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Executive summary

To better understand crime and public perceptions of safety in Tanzania, victimisation surveys were carried out in Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Mtwara. A fundamental requirement for the prevention and control of crime is the availability of reliable data. To this end the Arusha Municipal Council, the Dar es Salaam City Council (Safer Cities) and the Mtwara Spatial Development Initiative located within the National Development Corporation, in partnership with the Mtwara-Mikandani Town and Mtwara Rural Councils, requested that such a study to be undertaken in each of their constituencies.

The surveys consisted of 1,150 interviews in Arusha and 1,100 each in Dar es Salaam and Mtwara. The demographic component of the survey gathered information on 13,373 persons living in 3,256 households across the three areas. The average household size was 4.2 people in Arusha and 4.1 in both Mtwara and Dar es Salaam—figures that compare favourably with the 2002 Census. Over three quarters of all household members over the age of 19 were not engaged in any income earning activities. Indeed, only 11% enjoyed intermittent earnings and a miniscule 5% had a regular income from formal sector employment.

Public perceptions of crime and safety

People living in urban areas were more concerned about crime and safety than those in the rural areas surveyed. Reflecting this trend, people in Dar es Salaam and Arusha were more worried about crime and safety than those in Mtwara. More specifically, 40% of Tanzanians surveyed thought crime has increased in the past three years, with this view being far more common in Arusha and Dar es Salaam than in Mtwara. Similarly, around half the respondents living in urban neighbourhoods thought crime had increased, compared to only 28% in rural areas.

Perceptions about which crimes are most prevalent varied considerably between the three areas: in Arusha burglary was believed to be most common, while in Mtwara it was crop theft, and in Dar es Salaam, robbery. Fear

of crime was highest in Arusha. At night 60% in Arusha felt very unsafe walking alone, compared to 40% in Dar es Salaam and only 16% in Mtwara.

Perceptions about crime affected the activities and behaviour of people in all three towns, although safety issues were less of a concern for those living in Mtwara. Most respondents in Arusha (78%) and Dar es Salaam (77%) said their behaviour has changed in the last three years because of crime, compared to only 36% in Mtwara.

In all three areas, people were most likely to think the unemployed, followed by locals, and teenagers/youths commit crime. The motive for crime was largely perceived to be 'need' rather than 'greed'. In all three sites, respondents identified unemployment as the key reason for crime, followed by a lack of alternative means of survival, such as subsistence agriculture. Many also said criminals are lazy and "take the easy way out".

Opinions about the police and courts

Respondents believed that government's main response to the crime problem should be to increase visible policing. People were also prepared to take their own precautions to protect themselves—one example being the Sungusungu units. Residents rely on these units both to prevent crime and to apprehend suspects. Such non-state measures are generally considered an effective adjunct to law enforcement agencies. On the negative side however, some felt that Sungusungu units were too rough in their handling of suspects.

Respondents in urban settlements come into contact with uniformed police officers on a regular basis. Unsurprisingly, more than one third of those in rural areas had never seen a uniformed police officer in their area. Overall, those respondents who had visited a police station said the experience had improved their opinion of the police. Generally, the police were respected for their perceived commitment, and high levels of trust in the police were recorded. Those who thought the police were doing a poor job, indicated that corruption was the main problem.

Few people had actually been to court, and those who had were generally satisfied with the work being done. Of those few respondents who

were not satisfied, corruption and the length of time taken to resolve issues, were the reasons given.

Corruption

High levels of petty corruption were recorded by the survey: overall, one fifth of respondents had been asked for a bribe by a government official in the past year for delivery of a public service. The most common type of bribe requested was for money, followed by favours and then presents. This type of petty corruption was much more common in Dar es Salaam than in Arusha or Mtwara.

Officials working in the health, policing, courts, employment and school sectors were most likely to ask members of the public for bribes. In most cases, respondents said they paid the bribes “occasionally, depending on the circumstances”. Many of those who did not pay the bribe were refused services and threatened by the officials concerned.

Overall, respondents were only slightly more inclined to believe that corruption has increased rather than decreased in the past three years. Views differed markedly between the three towns however: most people in Mtwara thought bribery had decreased, while those in Arusha and Dar es Salaam were more likely to think it had increased.

Experience of crime

Theft of personal property and home burglaries were the most common crimes overall. Property crimes were more prevalent than violent crimes: five of the six most common crimes were against property, with robbery, the only violent crime, taking sixth place in the ranking.

Dar es Salaam had much higher crime rates than the other two towns surveyed, with the exception of bicycle theft, stock and crop theft which were highest in Mtwara.

Less than half of all crimes surveyed were reported to the police. This occurred in spite of the fact that on average, over a third of victims knew who had perpetrated the crimes against them. One of the most common reasons for not reporting to the police was that they were unavailable or

inaccessible. Many victims also said the crime was not important enough to warrant reporting to the authorities.

On average, nearly two thirds of victims reported the crime to a structure other than the police—mostly traditional authorities, local ward councillors and the Sungusungu.

Implications

The victim survey raises a number of points about crime and crime control in Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Mtwara:

- Law enforcement officers need to increase their presence and interactions with the public in residential and business areas in all three of the towns surveyed.
- Interaction between the police and the Sungusungu should be improved and formalised. When members of the latter act as a vigilante group by punishing suspects, they must be brought to justice. Communities that create Sungusungu units should also be made aware of the rights, obligations and limitations of all stakeholders, including criminal suspects.
- Dealing with corruption must be a priority of both the Tanzania Police Force and the local authorities in the three areas researched.
- Crime and corruption reduction strategies should be accepted as priority items on the socio-economic development agendas of the three towns and regional councils within which the research was undertaken. Specifically, Safer Cities or similar initiatives could be initiated in Arusha and Mtwara.

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