

## **Community-Led Security Mechanisms: The case of Mlango Kubwa and Kawangware in Nairobi**

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### **Abstract**

*The state assertion of monopoly over the provision of security and use of force remains a contested reality in Kenya. Challenges of inadequate finances, personnel and equipment limit the state's capacity to secure the entire territory. The political economy allows for hierarchy in the provision of security and results in marginalisation of poor neighbourhoods and their security needs. Instead, they are seen as a source of insecurity and policing exerts a repressive hand. In the resulting lacuna, community-led security mechanisms emerge to provide security in poor neighbourhoods. The experience, successes and challenges of these mechanisms hold important lessons for policy-making on urban security. This paper presents the findings of a study assessing the effectiveness of community-led security mechanisms in two poor neighbourhoods in Nairobi and argues that nodal governance of security is the de-facto reality and indicates the trajectory of security governance in Kenya.*

**Keywords:** Security governance, poor urban neighbourhoods, Nairobi

### **Introduction**

Public policing in Kenya and other nations in Africa has not succeeded in asserting monopoly over the provision of security and the use of force across the entire territory of the state (CHRIPS 2014). Often, a number of regions within the state remain underserved in the delivery of state security services. Inadequate financial resources and deficiency in security personnel numbers are among the key factors that limit state capacity to extend security services across the entire territory in Kenya and a number of countries in Africa. Added to this is a political economy that allows for classification of some geographic regions as low priority thus facilitating their marginalisation in

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the provision of services including security. Further, it allows a socioeconomic stratification that imposes a hierarchy in the delivery of services, placing poor neighbourhoods low down in the hierarchy. Poor neighbourhoods often do not have security needs met by the state. The resulting lacuna creates room for other non-state actors to emerge, ranging from private entrepreneurs, self-help initiatives to criminal gangs and militia some of whom provide security and some create insecurity.

Kenya's urbanisation as well as successive governments' failure to curb deepening poverty has triggered the growth of large poor urban neighbourhoods that occupy space often on the fringes of upscale neighbourhoods. These poor urban areas represent a laboratory of complexity in state service provision and in particular with regard to security. Many are viewed in both public and policy thinking as crime and violence ridden. Indeed, one may say, insecurity is a defining characterisation of these neighbourhoods in popular imagination and discussion. One would expect that in the absence of adequate state security provision such neighbourhoods quickly descend into lawlessness and rampant crime, but not all low-income neighbourhoods in Kenya reflect this expectation.

While it is widely acknowledged that contemporary security provision may include non-state actors, their role and impact has not been the subject of extensive study. Formal non-state security institutions are registered and regulated under the Private Security Regulation Act 16 of 2015, Companies Act 17 of 2015 and other general laws that govern corporations. The informal mechanisms are diverse and are more prevalent in low-income neighbourhoods. They significantly shape security within these neighbourhoods but are not well known, studied or understood at the policy level. A pre-occupation with security governance as the exclusive domain of state security institutions obscures such community-led mechanisms. The reality is that plural sites of managing security typify contemporary security governance particularly at the micro level. These mechanisms vary in structure, articulated purposes and they have varying relationships with state security agencies or even no relationship.

The study on community-led security mechanisms explores security governance by non-state actors and seeks to present an understanding of measures taken within communities, initiated and driven by those communities towards securing their neighbourhoods. The study argues the

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hypothesis that emerging non-state, private citizen initiatives in the developing world are de facto transforming the security provision and governance into a function that is fulfilled by multiple actors even in the face of continued assertion of states of their monopoly over the provision of security.

The study is located in nodal governance approach which Burris, Drahos and Shearing (2005) present as an elaboration of the contemporary network theory of governance. Nodal governance perceives management of complex social systems through a plurality of actors engaged in micro-governance and through their actions, interactions and networking they generate social order. Nodal governance of security therefore focuses on the pluralisation of the centres and actors through which social order and security are governed and delivered. These centres or nodes often – but not always – function as nodes within a network, where the network shares an interest in common outcomes. The relationships between the different nodes are deliberate and activated to achieve the desired goals in the most efficient and effective way possible. The nodal governance framework has been propounded and debated in the works of scholars including Stenning and Shearing (1980), Bayley and Shearing (1996), Burris, Drahos and Shearing (2005), Berg (2007), and Wood and Shearing (2007), and Majjid (2011), among others. Nodal governance framework is relevant in studying the community-led mechanisms in the selected neighbourhoods in Nairobi and understanding how the initiatives operate and interact as part of a network or independently to generate security outcomes within the communities. The study in Nairobi focused on two low-income urban neighbourhoods: Mlango Kubwa in Mathare Sub-county and Kawangware in Dagoretti North Sub-county.

#### **Methodology**

This is a qualitative study that places emphasis on the narratives, perceptions and experiences of the residents in relation to community security and the operation of the mechanisms in Mlango Kubwa and Kawangware. The study explores nodal governance of security in these neighbourhoods, the interaction of the nodes towards realizing security outcomes and the effectiveness of these nodes in providing security within the neighbourhoods. Four characterizations of nodal governance as identified by Burris, Drahos and Shearing (2005) were key in defining the parameters of data collection:

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1. Mentalities or a way of thinking about governance. These focus on the narratives of how the node sees the world;
2. A set of methods or technologies for exerting influence over the flow of events. It includes the means of intervention employed to achieve the desired outcomes or prevent a breach of security;
3. Resources to support a node's operations;
4. Institutional structure that enables the directed mobilisation of resources, mentalities and technologies over time, with different levels of formality.

The assessment of effectiveness focused on assessing the success of the community-led mechanisms in achieving the objective of community security. Community perspectives on the success of the mechanisms, the acceptance of their methods and approaches, their deployment of resources and the institutional structures they adopt to achieve their objectives were relevant in assessing effectiveness.

**Profile of Respondents**

Data collection was done through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The in-depth interviews were important to gain an understanding of the nature of the mechanisms, their operations and the interactions of the community-led mechanisms with other nodes. The key informants chosen were those who exercise leadership, influence or authority in the community, and are involved in or are privy to decision-making regarding security and safety in the community. It also included police officers and local administration officials. The focus group discussions were necessary for assessing the effectiveness of the community-led security mechanisms. Community members' narratives, lived experiences, community attitudes, perceptions and understanding of the interactions between the community-led mechanisms and state security agencies were essential in deriving an analysis of the effectiveness of the mechanisms. A total of 28 key informants were interviewed and 73 community residents participated in 11 focus group discussions held in both neighbourhoods. The study targeted both men and women as separate respondents as well as together in groups. Forty-one percent of the respondents were women and 59 percent were men.

In Mlango Kubwa, the key informants included the leadership of the Mlango Kubwa Landlords and Tenants Association (MLATA) which is the community-led security initiative studied in the area. Other key informants

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are the male and female leaders of a youth group, landlords, caretakers of residential housing units, residents who have been in Mlango Kubwa for a long time, the local administration at the Chief's Office, police officers, Nyumba Kumi leaders,<sup>1</sup> church leaders and one self-confessed former criminal. The focus group discussions drew in male and female tenants, members of self-help groups, women's giving circles and youth groups.

In Kawangware, the key informants included the Dagoretti Landowners Association leadership as the main community-led security mechanism that the study reviewed. It also included District Peace Committee members, landlords and an opinion leader who also runs a community-based organization. The focus group discussion participants included male and female tenants, young men who are part of a reform group for former criminals, young men in the community, young women, youth group associations and business owners.

#### **Overview of Low-Income Neighbourhoods in Nairobi**

Nairobi was set up as a colonial European city, providing residential housing as well as business premises for the colonial settlers. Africans who lived in the city were present as labour servicing the colonial economy. They were settled in restricted residential areas like Mathare where housing was typified by low quality, mainly single-room houses. Men, who were the bulk of African labour shared accommodation and hence the setting did not cater for family units (UN-Habitat, 2003; Hake, 1997; Kinuthia, 1992). These segregated areas were not prioritized by the government and service provision remained inadequate. After independence in 1963, many Africans were migrating from rural areas to look for work. The bulk of the migrants coming into Nairobi settled in these low income, poor housing areas reserved for Africans. The areas remained unplanned and underserved by the local government even after independence. Where segregation was previously on racial lines dividing the neighbourhoods where the colonial settler and black labourers lived, after independence it was entrenched in a socioeconomic hierarchy cementing the residential divide between the poor and those better off (UN-Habitat, 2003).

Since then, the growth of informal settlements has been prolific in Kenya. An estimated 71 percent of the urban population in Kenya is living in informal settlements with the number projected to double in 30 years if necessary interventions are not undertaken (UN-Habitat, 2006). The focus on security in low income neighbourhoods becomes a critical consideration given that

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the vastly greater population of the city lives in these neighbourhoods. UN-Habitat notes that while slums are not necessarily a source of urban unrest, they nonetheless constitute areas that experience a higher concentration of crime, violence and victimisation (UN-Habitat, 2003).

### **Study Sites**

The selection of Mlango Kubwa and Mathare as study sites was informed by the fact that the two areas manifest typical attributes of low income neighbourhoods but also have individual characteristics and histories that inform the fairly different community-led security mechanisms they have in place. Low-income neighbourhoods for purposes of the study are spatial; connected to physical space and occupying a particular geographical region within the city. The neighbourhoods were determined by area rather than individual households. Poor urban neighbourhoods in Nairobi and indeed in other cities are identifiable by the low socioeconomic status of the residents and their informal and unplanned nature of the neighbourhoods. In some cases, the residents are squatters or tenants on public land. These neighbourhoods have low penetration of public services and poor infrastructure. The Kenya Ministry of Water and Sanitation notes that the prominent attributes that characterize low income areas are: an absence of a clear layout and plan; dense population; poor infrastructure and services including access to water, drainage systems, solid waste disposal, road infrastructure; poor quality housing; and temporary housing structures.

The selection of the sites was guided by an initial pilot study of four low income neighbourhoods in Nairobi: Kangemi, Kibera, Kawangware and Mlango Kubwa. A key criterion was the existence of community-led security mechanisms. For purposes of the study, such mechanisms excluded criminal organizations, formal private security enterprises and state-instituted mechanisms.

### ***Mlango Kubwa***

Mlango Kubwa is part of the larger Mathare neighbourhood that is one of Nairobi's oldest poor neighbourhoods. Mathare lies 5km to 10 km to the north east of Nairobi's Central Business District. Since the reclassification of geographic regions under the decentralized system of governance in Kenya, Mathare is a Sub-county made up of seven Wards. Wards are the smallest administrative units represented by Ward Members of County Assemblies. Mlango Kubwa is a Ward within Mathare Sub-County. The larger neighbourhood that has been known as Mathare has a spectrum of low

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income neighbourhoods with several sections classified as slums, including Mlango Kubwa. The larger neighbourhood has a history of crime and violence. In 2006 and 2007, Mlango Kubwa became associated with the criminal group Mungiki and was the site for many violent confrontations between the police and the group.

Mlango Kubwa comprises of a mixture of permanent and semi-permanent housing. The vast majority of residents are tenants. Housing rents range between Ksh 500 and Ksh 5,000 depending on the housing type and the location. Within Mlango Kubwa, the Kiandaa area is considered by residents as the most insecure. Kiandaa is also much poorer than other sections of Mlango Kubwa, with most of its structures made of iron sheets and rented out as bedsitters and single bedroom units.

Mlango Kubwa hosts a diverse demographic. Wa Teresia's study on crime in Nairobi city slums (2011) notes that the demographic of Mathare and other major slums in Nairobi comprises of a largely young male population below the age of 35. Most residents are engaged in income activities such as hawking goods along roads or small level trading within or outside the neighbourhood (selling cooked food and snacks, selling vegetables and fruit). A few are employed as house helps or security guards in homes mainly outside Mathare; as construction workers, mechanic assistants, among others. Income for many residents falls within the region of Ksh 3000 to Ksh 8000 per month, which mirrors the circumstances of residents in similar low income neighbourhoods (UN-Habitat 2003; Masese and Muia, 2014).

#### *Kawangware*

The second study site, Kawangware, is a low income neighbourhood that hosts a diverse demographic of residents that range from low income residents to a lower tier of middle income tenants and fairly well off landlords and landowners. Housing varies from high-rise flats with one, two to three rooms leased for prices ranging from Ksh 5,000 to Ksh 15,000 as well as low-cost housing renting for Ksh 1,000 to Ksh 5,000. The housing in low-income areas within Kawangware varies from stone houses to those made from iron sheets, from wood and some mud-plastered houses.

Kawangware occupies an area of approximately three square kilometres and is located towards the west end of Nairobi, an estimated 12 kilometres away from the central business district. Kawangware is a village within the larger Dagoretti area and has a large number of residential landlords and

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landowners. In addition to residential housing, the area also has a commercial shopping centre that includes banks, mini supermarkets, clothing shops and other small businesses. According to the Kenya Housing and Population Survey of 2009 up to 65 percent of residents are youth and mainly male youth.

### **Crime and Security in Nairobi**

Poor urban neighbourhoods are defined by common attributes that include the absence of a clear planning, dense population, poor road infrastructure, poor quality housing including presence of temporary housing structures and inadequate services including access to water, drainage systems, solid waste disposal. The growth of informal settlements has been prolific in Kenya with a rate of 5.4 percent per annum, as at 2006 (UN-Habitat, 2006; Mitullah, 2003). Indeed, an estimated 71 percent of the urban population in Kenya is said to live in poor neighbourhoods with the number projected to double in 30 years if necessary interventions are not undertaken (UN-Habitat, 2006: 41).

Beyond Kenya, the UN-Habitat points out that crime has become concomitant with urbanisation in many African cities (2003:219). Since urbanisation in Africa is characterized by increased movement of urban populations into slums, it is not surprising that these poor urban neighbourhoods have also emerged as urban sectors significantly affected by crime and violence.

Crime and insecurity persist as among the major challenges poor urban areas of Nairobi grapple with. Two-thirds of residents of Nairobi's poor urban neighbourhoods report that they do not feel safe in their neighbourhoods (Oxfam, 2009: 14). A 2010 World Bank study of Kariobangi and Viwandani areas of Nairobi indicates that residents of these areas rank crime and violence as the leading problem that they face (World Bank, 2011). However, updated data and statistics on crime and violence in these neighbourhoods has not kept pace with the developments. The National Police Service of Kenya has in recent years released annual statistics reports on crime and violence covering the country.<sup>2</sup> These provide data on types of crimes committed and prevalence of the crimes per county. However, they do not provide data disaggregation that allows a view on the levels of crime in poor urban neighbourhoods compared to middle income and affluent urban neighbourhoods, or crime in poor urban neighbourhoods versus poor rural neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, it is generally known that Nairobi has poor



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reputation when it comes to crime. Indeed, for many years, the international press has mockingly referred to the city as *Nairobbery* (Diphhoorn 2016).

Nairobi's escalating crime is believed to have accelerated in the 1980s as the country grappled with economic austerity (Gimode, 2001). Incidents of armed robberies and carjackings were rife. Outside of Nairobi, crime waves had also become a serious challenge for security with highway bandits attacking motorists. By the early 1990s, some western countries issued travel advisories to their citizens advising them to avoid visiting Kenya due to the insecurity (Gimode, 2001). The collapse of Somalia in 1992 led to a flood of illegal arms into the country that further escalated lethal crime in Nairobi and other cities.

Over the years, crime has waxed and waned. By the early 2000s, crime in Nairobi had taken on a new dimension with the emergence of organized criminal groups that were somehow linked to the country's raucous politics. The most prominent of these were the *Mungiki* and the *Taliban*, with the former linked to then Central Province (Kikuyu) politicians and the latter to Nyanza Province (Luo) politicians. These groups added complexity to Nairobi's criminal scene and economy of bank robberies, house break-ins, muggings and assaults. They operated within the poor and informal urban neighbourhoods of Nairobi from where they drew their membership and built economies of predation on the local communities (Mutahi, 2011). The emergence and proliferation of these groups also solidified and cemented the public perceptions and policy-makers' views that crime and violence were located in poor urban neighbourhoods of the city.

Kenya police statistics indicate that crimes classified as stealing, break-ins and robbery accounted for 25 percent of reported crime in the country (National Police Service 2015). Stealing includes muggings and snatching from pedestrians. Police reports do not distinguish crimes that take place in low income and high or higher income neighbourhoods. However, credible studies have noted that poor urban neighbourhoods are susceptible to capture by criminal gangs whose activities range from provision of security to criminal attacks on residents and rival gangs as well as provision of political muscle to local politicians at a fee (Kenya. Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence: 2008; KNCHR 2008; Human Rights Watch 2008; Okombo and Sana 2010).

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Most of the public and policy attention has focused on the operations of the criminal groups and the security challenges they pose to the more affluent areas of the city. How the poor, who live in these neighbourhoods, are policed, still remains understudied. What is known is that efforts to provide security in these poor neighbourhoods through public police have been quite limited and where efforts are made they have often led to punitive treatment of residents by the security agencies. The mentality in policing poor neighbourhoods has been largely one of punitive expeditions to “flush out” criminals who are believed to hide in these neighbourhoods. Relations between the public and the police in these neighbourhoods therefore remain poor. The residents fear and resent the police. Moreover, the police are not available in sufficient numbers to provide security as expected and as is needed by the residents (Mutahi, 2011).

In the more affluent parts of the city, private security is a ubiquitous phenomenon. Indeed, it has been noted that private security guards in Kenya, now outnumber public police to the ratio of five to one (Ruteere 2014; Kenya; National Taskforce on Police Reforms, 2009). For the majority of the poor however, private security is unaffordable. Without the public police, the poor have to resort to self-help measures that include community based security initiatives of various shades. These come in the form of vigilantes, community neighbourhood watches. Security provision in many of the poor neighbourhoods reflects a form hybrid of private initiatives, public policing and community interventions.

### **Mlango Kubwa - Community-led Security Mechanisms**

#### ***Security/Insecurity in Mlango Kubwa***

Mlango Kubwa, like other low income neighbourhoods of Nairobi, has experienced insecurity linked to crime for years. However, in 2007 the area came prominently to the public's attention with media reports of police operations against the Mungiki criminal group. During this period, the area was heavily and intensely patrolled by police who on many occasions conducted house-to-house raids, arrests and killings of Mungiki suspects, as well as demolition of their houses and meeting places. Interviews with community residents attest to the burning of a community hall by police on suspicion that it was the meeting place for Mungiki. A focus group discussion with youth affiliated to the Mathare Environmental and Conservation Youth Group (MECYG)<sup>3</sup> and interviews with the leadership of the group<sup>4</sup> indicate that community members believe the police were unwilling to entertain an alternative perspective on the community hall and

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in fact burned down the only place where youth could congregate within the neighbourhood. At the time of the study, the community centre had since been rebuilt by MECYG with the financial support of a well-wisher. The community members believe they faced excessive police force and brutality in the police crackdown on Mungiki, with some young people opting to flee from the area, whether they were affiliated to Mungiki or not. Eventually the crackdown on Mungiki in the area waned and as of 2013 there has been little overt activity associated with Mungiki in Mlango Kubwa.

Discussions with residents and interviews with key informants point out that crime, and in particular muggings, snatch-and-run and robberies, continue to occur. This state has left residents fearful of having non-residents visit the area as they are likely to fall victim to crime. Describing the levels of crime, one woman in focus group discussion with women stated,

Even that bag you [the researcher] are carrying would have been taken on the road long before you reached here [interview site]. You may even have lost your shoes.<sup>5</sup>

A church leader interviewed remarked:

*Mlango Kubwa pamesahaulika sana. Security imekuwa mbaya na kumekuwa na visa vingi vya uhalifu na mauaji. Hata kulea watoto hapa ilikuwa shida. Unapata mara mtoto amejiunga na ma-gangs, mara utampata kule Juja Road akipiga watu ngeta ama kusnatch vitu kwa magari za watu.<sup>6</sup>*

[Mlango Kubwa is a forgotten place. Security has been bad and there have been incidents of crime and killings. Even raising children here was a problem. You would find the child has joined criminal gangs or will be along Juja Road mugging people or grabbing valuables out of cars.]

Interviews with the MECYG leadership underscored that until 2011 several incidents of muggings resulted in stabbings and even death.<sup>7</sup> In 2012, eleven residents were stabbed and killed during roadside robberies at night. Police patrols within the area are infrequent and do not provide an adequate deterrence for crime. The study established a sense of abandonment by the formal security apparatus that is echoed by residents and community leaders.

Some respondents link crime within Mlango Kubwa to peer pressure, particularly where gangs are involved. One self-identified former criminal

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said he was drawn into crime as he watched his peers buying new clothes and shoes, and looking well put together while he continued to struggle.<sup>8</sup> He felt acutely his lack of “good things”. The residents interviewed suggest that a chronic idleness among the youth makes the lure into crime very strong.<sup>9</sup> The rampant incidents of muggings, waylaying pedestrians, breaking into business premises and homes, and sometimes even killings or serious injuries during the robberies served to limit movement of residents and curtailed the possibilities of carrying out business late into the night. It also resulted in a high turnover of residents after short tenancy periods. Insecurity in the area also created a limiting prism through which the youth of Mlango Kubwa and their initiatives were viewed. The young men feel they have had a history of poor interactions with the police who are neither patient with the community nor interested in alternative narratives other than of the area as a crime zone.

Engagements between security agencies and the community have been largely acrimonious given the perception of Mlango Kubwa as a hub for crime and criminals. Police presence has often been in the form of raids, swoops and operations aimed at ferreting out suspected criminals. On a number of occasions, police have gunned down suspected criminals. Innocent civilians have also have been killed in these security operations. Respondents perceive that the police are disinterested in their safety and more interested in operations where they can get money. The police rarely come to their aid for issues seen as petty crimes (such as house break-ins) and when they do, it is often too late. One respondent, a middle aged man who is a long-time resident of the area, suggested that it is as though the police want them to do all the work: to do the investigations, find the criminals and take them to the police station.<sup>10</sup> The police are not doing enough to see to the security of the place.

When asked, all the focus group participants were of the view that sexual violence crimes register a low incidence rate in the area unless they happen within the context of the home in which case they are easily hidden. They attributed the low level of rape and sexual violence to the form of security provided by the residents themselves within Mlango Kubwa. However, it is possible that sexual violence is seen as less dire for the community as it is less visible, more individual and carries a stigma for the victim. It may not be flagged as a crime to be addressed by MLATA initiative or other community groups with the survivors opting to remain anonymous.

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The marked deterioration of security and inadequate police response left the residents desperate for measures to improve security and make life bearable in Mlango Kubwa. Several efforts had been made to curb the insecurity threats in the various residential areas within Mlango Kubwa. Some residents of housing areas put together money to hire individuals as watchmen were armed with a club, stick or baton to watch over their housing areas at night. Others opted to having the young men in a housing area patrolling periodically to deter those who would engage in crime. While these measures provided security around the housing unit, it did not guarantee residents safety when walking through the neighbourhood. A more collective and concerted effort came through the establishment of the Mlango Kubwa Landlords and Tenants Association or MLATA.

#### *Management of security*

MLATA and community members believe that the police have the overall responsibility for maintaining law, order and security. However, residents believe the police are seen when conducting raids and operations aimed at flushing out criminals believed to be hiding in Mlango Kubwa but rarely apply the same diligence in addressing the security concerns within the community. One church leader was of the view that in Kiandaa, police allow the business of brewing illicit alcohol to thrive because they use it as a rent collection activity. Brewers are harassed when caught and forced to pay bribes in order to avoid criminal prosecution. Community members identify that the *chang'aa*<sup>11</sup> business creates a trigger for insecurity as potent alcohol is available at all hours of the day and at low cost thereby enabling many young people to engage in crime while inebriated or under the influence of the alcohol.

Interviews with the police engagement reveal Mlango Kubwa as the source of that crime which poses a risk for the rest of Nairobi.<sup>12</sup> Interviews with police officers indicate the view that Mlango Kubwa produces many of the highway muggers and snatch-and-run thieves along Juja Road, a large and busy road that transverses Mathare subcounty. The police officers interviewed believe that the security situation in Mlango Kubwa has improved significantly, which they attribute to their work.

#### *Mlango Kubwa Landlords and Tenants Association (MLATA)*

The Mlango Kubwa Landlords and Tenants Association (MLATA) was created and registered as a Community Based Organisation in October 2013. As a community initiative, it brings together resident landlords and tenants

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to deal with community challenges and particularly insecurity. MLATA was principally formed in response to the deteriorated security in Mlango Kubwa and the failure to get timely responses from the state security actors to curb the crime. It was also intended as a forum to address issues arising between landlords and tenants and to champion initiatives that improve Mlango Kubwa. MLATA is also seen as significant in curbing crime in a more acceptable way following a sharp escalation in crime after Mungiki gang was ejected from Mlango Kubwa. MLATA has two arms: a landlords' committee of 10 members tasked to deal with the landlord and tenant issues and a watchmen committee of 10 members responsible for enforcing safety in the neighbourhood.

Prior to this, the Mungiki gang had established Mlango Kubwa as a major centre from which it operated and carried out its activities in Nairobi particularly in 2007. This included forceful extraction of rents and fees from residents in the a number of low income neighbourhoods, levying fees for privately owned public transport vehicles that plied 'Mungiki routes', as well as seeking to influence the dominant ethnic groups residing in particular neighbourhoods by terrorizing residents from other ethnic communities. At the same time, Mungiki was successful in thwarting crime and disorder in slums and improving some of the public facilities and services (Ruteere, 2009; Landinfo, 2010; Sana and Okombo, 2012). Mungiki asserted a form of 'law and order' in the Mlango Kubwa that not only triggered the exodus of criminals from the area but also left residents living in fear. They established a system of protection for residents at a fee imposed unilaterally and violently. They conducted public trials for crime suspects, gave summary judgements and meted out corporal punishment or even killings. This protection system also brought the Mungiki gang into conflict with local property owners and business people who bore the greater weight of the extortionist practices. Due to their pattern of abductions, macabre killings, terrorising public transport operators and fomenting conflict between communities beyond Mlango Kubwa, the group's quickly came into conflict with the police. In 2007, police mounted a brutal crackdown of the gang, leading to the killing of several of its members as well as deaths of a number of youth in Mlango Kubwa. Eventually Mungiki was ousted from Mlango Kubwa. Police patrols and engagement in Mlango Kubwa also ceased after it was clear Mungiki had been rooted out. In this void, crime resurged within the neighbourhood. MLATA arose to stem the rise of crime.

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Although initially registered as a community-based organization, MLATA's registration was withdrawn in 2014 and its bank account frozen. This was on the assertion that a community-based organisation cannot undertake security activities unless it is registered as a private security company. The organisation has continued to operate within the community to promote security and continues to enjoy acceptance of community members. Respondents in focus group discussions were emphatic that the improved security in Mlango Kubwa was a credit to MLATA. The organisation is considered necessary to the continued relative security enjoyed in Mlango Kubwa.

### *Organisation of MLATA and community perspectives*

MLATA has adopted a community-supported, open approach of addressing the increased crime. MLATA leadership is conscious of the coercive approach that Mungiki gang had applied and the organisation is keen to distinguish itself from the style, intent and reputation of Mungiki. At its inception, MLATA held a community meeting to discuss solutions to the insecurity plaguing the neighbourhood. The leadership sought ideas and input from community members on the MLATA initiative and built consensus around contributing cash voluntarily to provide incentive to the young men who would undertake patrols. It was agreed that MLATA collects a monthly fee of Ksh 50 per tenant and Ksh 300 to Ksh 1500 per landlord depending on the size and number of their houses. The money is given voluntarily and receipted.

MLATA faces the challenge of some tenants and landlords opting not to pay. The question of compulsion of residents and landlords to pay is seen as the key factor that distinguishes MLATA from the Mungiki gang. However, it means that the amount collected by MLATA is not consistent and while it is clear that the money given to the youth is an incentive rather than a salary, a number of youth rely on this money as their income or to supplement their income. Some landlords and caretakers feel the amount is too much and should be reduced to Ksh 300 or Ksh 400 for landlords.

After its deregistration, MLATA lost the confidence and authority to publicly convene meetings and openly discuss security for fear of running afoul of the law and being labelled a vigilante group or a gang. This means that the space for collective community engagement, providing feedback and sharing ideas is significantly undermined. MLATA's lack of registration also means it cannot engage openly and formally with the local administration and

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security agencies on issues of security. Instead, MLATA and many in Mlango Kubwa rely on individual relationships established with police officers and the area chief and assistant chief. These relationships easily fall into patronage patterns, are precarious and do not provide a reliable way to collectively address community insecurity. They are also subject to end suddenly due to normal redeployment of the police and the local administrative officers. This is likely to affect its future credibility as there is presently no forum through which community members can collectively provide feedback. Ideas, opinions and complaints are now shared with the MLATA leadership by approaching the known members of the committee who will then relay the information to other MLATA leaders.

MLATA has considered registration as a private security company to improve its ability to operate and to regain access to its bank accounts. Some MLATA members argue that formalizing the registration may create opportunities for youth employment since they will have to formally employ watchmen or security guards and provide them with uniforms. This may encourage more consistent contributions from tenants and landlords and generate support from external entities, such as for donation of flashlights and other equipment. It also will provide a platform in which the police are may engage with MLATA more readily. However, the MLATA leadership points out that operating as a registered private security company will require meeting obligations such as taxation, auditing, indemnity fees, among others. Higher running costs and statutory obligations necessitate charging fees and with charging fees it would mean not everyone in the community will benefit from provision of security. One leader remarked that people have already tried to hire watchmen.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, in some housing units, landlords retain one or two security guards. While this may work for the housing unit, it does not take care of the broader problem of insecurity in Mlango Kubwa neighbourhood and has not always been effective in actually stopping break-ins. He was of the view that the community ownership element will be lost if MLATA is forced to provide security only to those who pay. MLATA is unwilling to convert into a private security company. It nonetheless continues to organize and coordinate community patrols to promote security in the neighbourhood.

#### ***Methods and technologies of delivering security - MLATA***

The security patrols are undertaken on a volunteer basis by young men. Initially the night patrols would have as many as 50 young men patrolling in groups around the neighbourhood. Women do not participate in patrols as it



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is seen as a male role and responsibility. The sheer number of young men patrolling at a time is intended as a deterrent to criminals. Their presence and patrols every night is believed to have reduced crime in the area. One female tenant described the significant change that MLATA patrols have had on insecurity as follows: "At last we could go a whole night without hearing someone screaming because they are being mugged or robbed".<sup>14</sup> Public awareness of the patrols by MLATA has encouraged individuals to report crime. The reports are made in the first instance to MLATA and depending on the nature of the issue, may be escalated to the police. When asked where they report crime, focus group discussion respondents said invariably that MLATA is the first port of call.<sup>15</sup> Major crimes, such as killings or violent crimes involving arms were reported to MLATA but also reported to the police.

MLATA also reaches out to youth groups such as Mathare Environmental and Cultural Youth Group (MECYG) and its affiliated football club Pequininos. It also works with Karambee Environment Group and its football club Espana. MLATA taps into ongoing community improvement projects and promoting awareness among the youth and the broader community that the improvement of their community living area depends on them. The groups thus engage in environment conservation projects and income generating ventures such as garbage collection and disposal, drainage and sanitation, as well as ensuring security of their neighbourhood.

MLATA employs a process of gradual escalation in dealing with known criminals. In the first instance, MLATA will intervene with a suspected criminal to warn him or her against continuation in crime. He or she may be warned a few times depending on the crime and the circumstances. If that does not work, the leadership will intervene with the subject's family. In cases where the criminal is caught in the act, particularly men, the individual may be roughed up a bit and warned against continuing in crime. If the individual is unyielding, they are arrested and handed over to the police.

MLATA sees value in adopting a more understanding approach that gives known criminals the opportunity to self-correct and reform. It uses community pressure to prompt and in some instances compel change from a lifestyle of theft. At least 70 percent of the respondents see this approach as positive as it treats the criminal as a person and a known member of the community, and provides them with an opportunity to reform. Residents believe that a person engaging in petty crime within the neighbourhood does

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not automatically make them a 'bad person'. Immediately handing over criminals to the police does not give them a chance to reform and throws the individual into the criminal justice system, giving them a crime record which then may create a cycle of engaging in crime.

Questions arise on how MLATA would deal with female criminals within the community. In keeping with common public perceptions of violent crime as committed by men and the provision of security also being a male domain, MLATA has not anticipated a situation where crime in society is committed by women. At the time of the study only males had been the subject of these interventions. One MECYG leader suggested that an intervention with the family would most likely be undertaken if the culprit is female. However, this may also point to an inherent bias and blind spot that MLATA may have in defining what crimes receive MLATA attention and interventions. Crimes that affect women may not be visible or prioritized. In thinking of the mentalities and technologies of nodal governance of security it becomes significant that a seemingly gender neutral approach to defining crime in the community is adopted whereas the types of crime prioritized and initiatives instituted to address the crime may be blind to specific crimes that affect women.

#### *Nodal Governance of Security in Mlango Kubwa*

Burris, Drahos and Shearing (2005) suggest that a key aspect of nodal governance is that the nodes within the same outcome-generating system often work through networks to exert influence and leverage their relative strengths to achieve the shared goal. The police, the local administration and MLATA are working for the same goal of security, however, their understanding of the sources and drivers of insecurity are varied and the approaches different. In this case, the nodes within the network do not have overt and formal partnerships. There is an extent of resource sharing where joint patrols have been informally undertaken. An interview with senior police officers in the area indicated that the police do not support or encourage community-led security initiatives for the risk that they can become vigilante groups or give cover to criminal gangs to operate under the guise of providing community security.<sup>16</sup> One police officer suggested that the value of such community organisations is only insofar as they provide information to and cooperate with the police. However, there is a tacit acknowledgment of MLATA operating to provide security in the area as the interviews with the police and the MLATA leadership and MECYG youth

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indicated there have been instances of 'joint patrols' in the night between the police and community youth.

MLATA activities are unofficially accommodated by the police as long as they remain low key. As an unregistered organization, their legitimacy, success and potential is not recognized by the security agencies and local authority. The police are unequivocal that no formal support can be given to unregistered, autonomous community initiatives undertaking security work. The argument is that there may be a fine line between such well-intentioned groups and criminal gangs in managing security or promoting crime and terror. Gangs are a problem in a number of low income neighbourhoods across the country. They exploit these micro spaces to terrorize communities and perpetuate crime. Not only do the police not accept the legitimacy of MLATA's work, there is also a disinclination to draw a distinction between gangs and other illegal groups. A key resource is lost in the overall management of security.

While no formal relationship exists between MLATA and the police an unintentional symbiosis appears to emerge by default rather than by design. The police step in to deal with major violent crimes and crimes that have been flagged as a national concern and have been less responsive to smaller crimes. MLATA relies on the good relations of a few individuals within the police to provide support and seek a response when needed. This is not always successful. MLATA nonetheless continues to organize and coordinate community patrols to promote security in the neighbourhood.

Prior to 2015, community policing efforts across the country were driven by the police and have often been a source of unreciprocated information flow from communities to the police. The community policing structures have not always enjoyed community support as they are seen as a furtherance of state surveillance and information gathering (Ayiera, 2015). This approach stems from the prevalent view among formal security actors that the conceptualisation and provision of security is exclusively a state function (Kenya, National Task Force on Police Reforms, 2009). Civilians are valuable only as informants and merely receive security services. They do not participate in conceptualizing of designing security outcomes.

Since 2015, the community policing approach has given way to the concept of 'Nyumba Kumi' as an avenue for community involvement in improving security at the local level. It was formally introduced by the state in 2015 in

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response to increasing terror attacks. The concept encourages residents to apply knowledge of and proximity to neighbours to provide a low level monitoring and flagging of criminal activity. It indicates awareness by the state of the need for partnerships with communities to improve policing and security but does not indicate an acceptance of civilian roles in shaping the structure and delivery of security.

Similar to previous community policing initiatives, Nyumba Kumi structures are perceived by residents in Mlango Kubwa as in many other parts of the country as an added layer of state surveillance particularly in low income neighbourhoods. The initiative faces resistance. The police and local area chief interviewed believe Nyumba Kumi approach should be the way that communities engage in supporting security efforts rather than through independent informal efforts.

At the time of the study, MLATA did not have a formal partnership with the Nyumba Kumi committee that had been recently set up. Community members expressed scepticism about the ability of Nyumba Kumi in solving their security challenges.<sup>17</sup> They felt that MLATA and Nyumba Kumi could exist side by side and Nyumba Kumi did not replace MLATA. MLATA was seen as community-led measure which prioritized community needs and sought actual solutions to the challenges of insecurity. Nyumba Kumi was seen as encumbered by a push by the state to monitor communities and collect information without accountability. Once Nyumba Kumi has been firmly established and its operations clear, the question on how it collaborates with MLATA is a relevant. Nyumba Kumi has the recognition of local administration and the police. They do not however operate as a community-led mechanism and whether they engage with security issues based on the perspectives and priorities of the community rather than promoting the state priorities remains to be seen. These will be critical issues in determining how MLATA and Nyumba Kumi network.

#### *Effectiveness of Community-led Mechanisms in Mlango Kubwa*

MLATA as a security-providing initiative in the community has had significant success in bringing an end to daily crime in the neighbourhood including house and business break-ins, street muggings during the day and night, snatch and run thefts, among others. Significantly, it has contributed to diminishing the fear that residents felt due to the previous high crime levels. The evidence is in community residents reporting significantly reduced rates of crime within Mlango Kubwa which they attribute directly to MLATA and

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the patrol work they carry out. In addition, the community mechanism incorporates a form of correction and rehabilitation of known petty criminals.

The community approach has also provided a sense of responsibility for security among young men who are greatest perpetrators of violent crime in the community. Responses from the young men and women in the Mathare Environmental and Conservation Youth Group (MECYG) and members of MLATA show that by engaging as providers of security has been transformative for a number of young people who opt to give up criminal endeavours as they acquire a greater sense of responsibility for the state of security in the neighbourhood. It has empowered the young people with a sense of purpose, an ability to contribute to solutions and seeing transformation in the community as security improves.

Controversially, MLATA and the community insistence that individuals desist from criminal activities in the neighbourhood does not extend to an insistence that the individuals desist from criminal activities outside Mlango Kubwa. There is an unwritten code to the effect that individuals who chose to continue in a life of crime should do so outside Mlango Kubwa and not within the neighbourhood. When asked, MLATA leadership and a number of tenants interviewed believe that individuals engage in crime due to poverty and in a bid to supplement their income. A MECYG member explained that it remains a struggle for many young people to make ends meet, especially as school dropout rates are high and a number of minors and young adults bear responsibility for making ends meet and feeding younger siblings. Low employment and entrepreneurship opportunities remain the reality for many residents. One former criminal remarked however that peer pressure and the desire for “good” material things, idleness and the belief the brotherhood among criminal gangs are major pull factors for youth to crime. This is credible as not all the poor resort to crime.

Mlango Kubwa residents see themselves as peripheral to the wider national security and safety agenda on the basis of which resources and personnel of the security agencies are distributed. Security provided by the state is for “those people” which often refers to residents in better-off neighbourhoods as well as the larger businesses. Security provision by the state is treated more as a privilege than a right and therefore doled out differently along on economic hierarchies and classes, with those in low income neighbourhoods remaining at the bottom of the hierarchy. The attitude of accepting criminal

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activity if carried out outside Mlango Kubwa is bolstered by the sense of having no stake in the broader security objectives.

MLATA has been effective in mobilizing monetary and non-monetary resources in security governance in the neighbourhood. It has built on the goodwill in the community, created a sense of ownership of solutions to crime and agency in resolving insecurity within the neighbourhood. Building a balance between volunteership among the young men patrolling and mobilizing the community to provide money to incentivize the youth is an important balance and has allowed MLATA to be effective.

The effectiveness of MLATA is watered down by the cancellation of their registration and the resulting fear that the group can easily be labelled a criminal group. Community members are also frustrated that they now lack a forum to collectively talk about MLATA, the security patrols and any community priorities or concerns they have. A MLATA leader indicated that that some community members stop paying the incentive fees if they fall victim to crime and there is no forum to have a discussion that clarifies that the engagement with security is continuous rather than a one-off event and that keeping the neighbourhood safe may not succeed in stamping out all crime but keeps it in check.

#### **Kawangware - Community-led Security Mechanisms**

In 2012 and 2013, the most prominent security challenges in Kawangware were armed robberies, carjackings and violent muggings of pedestrians, a number of which resulted in deaths or seriously wounding individuals. As a result, police mounted a crackdown to ferret out suspected criminals. Police presence in the neighbourhood was also increased. These measures are thought to have improved the security situation. Young men who are either unemployed or work at *matatu*<sup>18</sup> stages within Kawangware feel that police harassment of young men is their biggest challenge. Young women interviewed were also of the view that police harassment was a major challenge but had nonetheless improved over the past few years. They note that perception of rampant crime and insecurity was a challenge for women as the fear of being out late at night and alone curtailed their ability to conduct businesses in the evening.

Residents' perceptions on the levels of crime in Kawangware vary depending on the area of the neighbourhood one is in. For example, the young men who are also *matatu* touts believe that around the market area which is the main

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street and among the busiest areas, pickpocketing, snatch-and-run crimes are frequent on market days. The civil society organisation youth consider violent and armed crime to happen more frequently further away from the main street.<sup>19</sup> These include home break-ins, and violence from gangs that often terrorize residents walking at night. The young men from Simba Reform Group that is a reform group for criminals suggest that the main challenges are the armed thieves who waylay and rob passers-by.<sup>20</sup> Some landlords interviewed pointed out that muggings are sometimes accompanied by shootings, stabbings, rapes and killings.<sup>21</sup> However, many respondents view those who commit armed crime as “outsiders” that are not known to residents.

Feedback from all the key informants and focus group respondents interviewed in Kawangware indicates the perspective that security has improved over the past three or four years. This has been bolstered by development measures since the shift to devolved government and strengthening of government at the local level in 2013. These measures include putting up of bright outdoor lights in strategic places, popularly referred to as “Mulika Mwizi” or “shine light on the thief”, the installation of cameras in strategic places, among others.

Responses from the Dagoretti Landowners Association make it clear that landlords and landowners believe the constant engagement between the Association and the police has increased policing and thereby improved security.<sup>22</sup> The study established that the Dagoretti Landowners Association is a key player in shaping security outcomes in Dagoretti.

#### ***Dagoretti Landowners Association: Organisation and Structure***

The Dagoretti Landowners Association has been in existence for more than 10 years and is formally registered as an association. Its members are landlords and landowners in the greater Dagoretti area which covers Dagoretti North and Dagoretti South sub-counties many of whom have owned land and property for decades in Dagoretti. Kawangware is in the Dagoretti North Sub-county. The Association’s primary interest is protecting the business, social as well as security interests of the landlords and landowners, including tenancy and regularity of rents. The members argue that tenants are transient and as such have no long term investment in Kawangware, but the landlords are focused on long term security of Kawangware and Dagoretti. Members in turn believe that resolving

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insecurity is primarily the responsibility of landlords, to ensure insecurity does not prevent rental houses from being occupied.

The Association holds monthly meetings in which issues of concern to members are discussed. Tenants have no say in the meetings and in the voicing of concerns to the Association, although there is the understanding that individual tenants can raise grievances with their landlords. Residents do not receive information on matters discussed unless decisions made affect them directly. The high turnover of residents over the years in Kawangware has also contributed to the exclusivity of the Association.

The Association has had significant influence in facilitating police action within Kawangware. It provides an important avenue for understanding nodes and networks in the plural governance of security in Kawangware and a comparison point with Mlango Kubwa where the community initiative was more inclusive but had limited interaction and support from the police.

#### *Methods and Technologies of Community-led Security Governance*

In tackling insecurity, the strategy of Dagoretti Landowners Association has been to work closely with the police and have them increase their presence and patrols in Kawangware during the day and night. The Association in Kawangware is well connected to the police in contrast to the Mlango Kubwa association. There is clear partnership and networking towards reduction of crime in the area, which includes resource facilitation and provision of information to the police. The landlords have cultivated and maintained good relations with the police which has allowed them to draw in police patrols and crackdowns whenever there is a rise in crime in the area. The landlords also deploy financial resources to assist police, for example, providing fuel where transportation to various areas of Kawangware may be needed and the available police resources are inadequate. The monetary resources have given the Dagoretti Landowners Association significant mileage in getting police cooperation in addressing crime.

The Association's approach is similar to the approach used by the Nairobi Central Business District Association (NCBDA) in the 1990s that saw to the rollout of a prominent model of community policing. NCBDA provided the police with resources to help them to respond to and deter crime that affected their members' business interests (Gitau, 2017; Ruteere and Pommerolle, 2003). In reciprocation, the police deployed significant numbers of personnel and resources towards securing business interests.



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The police security responses focus on the landlords' priorities which does not necessarily mean tenants concerns are taken into account or dealt with. For example, the civil society youth group pointed out that where insecurity emanates from the children of the landlords the situation is not well addressed and if the perpetrators are arrested they are quickly released and the criminal charges do not seem to progress. One respondent in the youth focus group remarked,

The landlords have money and it is believed it is their children who do not need to work for a living that are in fact the thugs who trouble people in Kawangware. But the landlords do not accept. And their children are never arrested. They support the police so the police support them. They only respond when it is crime related to others who are not their children.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, discussions with youth groups and tenants indicate that there is a general appreciation for the security outcomes of the landlords and police interaction. A tenant gave her opinion on the change in security:

Insecurity generally has reduced. You can tell by the fact that there are banks operating in the area. You can withdraw money from an ATM and not be mugged. There are investors in the region; there are M-Pesa shops, you can speak on your phone at a [bus] stage and it will not be snatched.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to working with the police, some landlords occasionally and surreptitiously use vigilante groups to carry out patrols around specific housing areas and scare off thieves at a time when incidents of crime are reported. These groups walk a fine line between criminality and legality and tenants interviewed were of the view that these groups sometimes take liberty to harass residents who are going about their business at night. These groups are paid quietly by the landlords who convene them. The use of vigilante groups is not used collectively by the landlords and is used more as a rapid response to a situation arising around a particular housing area. Tenants interviewed in Gatina neighbourhood within Kawangware pointed out that because the activities of the vigilante groups are illegal, such arrangements are not openly discussed.

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### ***Resources in Community-led Security Mechanisms***

The Dagoretti Landowners Association is well known to and respected by the local administration and the police operating in Kawangware. They are not involved in providing actual security or mobilizing the community to provide security. Instead they build on their relationship with the police for interventions to address crime. They share information with the police related to crime and security in the community. Generally, the community believes that the partnership of Dagoretti Landowners Association with the police has improved security and that when crime escalates, mobilizing the police to respond is useful. A female community leader interviewed in the area pointed out that it has also allowed people to report crime confidently without the fear of being labelled “kagunia” which is a slang phrase used to refer to a person considered a traitor or informant. Previously people were afraid to report crime to the police because they were targeted and harmed by the criminals operating in the area. However, the frequent interventions by the police including swoops, crackdown operations have succeeded in reducing crime and residents are no longer afraid of reporting crime.<sup>25</sup>

As a group of landlords and landowners, the Dagoretti Landowners Association is fairly well off economically and have used their ability to provide financial or equipment support to the police to obtain greater police engagement to curb crime than is witnessed in many other low income areas.

### **Effectiveness of Community-led Security Mechanisms in Dagoretti**

In Kawangware, the landlords’ engagement in security governance has focused on protection of their business interests as the dominant agenda and as such, tenant involvement is scarcely sought. Crime reduction is achieved mainly through cooperation between the landlords and the police. Tenants and youth groups interviewed confirm that the engagement between landlords and police has had positive benefits for curbing crime in the area. However, groups such as the *matatu* touts and other unemployed youth feel that the approach is one-sided and they are often treated as the source of crime and thereby harassed by the police. In the discussion with them they indicated that they see the police as the main source of insecurity for them.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, community residents feel that the police interventions are useful only insofar as the children of the landlords and landowners are not involved in crime. Altercations with landlords are not fairly addressed when it is necessary to involve the police.<sup>27</sup> The view among civil society actors and some tenants who were interviewed is that the landlords and landowners are in a position of privilege within the community. Tenants feel that their

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concerns on security are secondary to the interests of the landlords and landowners.

Unlike in Mlango Kubwa, the interventions being driven by police do not incorporate aspects of deterrence or giving opportunity for rehabilitation of youth found engaging in crime. They are instead immediately entered into the criminal justice system. This may have detrimental effects for some including those who may have been caught involved in petty offences. However, the recourse to the criminal justice system makes it clear to all that involvement in crime could lead to imprisonment or being fined in court and this may have its inherent deterrent effect.

Even so, the police are still seen as partial in what they prioritize and they do not respond with equivalent speed and keenness to complaints lodged by other tenants in the area. For example, where there is theft in a home or business premise, the police will take too long to respond when tenants lodge complaints.

The study finds that the approach used by the Dagoretti Landowners Association is driven principally by their business interests and the safety and security that tenants enjoy is as a result of tending to these interests. The use of the phrase 'community-led' in Kawangware is therefore less about community within a geographic area and more about community brought together by shared interests. The effectiveness of the Dagoretti Landowners Association is seen in the result of reduction of rampant crime that is attributed to their intervention with the police. However, having to resort to providing financial and material support to the police deepens the problems that poor urban neighbourhoods face in relation to security service provision. Security services continue to be prioritized for higher income and affluent neighbourhoods on the presumption that they have materially more to protect. Further, a political and socioeconomic hierarchy privileges those who have over those who do not have or who have less. The police therefore lack incentive to respond as a matter of effective service provision to the crime concerns in Kawangware and may be more inclined to respond where financial and material support is availed. This deepens the marginalisation of poor urban neighbourhoods in security service provision.

#### **Conclusion**

The study on community-led security mechanisms in two poor urban neighbourhoods in Nairobi reveals the following issues.

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Nodal governance of security is a de facto reality in Kenya, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods which have high incidence of crime and low police presence. While a number of neighbourhoods have grappled with armed criminal gangs that provide both security and insecurity, it is important for state agencies to distinguish vigilante groups and gangs from legitimate community mechanisms that play a significant role in ensuring security at the micro level. The study found that MLATA has been successful in curbing crime in Mlango Kubwa through community efforts despite the the withdrawal of their formal registration. Safety and security in Mlango Kubwa is described by the residents as the ability to move around the community without fear, conduct business until late in the night, the absence of individuals screaming in the night as they are waylaid by thieves, longer tenancies by residents and absence of fear among residents and external people in visiting the area. Dagoretti Landowners Association underscores the position that business interests have in influencing security governance in community and more so in low income neighbourhoods (see also Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003).

The success of Dagoretti Landowners Association in turning around crime has hinged on their partnership with the police and ability to effectively leverage their position as business owners to protect their interests. They have occasionally resorted private and below-radar arrangements with vigilante groups, which lends weight to the police argument that security by communities often walks a fine line between legality and illegality. Although the tenants are not directly a part of the decisions made, they benefit for the most part from the initiatives of the landlords.

In nodal governance of security, business owners are an important node in the network. MLATA brings together landlords and tenants to address insecurity which presents a challenge for both groups. Dagoretti Landowners Association brings together landlords and landowners who are protecting their business interests. However, the challenge lies in ensuring the influence of business does not overshadow the interests of residents in a community and perpetuate the perception that state security is ineffective or altogether unavailable in poor urban neighbourhoods precisely because of their lower socioeconomic status. Learning from the Nairobi Central Business District Association efforts in the 1990s, community policing initiatives that focus predominantly on protecting the interests of businesses are likely to fail in building inclusive and lasting community security mechanisms that also

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offer reform opportunities for criminals and potential criminals (Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003).

Communities have a role to play in analysing insecurity, conceptualizing security solutions and delivering security outcomes at the local level. The formal security policy-making and security governance apparatus have not engaged with existing structures to draw lessons from their experiences and replicate good practices in other neighbourhoods. The Nyumba Kumi initiative is a promising state-driven initiative to enhance community policing efforts. It brings together communities and government. However, the concept is faced with a degree of resistance at the local level. Residents in Mlango Kubwa and in Kawangware as well as in other poor neighbourhoods where the initiative has mainly been rolled out, see Nyumba Kumi as an extension of state surveillance that does not address the low level of security provision within the poor neighbourhoods. The success of the community-led mechanisms in Mlango Kubwa and Kawangware underscore that community security initiatives are built on trust and people want to be involved in community security measures that affect their lives.

There is value in security agencies making a greater effort to draw a distinction between vigilantes and criminal gangs on the one hand and community-led informal initiatives on the other hand. At present, the unwillingness to draw this distinction emanates from a real proliferation of criminal gangs in poor urban neighbourhoods (Mutahi, 2011) and from entrenched police attitudes that perceive security governance as under the exclusive authority of state agencies (Kenya National Taskforce on Police Reforms, 2009). The success in mobilisation of community resources seen in Mlango Kubwa demonstrates the value of both financial and human resources in tackling crime in community. The resources can be mobilized through building goodwill, trust and partnership between the security actors and the various legitimate nodes that contribute to security management. Working with community-led security mechanisms may allow a sharper distinction to be drawn between vigilante groups and criminal gangs on the one hand and legitimate community efforts on the other hand. It also supplements low state resources to effectively provide security across the country and provides a basis for strengthening state initiatives such as Nyumba Kumi.

Mentalities on crime and security in Mlango Kubwa indicate that crime is not seen as a simple black and white affair with only legal solutions. Crime is

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considered a social problem that requires diverse approaches including deterrence, interventions with families, social reprimand of individuals, providing opportunities for criminals to change and in some instances facilitating arrest and prosecution. In Kawangware, the initiative led by landlords focuses on having criminals arrested and surrendered to the criminal justice system. Without a comprehensive approach to curbing crime in community, some sections of the population may feel unfairly profiled and targeted in measures to curb crime. Community-led security mechanisms can provide a means not only for directly deterring criminal activity within the neighbourhoods but also a platform for pursuing social solutions that promote the welfare of individuals and communities. Having young men participate in patrols and in providing a solution to crime in Mlango Kubwa motivates them to take ownership of the state of security in the community and has enabled a number to walk away from the crime. However, without a means of ensuring community-led mechanisms operate within the law, such mechanisms may be resort to violence and corporal punishment against individuals. A partnership with security agencies may be a useful way to curb such tendencies and provide a clear avenue of surrendering to the police for example those who may otherwise have been subjected to violence by the community mechanisms.

Security governance at the micro level does not necessarily address the deeply patriarchal attitudes and structures that shape the conceptualization and delivery of security. A patriarchal perspective casts men in roles that make males more prone to commit crime and females in the position the easy prey without the crimes that target females specifically forming a core consideration in measures to redress crime. The study found that a gender neutral approach to security governance in both Mlango Kubwa and Kawangware in fact amount to a gender blind approach. Crimes that may affect women in particular such as sexual violence is not identified as a major security challenge and the community mechanisms do not incorporate measures to respond to gendered crimes.

In conclusion, there are significant lessons to be drawn from the approach, operations and successes as well as challenges of the community-led security mechanisms. Shearing and Wood (2003) point out that the state is given gradual rather than dramatic changes. The change does not follow a linear trajectory of cause and effect but happens in waves that take time and effort. Each new wave of change is mitigated and reorganized by intervening waves of resistance, competition, contestation and acceptance (Shearing and Wood,

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2003: 405). As such it is not unusual that a lingering and strong resistance to pluralistic security governance remains despite the reality of de facto nodal governance and multiple actors participating in actual security governance at the community level.

#### **Notes**

1. Nyumba Kumi is a Swahili term for “ten houses” borrowed from a system of community policing in Tanzania. Nyumba Kumi in Kenya is a state initiated measure to promote community watching and reporting of crime. It was adopted after the Westgate Mall terror attack of 2013 in Nairobi.
2. The National Police Service has available on its website the annual Crime Statistics Report for 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015 as at the time of the study.
3. Focus group discussion with MECYG youth group conducted on 19 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
4. Interviews conducted with MECYG leadership on 19 and 20 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
5. Focus group discussion with Karambee Environmental Group members conducted on 21 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
6. Interview conducted with church leader on 20 July 2015, Kiandaa.
7. Interviews conducted with MECYG leadership on 19 and 20 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
8. Interview conducted with self-identified former criminal on 22 July 2015, Westlands.
9. Focus group discussions with tenants conducted on 19 and 20 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
10. Interview conducted on 19 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
11. A popular, uncontrolled alcoholic brew made and sold cheaply in low income neighborhoods but is not subjected to the regular alcohol production and sale controls. Its composition varies from brewer to brewer and has been known to incorporate dangerous substances. Chang’aa is illegal.
12. Interviews with police officers conducted on 22 July 2015, Pangani.
13. Interview with MLATA leadership conducted on 19 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa

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14. Interview with Espana tenants conducted on 22 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
15. Interviews and focus group discussions with women and men tenants, church leaders, self-help groups, long-time resident between 19 and 22 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa.
16. Interview with police officer conducted on 22 July 2015, Pangani.
17. Focus group discussions with male and female tenants (19 and 20 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa); interviews with MECYG (19 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa) and business owners (21 July 2015, Mlango Kubwa).
18. *Matatus* are privately owned public transport vehicles
19. Focus group discussion with youth groups conducted on 11 August 2015, Kawangware.
20. Focus group discussion with Simba Reform Group conducted on 11 August 2015, Kawangware
21. Interviews with landlords conducted on 11 August 2015, Kawangware
22. Focus group discussion with Dagoretti Landowners Association members conducted on 12 August 2015, Kawangware.
23. Focus group discussion with youth conducted on 11 August 2015, Kawangware.
24. Focus group discussion with Gatina tenants conducted on 11 August 2015, Kawangware.
25. Interview with female community leader (11 August 2015, Kawangware); Focus group discussion with landlords and landowners (11 August 2015, Kawangware).
26. Focus group discussion with *matatu* touts conducted on 11 August 2015, Kawangware.
27. Gatina tenants focus group discussion conducted on 11 August 2015, Kawangware.

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