



Covid-19 Response

Community Safety

BULLETIN 01, 2020



Safety and Security Context Highlights

This context analysis highlights the state of community safety and security and emerging dynamics of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic since the declaration of the national curfew on 28th March 2020 to date.

New dynamics have emerged because of the declaration of the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) for security and stabilization in Kenya. The government's response has been to securitise the situation. Responses including restriction of movement; new arrangements of social cohesion and public engagement; enforcement of public orders and redefinition of law enforcement for public health are some of the measures taken to respond to the crises. Introduction of dusk-to-dawn curfew, while not new, presents a new dynamic with a negative effect on crime and disorder, police incivility, gender-based violence crimes and opportunistic crimes.

Responses including restriction of movement; new arrangements of social cohesion and public engagement; enforcement of public orders and redefinition of law enforcement for public health characterise the measures taken to respond to the crises.

Public support for the measures is shaped by the behaviour and approach taken by first-line responders – where police response is professional and empathetic, citizen compliance increases. The cessation of movement in and out Nairobi, Kilifi, Kwale and Mombasa counties are examples of the causal relationship – at the onset of the curfew, the brutal response by the police, strained public support for the curfew and spot-lights the need to re-think the approach to law enforcement under circumstances of pandemics.

Excessive use of force characterised the first evening of the Government imposed dusk-to-dawn curfew with police brutality evident in several counties. This remains a challenge for the National Police Service (NPS) and underlies the prevailing culture of incivility and poor accountability. The resultant public outcry led to action by stakeholders, among them the Law Society of Kenya who moved to court seeking a suspension of the curfew and a decision dispensed by the High Court. While President Kenyatta has apologized for the excessive use of force, there is need to go further and review NPS conduct during operations.



Police in Mombasa Round-up members of public caught past the set curfew.

¹Exceptions have been granted to persons providing essential services as gazetted in the public order notice.

²<https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Dozens-injured-as-police-brutality-marks-start-of-curfew/1056-5506380-kexxbyz/index.html>

³<https://www.nation.co.ke/news/LSK-Havi-court-over-curfew-coronavirus-Covid-19/1056-5508992-hdxhwd/index.html>

⁴<http://kenyalaw.org/caselaw/cases/view/193192/>

⁵<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/nakuru/Officers-interdicted-for-assaulting-Kenyans-during-curfew-/1183314-5512270-17h5sx/index.html>



Police constable Amina Mutio Ramadhan escorts a lady and her child in Utawala, Nairobi County upon the declaration of the nationwide curfew. (PHOTO: Citizen Digital)

National Overview

Glimmers of change have been witnessed among police officers who have conducted themselves within the law. It is worth highlighting two officers who exhibited professional conduct to enforce the curfew. Inspector Ibrahim Abachila, the Administration Police Commander in Baringo County, and Constable Amina Mutio, of Traffic Section – Embakasi, who acted with restraint and engaged citizens in a friendly and accountable manner continues to win admiration across the sector and with the public giving hope that not all is lost. By highlighting these cases, the public is aware of non-violent police conduct. It will also motivate other officers to reform.

Incidents of crime and public disorder were reported at several markets in Gikomba, Korogocho and Ongata Rongai markets within Nairobi and Kajado counties, where traders have clashed with police officers since the GoK first imposed social distancing. Incidents Protests have been reported in Mandera Town, Thika (Kiambu County), Langas (Uasin Gishu County), Kisumu and Likoni (Mombasa county). There is need for focused analysis of the correlation between the closure of markets and crime patterns in these communities. Results may point to a rise in crime including class related tensions between the high- and low-income neighbourhoods. Specifically, a continued increase in burglaries of vacant homes, as owners are migrating, and domestic violence is expected.

There has been an increase in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases. A well-coordinated response framework underlies the emerging strategy in this sector.

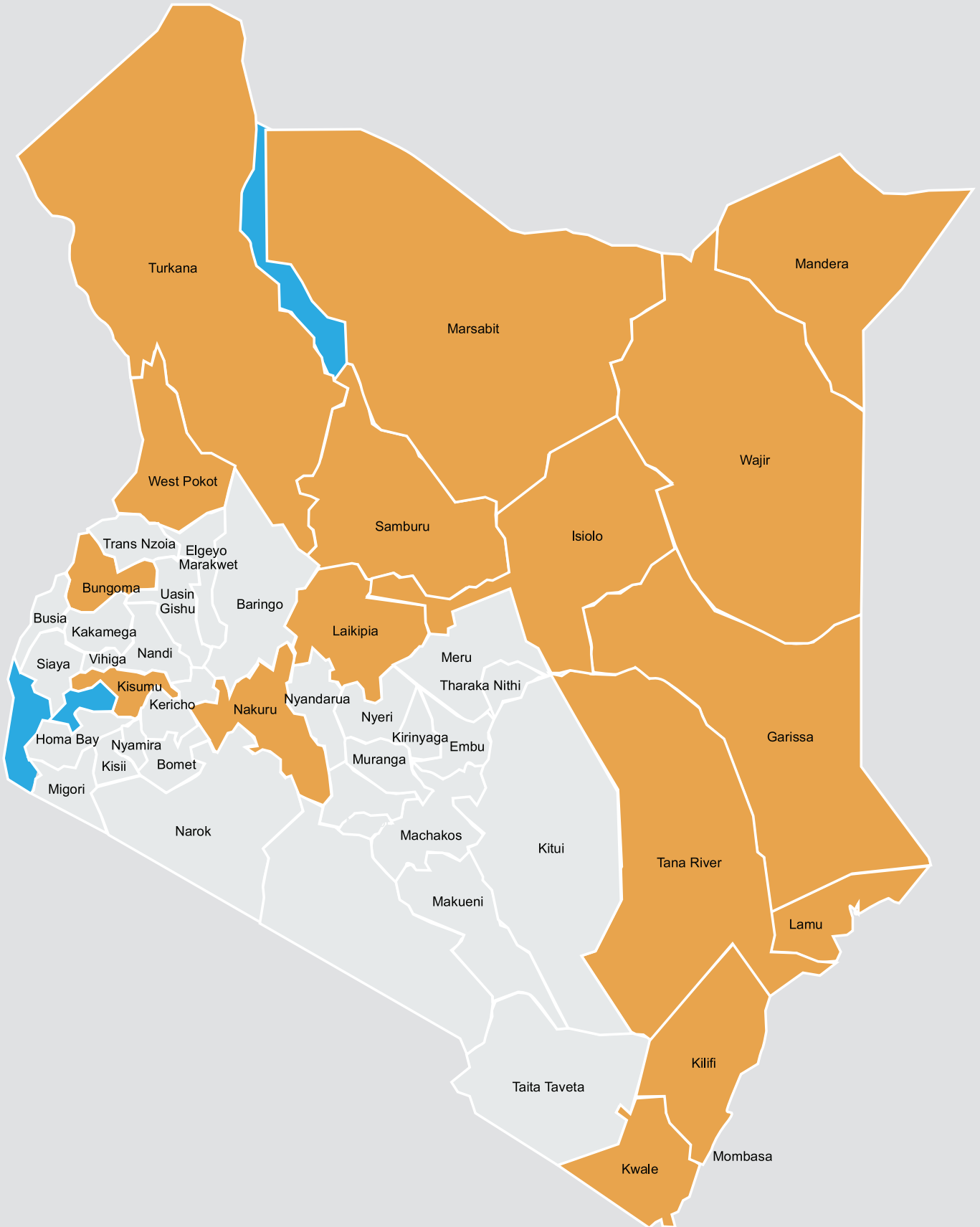
Supporting **the national toll-free reporting lines such as 1195 GBV platform** is the gateway to closing the circle of care for victims and survivors of SGBV.

‘Potential crime-hot spots include the points at which relief food, water and essential livelihood support packages are distributed. The most vulnerable including women, girls, persons with disability and the elderly will be disadvantaged if the distribution is not well organized and coordinated. This poses greater risk where social protection measures are not well implemented.

The dawn-to-dusk curfew and subsequent lockdown of three counties on the coast has heightened feelings of perceived marginalisation amongst the communities in Kilifi, Kwale and Mombasa. The lack of community engagement, through local consultative forums or use of community influencers, on the reasons for the lockdown has heightened tensions. Communities, and some individuals, are accusing those who have recently travelled to the Coast Region of spreading the virus to the coast. This has created an atmosphere of stigmatisation against those believed to have been exposed or tested positive.

In the Western Region, the closure of markets, a major economic activity, has resulted in resentment from community members. The greatest complaint has been the way the closure of these markets was done without engaging the communities on intended closure that has catalysed antagonism between traders and administration.

County Overview



Mombasa, Lamu, Kwale, Kilifi Counties

There was intense public outcry following brutality meted out by police officers during the enforcement of the first day of curfew, especially along the Likoni ferry channel. In the aftermath of the public outcry, there has been improved public order management and controlled ferry service schedules to comply with the curfew directive.

Mombasa County has emerged as a case study on effective inter-governmental collaboration. County resources are being effectively deployed to cushion the vulnerable and thus support enforcement of law and order.

The County Government in collaboration with national government agencies have supported social-distancing measures, including an effective queue management and mass disinfectant system at the ferry. This has not only responded to the concerns over mass exposure at the ferry but also provided safe passage for commuters. Subsequently, no cases of police brutality have been recorded among commuters.

Due to fears of non-locals being possible carriers of the disease, there was tension in Kiunga Village, a village at the border of Lamu and Somalia. Residents demanded the departure of over 40 laborers' from Kilifi and other counties who had come to work on the Kenya – Somalia Border Securitisation Project (KBSP). The contractor in charge of the project had initially established a construction site, Usalama camp, at Karaweni in Kiunga; however, the camp risks closure because of this pressure.

Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu and Laikipia Counties

An increase in false information on COVID-19 has negatively affected efforts to provide effective preventive measures leading to caution from the Isiolo County Commissioner warning residents of fake news.

Emerging cross-border dynamics included a clash between the Kenya Defence Forces and the Ethiopia National Defence Forces along Moyale town. A response to Kenya closing its international borders and digging a trench along the Kenya-Ethiopia border to stop illegal crossing routes and thus minimise cross county infections. There is a need for continuous monitoring of the situation and implications for long-term cross border conflicts.

Kisumu, Bungoma, Nakuru, Turkana and West Pokot Counties

In March, a gang of robbers broke into the Kibos Police Post armoury in Muhoroni Sub-County and stole three rifles and 155 rounds of ammunition. The Regional Commander and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations led the search operations and a number of suspects have been arrested in connection with the incident.

The Kisumu County Government's directive on closure and banning of all open-air markets led to unrest when police sought to seal off Kibuye Market. The directive has had an impact on transport and movement of people and goods in the region. Since the closure of Kibuye market, traders have established a makeshift market called Corona Market along the by-pass connecting Busia Rd and Nairobi Rd. The Government is, in the meantime, planning to relocate the affected traders to four other markets to ease congestion.

In Bungoma County, Senator Moses Wetangula appealed for deployment of security officers along the border with Uganda. There are 18 border points between Malaba and Chepkube. The cross-border community dynamics continue to impact movement between groups of people in the two countries and pose risks especially when screening is not done. The county government is considering posting medics to the border and entry points to carry out screening.

In Nakuru County, the alleged suicide of a South African female put on forced quarantine has blighted the response and preventive approach to quarantine. She had complained that the conditions in the institute were deplorable and had requested to be transferred.

Tana River, Garissa, Wajir and Mandera Counties

In Wajir County, there's fear that a national lockdown will cause inter-communal conflicts. The restriction of people and livestock movement could be used by one community to deny the other access to water and pastures during a drought. The County Commissioner met with clan elders mid-April and discussed alternative measures to address manage water point access between all communities. There is need to monitor such interventions to learn emerging approaches to public consultation on effective lockdown measures.

The emerging need for contextually relevant response to COVID-19 is best espoused by the community disquiet at the closure of sale of khat/Miraa. The market is dominated by female traders whose livelihood is immediately affected thereby exposing them to many risks including GBV and loss of economic empowerment.

An unfortunate development not related to COVID19; a woman was hit by stray bullet in her compound at Bulla power sub-location in Mandera town. The bullet shot by Somali soldiers at the volatile Kenya- Somali border who were partying in a wedding of one of their own and started shooting into the air. This incident brings to the fore the need for continuous monitoring of the cross-border incursions even under the COVID-19 situation.

Recommendations for Action

1. Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for National Police Service:

Following the extension of the nation-wide curfew and cessation of movement restriction in certain counties, the NPS should integrate the COVID-19 operational guidelines into the current Service Standards Orders. This would ensure that officers maintain professional conduct, facilitate public access to essential services including health, and respond to emerging crimes especially sexual and gender based violence incidences.

2. Monitoring various responses by mandated institutions:

Stakeholders working in various sectors including peace, security and public health will need to closely monitor multi-agencies responses and provide constructive feedback while highlighting any avoidable rights violations.



Kenyan police officers and a health official check a boda boda rider's temperature in a random mass testing in Kenya.



About The REINVENT Programme

Reducing Insecurity and Violent Extremism in Northern and Coastal Regions of Kenya (REINVENT) is a five-year programme (2018-2023), funded by UKaid from the British people. REINVENT is a commitment of the UK-Kenya Security Compact. The programme aims to improve security and stability in 18 counties across four regions to enable investment, inclusive growth and equitable service delivery. The programme is led by Tetra Tech International Development and delivered in partnership with the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and the Danish Demining Group (DDG).

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