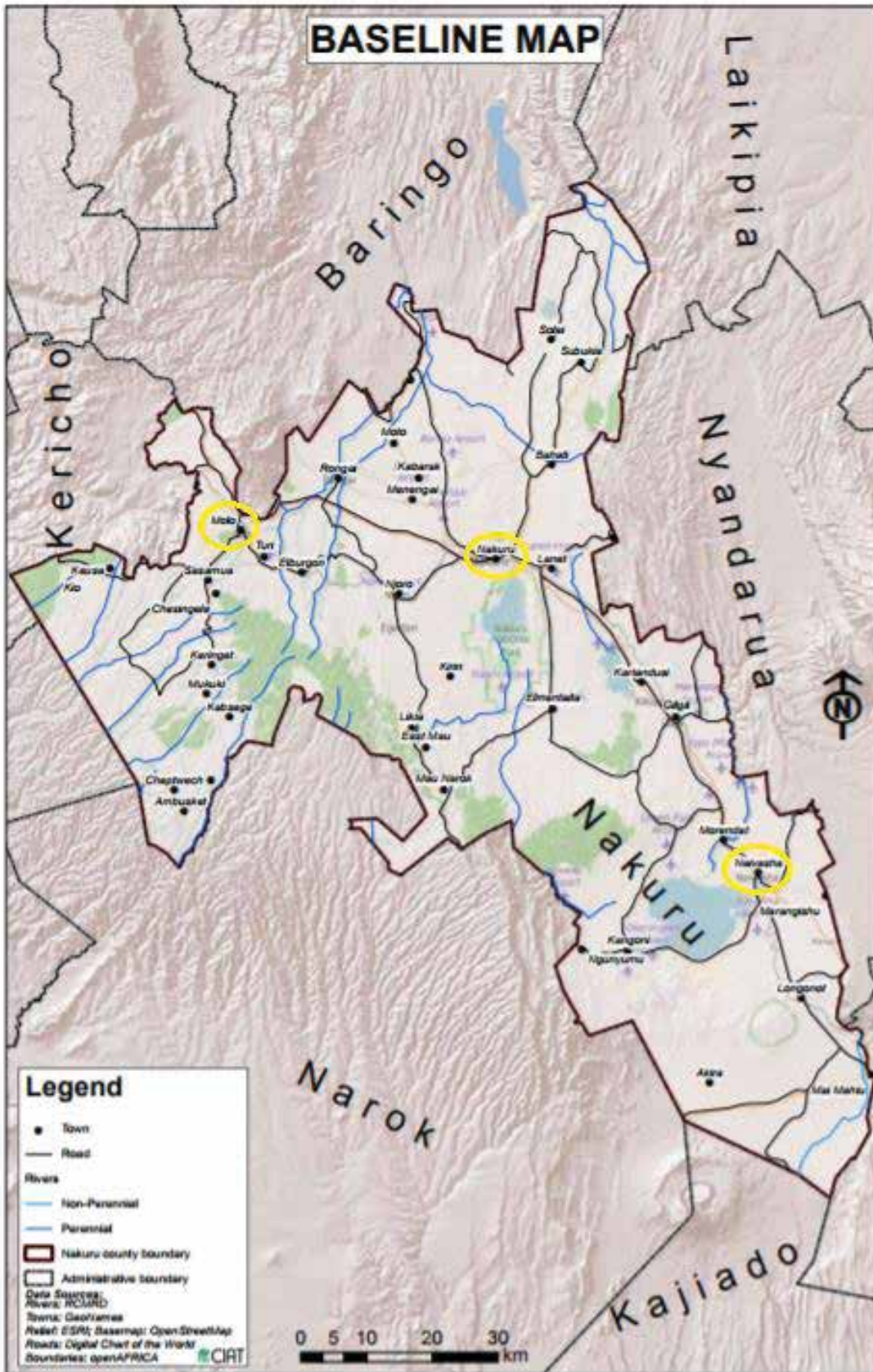
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1. Executive Summary

Rapid urbanisation has led to an increase in the prevalence of urban violence in many developing countries. This is because of the mushrooming of densely populated informal settlements in cities, which are characterised by deprivation and low quality of basic social services such as healthcare and education. The situation is aggravated by the lack of jobs for most residents of these settlements, who experience inequality, marginalisation and exclusion. Such an environment facilitates the emergence and increase in violence in urban centres.

In Kenya, about 25.6 % of the population is urbanised, most of whom live in large cities such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Eldoret and Nakuru, of which 56 % live in informal settlements. Violence in these areas has emerged as a serious security and public health challenge which the Kenyan security agencies have largely been unable to address. Violence has been shown to have significant negative consequences including erosion of social cohesion, trauma, broken families, injuries, deaths and loss of property.

The present study, commissioned by DIGNITY, is the first of its kind as it focusses on urban violence in Nakuru County. It provides new knowledge that will inform the design of a three-year multi-stakeholder urban violence program in selected areas of the county. The study was conducted in five sites across Nakuru County: Bondeni and Kaptembwo, Nakuru Town; Karagita and Kabati, Naivasha Town and Molo Town, where urban violence was previously understudied and, therefore, not well understood. The methodology adopted involved primary research using key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a household survey, with 43 % of respondents from Nakuru Town Municipality, 38 % from Naivasha and 19 % from Molo Town. Most of the respondents were women and young people, of which 69 % were below 34 years and only 10 % above 55 years old. These were complemented by secondary material.

The findings revealed that violence is a major concern for residents of Nakuru County, most of whom felt that violence was becoming more prevalent. The data collected highlights that the most prevalent forms of violence in the County mirrored the patterns of violence in Kenya. Those highlighted in Nakuru include sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), violence against children, violent crime, police violence and political and ethnic violence, which are distributed among the various neighbourhoods. Notably, SGBV and violence against children were highlighted as particularly significant challenges, by more than 70 % and 66 % of respondents, respectively, who noted that these forms of violence mainly occur at the household level. The study highlights that these forms of violence introduce unique challenges to intervention such as when the victims do not want the perpetrator punished for fear of broader repercussions. Violent crime is a significant problem, particularly in Bondeni Area in Nakuru, where 70 % of respondents identified it as most prevalent.

Given the prevalence of SGBV and violence against children, it is unsurprising that most respondents identified the bulk of victims as women, girls and children generally. Undoubtedly, there were few noted cases where men were victimised by their wives as well, especially in

Naivasha. Many respondents also indicated the youth as victims of violence, especially with respect to violent crime and police violence. Unsurprisingly, many respondents also identified young people as the major perpetrators of violence, sexual assault and violent crime. This could be related to the presence of gangs perpetrating violence in the County.

On the causes, of violence, about 80 % of respondents highlighted the underlying causes as unemployment and idleness among the youth, poverty and 60 % attributed it to drugs, especially alcohol abuse. This study however adopts a formulation developed by renowned scholars Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwane (2006) for understanding urban violence. They argue that urban violence is a complex phenomenon that should be viewed through three lenses: structure, identity and agency. As such, we argue that these underlying factors do not in themselves cause violence but rather interact with other social and individual dynamics and triggers to precipitate violence. This is also why the WHO and CDC, four-level social-ecological model (SEM) was adopted, as part of the design of the household questionnaire and in the data analyses. The SEM allows us to address the factors that put people at risk for or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence (risk and protective factors) and the prevention strategies that can be used at each level to address these factors.

The study notes that there are several interventions and coping mechanisms at the individual, community and state levels. We noted individual behaviour changes to limit exposure to violence, such as not walking after dark or *bodaboda* operators accompanying each other while taking customers to neighbourhoods perceived to be more insecure. At the community level, we noted efforts by civil society organisations, community-based organisations and religious institutions to address different types of urban violence through peace initiatives, awareness creation, setting up safe houses for victims of SGBV and the use of technology to alert authorities. At the State level, the respondents noted the Nyumba Kumi initiative, a form of community policing that has been applied across all areas under study, and other interventions by the County Government such as setting up of SGBV unit at hospitals.

The study however noted gaps in these interventions in their approaches and/or coverage, which presents an opportunity for additional programmatic interventions. We note, however, that the success of any intervention will depend on the extent to which it relies on community level structures that are seen as being trustworthy and effective in addressing these challenges of crime and violence. Notably, any intervention would be well advised to include religious leaders, community elders and local chiefs. About 70 % of respondents in this study found these local level institutions as both trustworthy and effective in dealing with violence.

We conclude by proposing recommendations based on the data with a focus on prevention of violence with limited attention paid to interventions after violence has occurred. Our proposed interventions are largely based on how to prevent violence by improving the awareness and understanding of the dynamics of violence and how they should be handled amongst the community and hence empowering the community to deal with violence. The view is on empowering the community to use existing mechanisms to address violence, with focus on

building on the community trust in the existing institutions such as community organisations, police, chiefs, elders and religious leaders.

Here is a summary of our recommendations:

SGBV
1. Supporting the expansion of existing awareness creation and empowerment programs beyond schools to the entire community, especially women and girls to understand the dynamics of violence and how to respond in case of victimisation but also to help men and boys understand what constitutes SGBV
2. Improving the incorporating of the most trusted actors in the communities in the efforts of creating awareness and empowerment related to SGBV. In this regard, programs to prevent SGBV cases should include doctors, religious leaders and the police.
3. Support further dissemination of information on the legal procedures relating to sexual violence including the preservation of evidence to facilitate arrest and successful prosecution. The trusted institutions within the community such as religious leaders and elders should be equipped with this information as they could be first points of contact of victims or witnesses of violence.
Violence against children
1. Support programs carried out by trusted local institutions such as religious leaders that raise awareness about the rights of children and the negative effects of violence against children. Such programs should also include education on parenting skills and other methods of disciplining children. Bringing doctors to speak to parent groups about the long-term effects of violence against children could strengthen such programs.
2. Develop school-based programs to empower children to be able to report on cases of violence and abuse occurring to them or to their friends at home, in the neighbourhood or in school including how to protect themselves from victimisation
3. Provide support to existing child support centres and homes for victims of this type of violence or setting up new ones in partnership with the communities to deal with the most serious cases.
Violent crime

1. Strengthening of existing community level interventions of dealing with violent crime such as the Nyumba Kumi and Community Policing initiatives. This requires a more fine-grained analysis of why they work better in some places and not others in order to replicate best practices across the county.
2. Support the scaling of the Mulika Uhalifu program or such similar initiatives across the county to help in the reporting of violent crime.
3. Lobby the government to enhance the existing programs of dealing with proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the county.
4. Work with the existing state mechanisms such as IPOA to enhance police accountability.
5. Support the National Police Service, and other mechanisms, at the local level to enhance patrols, investigate reported cases, arrest and prosecute perpetrators.
6. Target out of school youths in peace and security programming.
7. Address the high rate of youth unemployment through provision of life skills, linkages to access of government youth funds and the 30% tender provision by government.
8. Chiefs and police should crackdown on suppliers and brewers of illicit alcohol and supply drugs.
9. Demobilize violent gangs and provide them with alternative life skills to deter re-offending.
10. Promote citizen understanding and confidence of criminal justice system to improve citizen willingness to stand-in as witnesses and pursue cases in the courts.
11. Encourage police officers, directorate of public prosecutions and the courts to work in tandem in expediting cases before them in time.
Police violence
1. Support the existing programs by local level NGOs to create awareness about the rights of citizens when dealing with the police in order to increase demand for fair treatment when engaging with the Police.
2. Work with state level institutions responsible for creating police accountability including IPOA, NCAJ, KNHRC to help the residents better understand their roles and how to seek recourse in case of abuse by police officers.
3. Support local NGOs to fight the impunity of police officers by enabling them to bring cases against rogue police officers so that they can face the consequences of their actions.
4. Support community partnerships with the police where such issues can be raised and addressed.

Political and ethnic violence

1. Supporting the existing mechanisms developed by local NGOs and Faith Based Organisations to enhance inter-ethnic cohesion.
2. Lobby government institutions such as the NCIC, National Peace Committees to have a broader and deeper presence in Nakuru County.
3. Support and encourage the County Government of Nakuru to extend the Barazas on understanding and tolerance beyond Nakuru Municipality to other areas of the County.
- 4.
5. Work with the County Government to develop inclusion policies that promote equality of opportunity for all citizens in the County, regardless of ethnic background.
6. Support national level efforts, executed at the county level to address historical injustice in the most inclusive manner. Most importantly, the resettlement of IDPs displaced by politicised political and ethnic violence in previous elections.
7. Encourage community members to report cases of incitement by political leaders and support the prosecution of such leaders in the community.

Intersectoral violence prevention

All the above-mentioned types of violence, can be addressed by focusing work and interventions towards the following:

1. Participation and Norm change on how to prevent violence perpetration from happening at all, and reducing risk factors for people becoming perpetrators, by mobilizing participation and challenging norms.
2. Trust-building between police and community, as recommended by the World Bank.
3. Leadership development for intersectoral coalition building should be strengthened.
4. Forward looking we see a need for more studies and research into data on perpetrators as opposed to victims and victim-based data.

