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Public Perception of Community Policing in Tanzania

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Abstract

Community policing is widely recognized as a viable means to address increasing security challenges. However, security problems in Tanzania have increased even though the police force has formalized and implemented a community policing structure called Ulinzi Shirikishi (participatory security) during the past 20 years. In this paper, both qualitative and quantitative methods are applied to analyse the community perception of Ulinzi Shirikishi to determine its viability. Located in the concept of social capital, it reveals that even though the police and government have favoured the use of Ulinzi Shirikishi to organize security, it is not the most preferred security structure by local communities. Only approximately 20% of the respondents mentioned the presence of Ulinzi Shirikishi. The most prevalent community policing arrangements mentioned by community members are the council of elders, Nyumba Kumi and village councils. On the basis of the findings, it should be noted that the effectiveness of community policing is influenced by the sociopolitical and cultural values of local communities. The most pronounced community policing structures cited by community members are entrenched in the prevailing culture and practices of the particular community. The governance of Ulinzi Shirikishi should take into account the cultural, social and political practices of a community to become effective and sustainable. Thus, the success of community policing depends on the development of social capital, such as trust, which is rooted in existing community structures, networks and institutions. The practice of ulinzi shirikishi in Tanzania requires the development of social capital.

Key words: Community policing, Social capital, Sociopolitical values, Tanzania

Introduction

Security provision is traditionally considered a domain of state security organs comprising the police force, intelligence, the army, prison and immigration. In practice, however, the governance and provision of security are negotiated between the formal security organs of the state and nonstate actors. The community is among the key players in the provision of security (Arisukwu, Igolekwu, Oye, Oyeyipo, Asam & Oyekola, 2020). Certainly, there is growing importance and recognition of community policing as a tool for the prevention of crimes and conflict resolution. This is precipitated by the increase in insecurities and crimes. Embracing community policing is recognized as a means to increase the confidence and trust of communities in the police force (Bruce, 2017). Community policing is implemented through different means, including the decentralization of police operations by establishing local-level

neighborhood operations, community-led policing programs, and the designation of police officers at the grassroots level (Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998).

Overall, Tanzania is known for nurturing and implementing successful community policing structures, such as the famous Nyumba Kumi system that was emulated and domesticated in some neighboring countries, such as Kenya (Sambaiga, 2018). Tanzania's political environment has remained stable since its independence in 1961, largely because it has escaped the trap of religious and ethnic polarization, which is typical in some countries in the region (Marshall & Cole, 2011; Mpangala, 1999; Mukandala, Yahya, Mushi & Ndumbalo, 2006; Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2012). One of the factors that contributes to this stability is the country's deliberate efforts in nurturing and implementing community initiatives (Were & Apondo, 2021).

Yet, it should be noted that the formation and nurturing of community policing initiatives in Tanzania were influenced by the changing socioeconomic and political landscape in the country. Indeed, the period from the mid-1980s was a critical juncture in Tanzania's history. Participatory security, famously known in the Swahili language as 'Ulinzi Shirikishi', is a product of political change that took place from the mid-1980s (Killian & Parestiko, 2018). In particular, the period from the 1980s witnessed the ascendancy of Neo-liberalism and thereby marked the ideological shift of policies that shifted away from 'Ujamaa', an indigenous version of Socialism. The community peace and security structures established during the socialist era were entrenched in the institutional setup of the ruling party Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) (officially translated as the Revolutionary Party). In the context of a single-party system, the ruling party was supreme to the extent that it was fused in the government and organs of the state (Cross, 2014).

The N*yumba Kumi* system, established after independence in 1961, was the lowest structure of the ruling party. Given the fusion between the party and the state, government functions were also entrusted to leaders of Nyumba Kumi, popularly known as the 'Balozi'. The provision and maintenance of security was organized through the Nyumba Kumi set up whereby its leaders were assigned the responsibility of registering residents and visitors in their areas of jurisdiction. Families receiving visitors were required to report and register them to the Balozi. This allowed community members to know each other and keep an eye on any suspects in the community (Sambaiga, 2018).

The structure of Nyumba Kumi was disbanded from the formal government setup in 1992 following the reintroduction of multiparty competitive politics. However, Nyumba Kumi remains relevant and functional in many rural areas of Tanzania (Sambaiga, 2018). In some areas, for example, the Ilemela District in the Mwanza Region, attempts were made to formalize the Nyumba Kumi system by changing the names of its leaders from Balozi to coordinators (Walwa, 2018). Moreover, the Sungusungu structure was established in the regions around Lake Victoria, Mwanza, Tabora, Shinyanga and Mara, to fill a security vacuum after the Tanzania-Uganda border war in 1979. The period after the war witnessed an increase in crimes involving cattle rustling. Sungusungu is a Swahili term, which entails large biting black safari ants. Sungusungu was formalized through the People's Militia Act of 1975. It was given this name because of its violent acts of biting (severely punishing) criminals (Paciotti & Mulder, 2004; Fleisher, 2011). Even though successful in dealing with crimes, this community security mechanism was accused of violating human rights (Heald, 2002; 2006). Sungusungu

was reported to be extremely violent to the extent that some suspects and offenders were beaten to death (Bukurura, 1999).

Moreover, it should be noted that the transition from socialism to neoliberalism left a security governance vacuum and, in so doing, exposed the country to various forms of insecurity. Studies on peace and security in Tanzania (Killian and Palestiko, 2018; Walwa, 2018; Sambaiga, 201) have linked the growth of episodes of conflicts and violence from 2010 to 2017 in the Pwani, Mwanza, Tanga, Arusha and Kagera regions with the weakening of security governance at the local level. Violent conflicts in Tanzania have involved a range of areas, notably over natural resources, political competition and elections, and some of them have started to have extremist orientations. Tensions over natural resources in the northwestern region, namely, Mwanza, Geita, Mara and Shinyanga, where large-scale mines were established, are common. In North Mara, clashes between the police and security guards of an investor, on the one hand, and the local people, on the other hand, have become a common trend (Makomba, 2024; Walwa, 2016).

Other incidents of natural resource tensions surfaced in the Mtwara Region following the discovery and exploitation of natural gas. In April and May 2013, for instance, local residents in Mtwara organized demonstrations opposing the construction of a natural gas pipeline from Mtwara to Dar es Salaam. The demonstrators vandalized properties, such as vehicles, houses and other investments belonging to the state, government officials and the ruling party (Heilman and Jingu, 2015). Other types of natural resource tensions have involved farmers and pastoralists in several districts, such as Kilosa, Mvemero, Kilindi, Rufiji, Kiteto and Ifakara. Since then, the Kilosa and Mvomero conflict, which was first reported in 1998, has become recurrent. For instance, on December 8, 2000, the farmer–herder conflict in Kilosa claimed the lives of 38 people (Benjaminsen, Maganga & Abdallah, 2009). Furthermore, farmer-herder fights in Kiteto, which erupted at different times from mid-December 2013 to January 2014, claimed the lives of at least 30 people (Njoji & Kitomari, 2014). Recently, Tanzania experienced violent electoral conflicts on 29–30 October, 2025. Demonstrators that opposed the general elections and demanded electoral reforms clashed with security forces, claiming the lives of several people whose number is yet to be officially disclosed by the government (Dzungu, 2025;

Moreover, Tanzania has witnessed the emergence and growth of violent extremism episodes. Such incidents have been reported in several regions, including the Pwani, Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza, Kagera, Mtwara and Tanga regions. Brutal killings acts targeting government officials, security organs, civilians and religious leaders were reported in these areas. Some of these cases include the following: the May 2013 bomb attack that killed three and injured 60 people at Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church near Arusha; the events of February 2013, where a Catholic Priest was assassinated and the protestant church burned in Zanzibar; and the December 2012 shot of a Roman Catholic priest, Father Ambrose Mkenda in Zanzibar (Walwa, 2018).

By establishing the Commission on Community Engagement in 2006, the Tanzania Police Force (TPF) institutionalized community policing to find solutions to mounting crimes. Within this Commission, several other subunits, including the police gender desk, were established. The police force has deployed a community policing officer in each ward to assist in the identification of security problems and work with the community to address crimes. Through

the Commission on Community Policing, the police force has implemented several programs, such as police-youth sports, neighborhood watches, and the famous *Ulinzi Shirikishi*. Through Ulinzi Shirikishi, the police force has worked with community members to establish patrol units of male youth and sometimes female youth. The patrol units of youth provide security to the community depending on the arrangement agreed upon and implemented by the respective community. In some areas, members of patrol units are paid through voluntary contributions by community members.

The Ulinzi shirikishi structure has existed for two decades, and this paper uses a case study of the Tanga region to assess how it is perceived by the community. Thus, the major question to be explored at this juncture is as follows: What is the public perception of the current community security arrangements? In specific terms, how is *Ulinzi Shirikishi* perceived by the community? Previous publications on community policing in Tanzania, which were based mainly on a qualitative research approach, have revealed that U*linzi Shirikishi* has proven to be an effective mechanism for organizing security in urban settings (Walwa, 2017). Other studies have considered *Ulinzi Shirikishi* as one of the images of the Nyumba Kumi system (Sambaiga, 2018).

Thus, this paper builds on previously published works by combining quantitative and qualitative data to analyse the public perception of community policing. It addresses three specific objectives: First, it examines the perception of existing community policing initiatives at the local level to determine how Ulinzi Shirikishi is conceived by the community. Second, it analyses the perception of the viability of this community policing initiative to address crimes at the local level; and third, it analyses public perceptions regarding the role of the police in the institutionalization of community policing.

The paper is drawn from empirical research conducted from September to December 2020 in Mkinga, Tanga and Lushoto districts in the Tanga region. The Tanzania Region was of interest to this research since it experienced violent incidents, including the killing of 4 civilians by an alleged extremist group in Kibatini Village, Amboni Ward, in Tanga District on 02nd June 2016 (DW Radio, 2016). This was followed by a clash between security forces and suspects of civilian killing in the Amboni caves in Tanga District, killing three suspects (*Citizen*, 2016). The research adopted a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods; 600 questionnaires were administered (200 from each district), and 39 in-depth interviews (12 females and 27 males) were carried out.

The paper is informed by the concept of social capital. Social capital is defined in terms of trust, which is rooted in the social structures, networks and institutions of the community. Community policing is expected to build trust between community members and the police. Equally, it is expected to tap into social networks and relations to build trust and peaceful coexistence. One way of building social capital is to reinforce existing social structures, networks and institutions (Pino, 2001). In this respect, the success and effectiveness of community policing depend on the extent to which it helps to develop social capital. In the context of this research, social capital was measured by examining the perceptions of community members regarding the *ulinzi shirikishi* community policing structure.

The paper is divided into five main sections. Section two, which analyses the concept of community policing, follows the introduction. The third section analyses findings regarding public perceptions of community policing. In the last section, a conclusion is provided.

Conceptualizing community policing

Conceived as a security governance strategy, community policing refers to the integration and participation of local members in finding solutions to problems facing the community (Pandey, 2014). It is increasingly recognized that security provisions are a shared responsibility of community members, security providers and security forces of the state. Community policing regards the community as being at the center in the governance of security at the grassroots level. In other words, there can never be sustainable peace and security without the engagement of the community.

The concept of social capital would consider community policing as a means that helps to build trust between community members and the police. The practice of community policing involves a myriad of partnerships comprising government agencies, police and civil society. In this respect, community policing needs to be understood as the desire to bring the police and community members to protect the lives and properties of community members (Deluca & Stone, 1994). It is a proactive strategy intended to address the drivers of insecurity before they turn into violence (Arisukwu, Igolekwu, Oye, Oyeyipo, Asam & Oyekola, 2020).

It should be stressed that communities across the globe have adopted and practiced various forms of community policing. In the United States of America, for example, a neighbourhood watch program was adopted in the 1980s. This system, which is still operational, was tasked with fighting against grave offenses, such as terrorism, human trafficking and armed robbery (Meares, 2014). In the United Kingdom, the police force introduced the neighbourhood surveillance programme in the 1990s as a way of preventing crimes in the community (Emmanuel, 2014).

In Africa, the institutionalization of community policing resulted from police reform programs in the 1990s and 2000s. In Ghana, for example, community policing was adopted in 2002 when the country established the Administration and Bicycle Patrol Units (Kofi, 2007). Additionally, it was introduced in South Africa in 1991 in conjunction with the National Peace Accord of 1991, which established an accountability framework for the police force. South Africa's interim constitution of 1993 formalized the implementation of community policing at police stations (Wisler & Onwudiwe, 2009). Furthermore, in Kenya, community policing was institutionalized in 2004 to respond to recurrent land conflicts (Campbell, Mathias, Mbogo, McLean & Ndung'u, 2015). In addition, Kenya reinforced its community policing by adopting the N*yumba Kumi* (ten cell) system in 2013 to strengthen community participation in fighting against violent extremism and terrorism (Njuguna, 2016; Bruce, 2017).

However, it should be noted that while community policing would be expected to develop partnerships between the police and community members, the achievement of this partnership is often conflicted by 'value pluralism.' According to Thacher (2001), the police have their own values that compete with the values of community members. Community members may have their own priorities that do not necessarily match those of the police. In the view of the Thacher, the partnership envisioned to happen through community policing can occur when the police take into account the values of community members. Additionally, this partnership

can reap success if the police can accept changing police culture, which has in most cases been inclined toward crime control rather than crime prevention (Thacher, 2001).

Terpstra and Salet (2019) maintain that the working logic of the police often emphasizes crime fighting without necessarily investing in building relationships. The focus on crime control has, at times, been used by the police as justification for the excessive use of force and harassment. Ultimately, the excessive use of force coupled with police culture often tends to disconnect the police from the community. In the view of Reisig & Giacomazzi (1998), the community attitude toward the police is the key determinant of whether citizens will engage in community policing. Positive public perceptions of the police force tend to signal the possibility that community policing will be effective. The next section analyses the evolution of community policing in Tanzania.

Perceptions of Community Policing Initiatives

This section presents findings regarding community perceptions of existing community policing initiatives. The community members were first asked to identify existing community policing structures. Several structures were mentioned, including *Ulinzi Shirikishi*, the council of elders, the *nyumba kumi*, elected village councils and youth groups. *Ulinzi Shirikishi* is a structure that is widely embraced and promoted by the police and government. In contrast, community members did not rank *Ulinzi shirikishi* as the most prevalent form of community policing initiatives. Instead, they identified the council of elders, *Nyumba Kumi*, and elected village councils as the most prevalent initiatives. From the perspective of community members, the existing community policing arrangements play different roles, which include conflict resolution, sharing information about criminal incidents and suspects, and identifying and keeping records of residents and visitors through a resident registry held at the local level.

Accordingly, on the basis of the findings, Ulinzi Shirikishi exists in Tanga, but it is fairly weak and sporadic. It is often vibrant when incidents of insecurity increase, as that is the time when it is more promoted by the police. In urban areas in Tanga, for example, Ulinzi Shirikishi was more vibrant and successful from 2010 to 2015 following the increase in insecurities, such as cases related to violent extremism. However, when incidents of crimes and conflicts declined after 2016, the system almost collapsed. When the local people see that there is less threat to security, they often stop raising financial and nonfinancial contributions to support patrol units organized through Ulinzi Shirikishi; then, such groups stop functioning.

The sporadic performance of Ulinzi Shirikishi may largely be attributed to the manner in which this community policing arrangement is organized. The operationalization of this community policing system is top-down. Patrol units and neighborhood watch groups of Ulinzi Shirikishi are organized through officials and elected local government leaders and police officers. The patrol units are headed by commanders appointed by local government officials, leaders and the police. Each commander heads a small patrol unit of youth, which is tasked with providing security through patrols at night and during the day.

The police officers sit in the security committee of each ward, where they serve as secretaries of the committee. The Ward Executive Officer (WEO) is the chairperson of this committee. A security committee at the ward level is mandated to make decisions and develop mechanisms to find solutions to crimes and insecurities. In practice, the commanders of Ulinzi Shirikishi do

not report to the community. Instead, they report to the police and officials of the government that appoint them. This makes Ulinzi Shirikishi disconnected from the community.

When asked about where community members report first when they face security challenges, 78% (see Figure 1) of the respondents said that they report first to village leaders, while 27.7%, 18.4% and 8% of the respondents from the Lushoto, Tanga municipal and Mkinga districts, respectively, reported that they report to the Nyumba Kumi leaders. Fewer than 5% report to the police directly, even if officers are deployed in each ward to support and oversee the implementation of community policing.



Figure 1: Where community members report security challenges

Thus, on the basis of the findings, it can be said that the police and government promote a community poling arrangement, which does not have what Bukurura (1999) would refer to as cultural roots in local settings. In this case, for Ulinzi Shirikishi to enjoy the support of community members, it needs to have cultural roots. As shown in Figure 2 below, community policing structures that have cultural roots were cited by community members as being the most prevalent. Specifically, according to Figure 2, many respondents cited the council of elders, *nyumba kumi* and the council of elders as the most prevalent community policing structures. In contrast, fewer than 20% of the respondents cited the presence of Ulinzi Shirikishi.

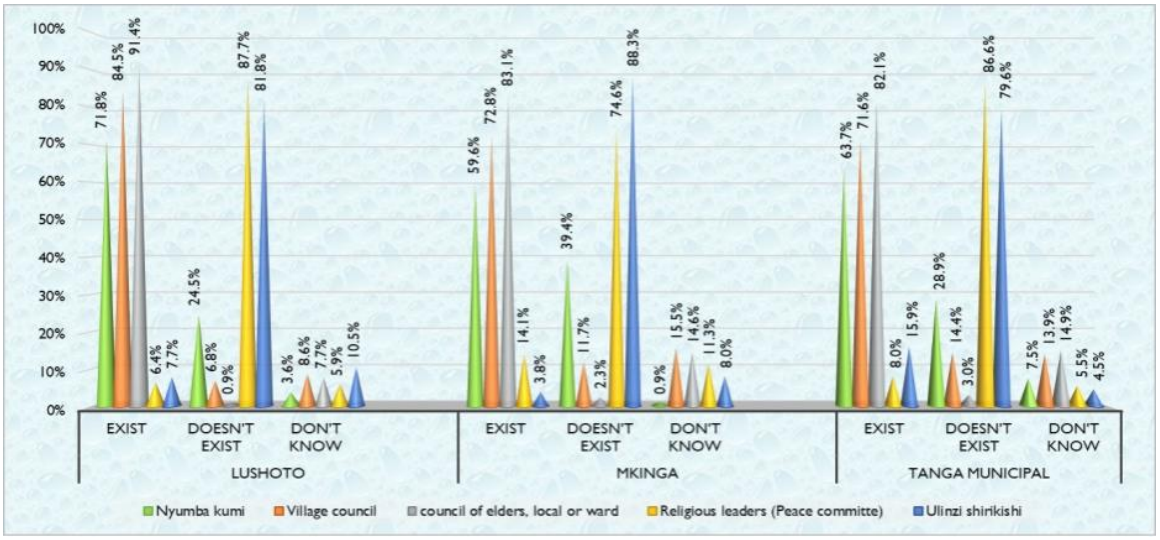


Figure 2: Forms of community policing

From the figure above, the council of elders was marked as the widely existing community poling structure in the three districts. It is not a formal community policing arrangement, but it enjoys legitimacy because of the cultural respect attached to elders. Traditionally, elders are believed to have the wisdom and experience to settle disputes in their community on the basis of customs, values and traditions.

Moreover, according to Figure 2, community members cited nyumba kumi as the second most prevalent form of community policing. As previously described, Nyumba kumi operates at the local level through an arrangement of ten households that are headed by a *balozi* (an ambassador). Although it was disbanded from formal government structures during the early 1990s, it still exists and has continued to play the role of security governance in local settings. During the past ten years, the ruling party increased the number of households led by the *balozi* from 10 to 50. Nonetheless, this research revealed that community members are not well familiar and did not make reference to the 50-household arrangement.

On the basis of the findings, it should be reiterated that security provisions through community policing are negotiated politically and culturally. While the council of elders is rooted in the culture of communities as elders enjoy respect in the community, the Nyumba kumi enjoys political support from the ruling party. Some studies, for example, Cross (2014), questioned the sustainability of Nyumba kumi because of the introduction of multiparty politics in Tanzania. Nonetheless, this research revealed the historical success of providing solutions to crimes. There is also a cultural element attached to the Nyumba Kumi system because its leaders are usually elders who enjoy respect in the community.

Opposition political parties in Tanzania are critical to the Nyumba Kumi system because its leaders are cadres of the ruling party (*Mwananchi*, 2018). However, some of them also have constitutionally established organizational structures similar to those of Nyumba Kumi. For instance, the 2016 Constitution (of the main opposition party, CHADEMA (Party for Democracy and Progress) has recognized and established Nyumba Kumi. CHADEMA has empowered the lowest decision-making organ at the hamlet level to appoint leaders of Nyumba Kumi leaders to oversee activities of the party.

Additionally, according to Figure 2, community members ranked village councils as the third most prevalent form of community policing. Councils are embedded in the local government system, with different structures for urban and rural settings. They are headed by chairpersons who are elected after every five years. The participants described mtaa, village and helmet chairpersons as important actors in community policing because of their closeness to the community. Daily interaction with communities has allowed local leaders to detect and respond to crimes. The ability to prevent crimes is one of the reasons that determines the electability of the leaders of village councils.

The research revealed that village councils have registers of residents and visitors. However, registers of visitors are seasonally enforced; they are strictly enforced when incidents of crimes increase. In particular, according to community members, there was more enforcement of resident registries during the period from 2010 to 2015, when Tanga experienced an increase in insecurities. Nevertheless, when the security situation normalized, the enforcement stopped. Resident registries are not always updated to include new comers who stay permanently or renting houses. Specifically, in Mkinga District, community members reported the presence of a "Waduluma" tribal group from Kenya who had come in good numbers without being registered. Waduruma is accused of engaging in illegal charcoal business, and the main market of charcoal is Kenya.

In practice, it is difficult to enforce a resident registry through the village councils, as councils are much larger administrative units that serve many people. Each village council is served by one government administrative officer who does not necessarily reside in a village or mtaa. It is thus easy to enforce a registry through the Nyumba Kumi system that serves a few houses and residents.

Moreover, this research revealed that boda boda (motorcycle) drivers and bajaji (three-wheeler taxis) units have emerged as important agencies for security provisions. This group of male youth works closely with police and community members to identify and report suspects. They are aware of people within the community and people who enter and leave the community. Even though the dominant narrative has linked youth with conflict and violence (Ismail & Olonisakin, 2021), this research revealed that youth involved in *boda boda* are helping to offer solutions to insecurities. Nonetheless, these youth face the challenge of a lack of formal recognition, which has limited their ability to address security challenges. On this basis, one of the youths revealed:

The problem we are facing is that our groups are not formalized. It is because some people think that *boda boda* are criminal groups, but as a matter of fact, we do help other organs, especially police, to detect criminals. There are some circumstances in which the police are delaying reaching and responding to incidences; boda boda becomes very helpful as we move as a group and make a follow-up on what is happening (Interview with a youth, Lushoto District, Tanga Region, September 15, 2020).

Local governments in Mkinga, Tanga and Lushoto have registered *boda boda* and encouraged them to form and work in groups. The study revealed that group membership was also dependent upon the payment of entry and annual fees for each member. Floes are used to provide support to members when they experience problems, such as accidents and the loss of a family member.

Additionally, the research revealed that other community policing networks have been developed and implemented to provide security and address crimes. One of the famous networks, which is worthy of emphasis, is the ujirani mwema (good neighborhood). In the Ujirani mwema arrangement, each neighbor is expected to be observant of the security of the entire neighborhood. This works more effectively through arrangements between families and villages. Finally, trained local militias provide security at the local level. The militias are groups of young people trained to serve as reserve armies. The military advisor stationed in each district organizes and conducts training for militia groups. Each district is served by a military officer tasked with organizing, recruiting and implementing the training. Trained militia are a useful resource in the organization of security in the community. Additionally, trained militias fill the police role by assisting local governments in arresting suspects and later handing them over to the police. The subsequent section examines public perception of the viability of community policing.

Perception of the viability of community policing

When asked about the viability of existing community policing arrangements to provide security, many community members did not cite Ulinzi Shirikishi. Instead, they indicated that they are more satisfied with the Nyumba Kumi, the council of elders, village councils and trained militia groups. As explained in the subsection above, people's satisfaction with this community policing arrangement is because these structures are linked to the social and cultural lives of community members; they play roles that go beyond crime prevention. They would be considered social capital because they have built trust in the community. Ulinzi shirikishi needs to build social capital to enjoy the same level of trust from the community. Notably, security is multidimensional and is linked to and rooted in other socioeconomic and cultural aspects of community members. As such, there is a sustainability challenge for community policing mechanisms whose functions are reduced to crime prevention alone (Amante, Saraiva & Marques, 2021; Zikhali, 2019). This could be said about Ulinzi Shirikishi, which is mainly inclined to prevent crimes and is yet to be entrenched in the sociocultural life of community members.

One role of community policing is the promotion of social cohesion (Sucic & Karlovic, 2017). However, this can occur only when the form of community policing implemented goes beyond a mere focus on crime prevention. From the perspective of community members, community policing plays a crucial role in conflict resolution through neighborhood structures such as those of Nyumba Kumi and the council of elders. Accordingly, many conflicts are settled from below through community policing arrangements. This helps reduce the number of cases in formal courts. It similarly helps to reduce the costs and time that people and the government would spend in formal courts. In this respect, community policing helps promote and enhance reconciliation in the community. Reconciliation occurs because the community policing initiatives preferred by community members are entrenched in the culture and practice of people. As Murithi (2006) maintains, culture shapes the meaning and practices of community members, including ways in which conflicts are resolved.

Community policing structures entrenched in the culture of people should be understood with the same logic as traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. It is widely acknowledged that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms contribute to conflict resolution. The African traditional system of conflict resolution does not punish offenders, but it helps to heal the

broken relationships between offenders and victims of conflicts (Daniel, 2010; Malan, 1997). When a conflict is settled through traditional mechanisms, the whole society wins, and hence, the social bonds are reinforced.

Nyumba Kumi, a council of elders and village councils, has helped to reinforce security by identifying signs of crimes, building confidence among community members and developing social networks to address crimes. Community policing plays a role in the sociocultural, economic and political life of communities. Explaining this, one of the community members in Lushoto District said:

There is good cooperation between the (community policing) structures and citizens. In fact, citizens are the owners of these structures. It is very easy for me and others to address any security challenges because we are very close to the security structures that provide security (Interview with a community member, Lushoto District, Tanga Region, October 14, 2020).

With respect to the forms of detection mechanisms employed by community policing structures, the most notable technique is the use of informers in the community. From the perspective of community members, there is no specific group of informers, but everyone in society is considered an informer. Any community member who observes signs of crimes and insecurities is required to report to local government leaders or community policing leaders. The other form of detection employed involves sharing and exchanging the names of the most prominent criminals with neighboring villages. This has allowed community members from several neighboring villages to work together and monitor the activities and movements of suspects. An official in Lushoto explained, "To detect conflicts or violence, the Nyumba Kumi leaders register new comers arriving in their areas. In any case or any sign of violence or conflicts, citizens may call me or the nyumba kumi leaders because we gave them our numbers" (Interview with a government official, Lushoto District, Tanga Region, September 24, 2020).

Nonetheless, the research also revealed that the community policing initiatives in place have one main weakness: they are male dominated. Women are left with minimal roles in decision-making with respect to peace and security in the community. As Table 2 shows, there is minimal participation of different groups of women in community policing. According to women, men have taken an upper hand in security matters, including participation in community policing. In Yoghoi village, Lushoto, for instance, there was no female Nyumba Kumi leader in the entire village. According to male leaders, the security governance position is unfit for women because it requires bearers to be attentive all the time.

Table 2: Levels of participation of women in community policing

	Lushoto			Mkinga			Tanga		
Groups of women	I	SI	NI	I	SI	NI	I	SI	NI
Married women – Employed	9.1%	40.5 %	50.5 %	4.7%	41.8 %	53.5 %	4.5%	41.3 %	54.2 %
Married women – Unemployed	8.6%	36.4 %	55.0 %	6.6%	40.4 %	53.1 %	4.5%	41.3 %	54.2 %

Divorced women – Employed	4.5%	40.5 %	55.0 %	4.2%	38.5 %	57.3 %	4.0%	49.3 %	46.8 %
Divorced women – Unemployed	4.5%	38.2 %	57.3 %	4.2%	38.5 %	57.3 %	4.5%	37.8 %	57.7 %
Single mothers – Employed	5.9%	40.9 %	53.2 %	4.7%	41.8 %	53.5 %	4.0%	43.8 %	52.2 %
Single mothers - Unemployed	4.5%	38.6 %	56.8 %	4.7%	41.8 %	53.5 %	4.5%	41.3 %	54.2 %
Widows – Employed	4.5%	40.5 %	55.0 %	4.7%	41.8 %	53.5 %	4.5%	41.3 %	54.2 %
Widow – Unemployed	4.5%	38.6 %	56.8 %	4.7%	41.8 %	53.5 %	4.5%	41.3 %	54.2 %

Key: I = Involved; SI = Slightly Involved; NI = Not involved

According to the data in the table above, fewer than 10% of the respondents indicated that women are directly involved in community policing, and approximately 40% of the respondents indicated that women participate slightly. Nonetheless, it should be noted that community policing is not the only institution in which women are less likely to participate. Men exercise dominance in other realms of power—for example, the political arena (Makulilo, 2020). Community policing initiatives are closely attached to the community culture and norms, which are often dominated by men. The exclusion of women makes community policing structures unsustainable.

Perception of the role of the police in institutionalizing Ulinzi Shirikishi

Finally, the paper revealed that there is a question about the police culture of brutality, which is the greatest obstacle to the institutionalization of Ulinzi Shirikishi and the embracing of community-police partnerships. The results revealed that many police officers continue to maintain a traditional way of doing things (e.g., excessive use of force), which has eventually disconnected them from the communities. Embracing a traditional state-centric approach to handling insecurities and crimes undermines community policing.

Specifically, the research revealed that there is a disconnect between police and community members. The police have established several social platforms to engage communities in the governance of security at the local level. However, when asked to delineate the social platforms established by the police, 80% of the respondents reported that they were less familiar with such platforms. The data in Figure 3 are illustrated below.

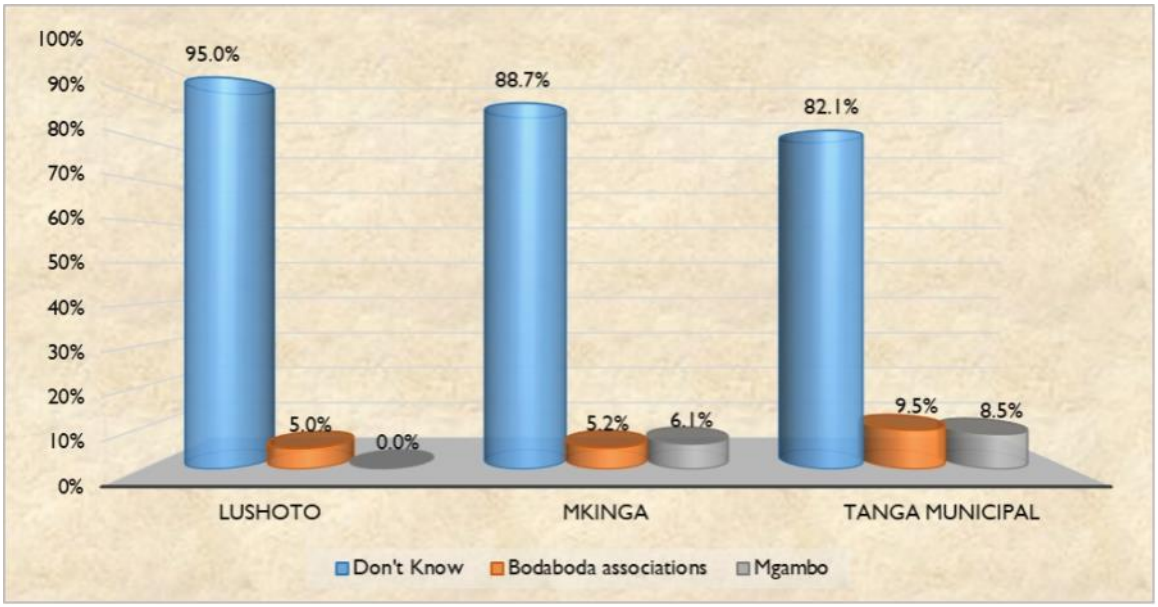


Figure 3: Existing productive networks connecting the police and community

According to Figure 3, fewer than 10% of the respondents cited the boda boda association and local trained militia as available productive networks connecting the police and community members. In other words, according to Figure 2, the only social groups with which the police have engaged are boda boda drivers and trained militaria. This comes without surprise because the patrol units of the Ulinzi Shirikishi have worked mainly with groups of young people and trained militia. Commanders of patrol units of Ulinzi Shirikishi are always recruited from among trained militia. It should therefore be noted that community engagement platforms established by the police have touched on a small section of community members. That makes it difficult for Ulinzi Shirikishi to have a strong social licence—since the most influential section of the community—notably, elders have been left out.

Related to Figure 3, some community members raised concerns about police brutality (interviews with community members, Tanga and Lushoto districts, Tanga Region, November 2020). Notably, police brutality is a common culture embedded in many police forces worldwide. In Africa, it is argued that police brutality is a colonial legacy—where the colonial police force was accused of using excessive force against Africans (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021). However, in the view of Abati (2020), police brutality is a product of violent African leadership and not a colonial legacy. Human rights reports in Tanzania (e.g., Legal and Human Rights Center, 2024) have repeatedly revealed that police brutality is a serious concern in the country. On this basis, one of the community members in Mkinga complained:

They (police) are not part of the community; rather, they are a part of the government—they do not behave as part of the community, but they just consider themselves as employees (of the government). It is not possible to develop such ability if people are intimidated by the police. You cannot identify criminal signs if community members are afraid of you. The only way to identify such signs is when community members are willing to give you such information, as criminals live in the community. Community members and the police force should be put together to discuss how they can best work together as they depend on each other (Interview with community members, Mkinga District, Tanga Region, October 22, 2020).

Additionally, some community members complain about the dishonest behavior of some police officers in handling confidential information about crimes and suspects; a few police officers are accused of disclosing the identities of informers and of the information being leaked to suspects. This was indeed raised during an interview with a community member in Mkinga District, who complained:

One of the weaknesses that tarnish the image of the police is their inability to keep secret. There was a time when a (trained local) militia notified the police about drug traffickers. The information leaked, and the militia was threatened by the culprits. This discourages the members of the community (Interview with a community member, Mkinga District, Tanga Region, October 16, 2020).

On their part, the police said that many community members misconceive police operations and the law. According to the police, some community members believe that once they report an incident to the police, the suspects arrested must be sentenced and imprisoned. As a result, once the suspect is bailed and released, community members often accuse the police of bribery. In the opinion of the police, sensitization programs on police–community relationships should be emphasized to create a favourable working environment between the police and the community.

Conclusion

There is growing importance and recognition of community policing as a viable method to address increasing crimes and insecurities. As a social capital and problem-solving approach, community policing involves the development and implementation of joint community-police efforts to build trust and find solutions to insecurities and crimes. It equally implies the development and promotion of community-police partnerships to address insecurities and crimes. To this end, community policing is expected to help bridge the gap between the police and community members while simultaneously addressing insecurities in crimes.

In Tanzania, the period from the mid-1990s was a critical historical juncture in terms of understanding community policing. This is the time when legal and policy frameworks were altered to create and accommodate an enabling political and economic environment for competitive politics. The new legal and policy frameworks had an impact on the governance of security through community policing. This is because the most famous community policing initiative, notably, nyumba kumi, was detached from the formal government's establishment. Since then, Nyumba kumi has remained and operated within the establishment of the ruling party, the CCM. In attempts to fill the security vacuum caused by the transition from one party to multiparty policies, the police have established and implemented a community policing called ulinzi shirikishi. This new structure has been operational for the past 15 years. However, security challenges have continued to intensify; research has attributed security challenges to the weakening of local security structures.

Therefore, in relation to the puzzle around community engagement in security governance in Tanzania, this paper combined qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse community perception regarding community policing. Specifically, the perception of ulinzi shirikishi was analysed to determine its viability. On the basis of the concept of social capital, the chapter reveals that, first, the police have promoted a top-down community policing arrangement known as ulinzi shirikishi. However, ulinzi shirikishi is not the most prevalent community

policing structure, which local communities are aware of and practice. Certainly, fewer than 20% of the respondents mentioned the presence of ulinzi shirikishi. The most prevalent community policing arrangements mentioned by community members are councils of elders, nyumba kumi and village/street councils. The question then is why Ulinzi Shirikishi failed to become the most preferred modality for community policing. On the basis of these findings, it should be noted that security governance does not occur in the vacuum but is influenced by the sociopolitical and cultural values of the community. The most pronounced community policing arrangements cited by community members are entrenched in the culture and practices of community members. For ulinzi shirikishi to become influential and command cultural and social licence, it should develop social capital by way of engraving itself in the cultural, social and political practices and networks of the community. In this respect, the success of ulinzi shirikishi is dependent on building social capital—in terms of trust and networks in the community.

Second, the research revealed that there is a demographic aspect influencing the governance of security at the local level. In particular, a young population involved in both boda boda and bajaji driving has become an important agency in terms of providing governance and security. They work closely with police and community members to identify and report suspects. Boda boda is particularly a network that is dependent on the police to support ulinzi shirikishi.

Third, this research revealed that community members recognize and value the importance of community policing structures. Certainly, community members applauded community policing structures for being useful for helping to solve security-related problems and maintaining peace. Even so, the existing community policing initiatives have one main limitation: they are male dominated. Women have been excluded from decision-making with respect to peace and security in their neighborhoods; men have taken an upper hand in security governance. As such, there is a sustainability question because a large section of the population has been left out in the decision-making on security governance.

Finally, the paper established that the operation of the police continues to be influenced by police culture of brutality—which works against the spirit of establishing and promoting community–police partnerships. Indeed, police operations emphasize crime prevention and less emphasize the development of partnerships with community members. Capacity building should be emphasized to help the police appreciate and embrace the importance of investing in and promoting community-police partnerships.

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