

Implications of National Police Service Reforms on Response to Terror Activities in Mandera County

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Abstract: A cross-sectional study of police officers was carried out in Mandera County of Kenya to elucidate the impact that reforms in the police service have had on their response to terror activities. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, the study found that while there had been a positive impact for the most part, more still needs to be done especially in the area intelligence gathering to prevent terror attacks and rebuilding the public trust in the police service in light of previous misdeeds.

Keywords: Kenya Police Reforms, Terrorism Response, Security, Mandera County

1. Introduction

The history of the Police service in Kenya dates back to precolonial times when the police were used by those in power to instill fear and protect individual interests (1). This culture of using the police service against the populace remained even after the granting of independence to the Republic of Kenya in 1963. From the reign of Jomo Kenyatta and also subsequent regimes, the police service developed a reputation for dealing ruthlessly with the perceived enemies of the state – in some cases without regard to the constitution and laws they themselves were bound to enforce (2).

Indeed, their motto “*Utumishi kwa wote*” a Swahili phrase meaning “Service to All”, has often appeared to be a mere suggestion rather than a guiding philosophy. In Kenya’s recent history there have been various reports of misdeeds by the police service against the local populace – ranging from extrajudicial killings to outright involvement in crime (3). In addition, police prefer to take bribes than enforce laws. All these have served to create an image of a police service that does not favour to the word service. Indeed, in the minds of many Kenyans, the police are often perceived as being part of the problem altogether.

This sorry state of affairs necessitated the institution of police reforms in Kenya. These police reforms are targeted at transforming the police service in Kenya through the provision of legal, policy and institutional frameworks. The expectation is that with the right framework in place, the police service will be transformed into a professional and accountable disciplined service that can effectively deliver on its mandate ((4).

Efforts to reform the police service have been ongoing for years. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) indicates that the setting up of task force of government and non-governmental actors, spearheaded the first serious effort to reform the police service in the year 2002 ((5). Nonetheless, lack of support meant that these efforts were largely unsuccessful.

Since then, various efforts have culminated in the Revised Police Reforms Program Document 2015-2018, which seeks to inculcate within the police service an observance of the law, accountability to public institutions and communities where they work. In addition, it calls upon the police service to not only protect the safety and rights of individuals but also build professional skills and conditions of service that support efficient and respectful service delivery to the public (6). While efforts to reform the service have seen some successes, it is worth noting that some of the repressive actions of yesteryear that were commonplace are still rampant within the service (7).

Mandera County, located in the North Eastern region of Kenya, shares a border with war-torn Somalia. As such, relative to other counties in the nation, it is subject to severe security risks due to an often-porous border. The presence of terrorist elements in Somalia means that these same elements can easily wreak havoc on Mandera County. In the recent past, the county has experienced security challenges of hijackings, growing radicalization and violent extremism. On 22 November 2014, Mandera bound bus was hijacked by Al - Shabaab terrorists that left 28 people dead and on 2 December there was an armed quarry attack that left 36 workers dead. Since then several other attacks of similar nature have occurred in Mandera prompting queries on the impact of police reforms on their ability to prevent and respond to terror attacks. Further, it has been demonstrated that even in cases where there is a response to terror – the response may not necessarily be appropriate and in some cases may result in ethnic or religious profiling, which violates human rights (8). This study therefore sought to elucidate the impact of the police reform program on response to terror threats in Mandera County.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Design

The study utilized a cross-sectional descriptive study design. It made use of a mixed methods approach where both quantitative and qualitative data was sought to elucidate the situation under study.

2.2 Study Area

The study was carried out in Mandera County of the Republic of Kenya. It covers a total land mass of 25,986 square kilometers (9). Located in the North Eastern part of Kenya, Mandera borders Ethiopia to the North, the Somalia Republic to the East and Wajir County to the South. It has six constituencies namely Mandera South, Mandera East, Mandera North, Mandera West, Banisa and Lafey. It is about 1,100km from the capital city of Nairobi by road, and its capital and largest town is Mandera.

Majority of the population in the county are pastoralists, predominantly Murule, Garre, Degodia and other ethnic groups of the larger Somali community. The county suffers frequent drought and food insecurity and often ranks the lowest in terms of socio-economic indicators (9). It's faced with increased cases of terror attacks, growing youth radicalization, violent extremism hijackings cattle rustling, banditry, opportunistic crimes and inter-clan feuds.

2.3 Study Population

The study population comprised the 1,200 police officers deployed in various capacities within

Mandera County. Key informants were drawn from other security agencies and senior police officers based in the six stations of Mandera County, namely: Mandera County headquarters, Elwak, Takaba, Lafey, Rhamu Dimtu and Banisa.

2.4 Sample Size and Sampling

According to (10) at least 10% of study population is an appropriate sample size for the research. From a target population of 1200 police officers and other security stake holders, a minimum sample size of 120 respondents was to be conveniently sampled for the survey. In addition, 24 key informants, 4 in each of the 6 stations were purposively selected for participation.

2.5 Data Management

Data was collected by means of a survey and key informant interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using IBM SPSS version 25. Frequency distributions and proportions were provided and presented in the form of Tables and graphs. Basic content analysis was used for the qualitative data.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Permission to carry out the study was sought and provided by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the police service headquarters. The rights of study respondents were respected and protected in the course of the study. Data confidentiality and respondent privacy were upheld during the data collection and management. Informed consent was sought prior to data collection.

3. Results

3.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 138 respondents participated in the study. Majority (82.6%) of the respondents were male, while the remainder were female (17.4%). The distribution of the other socio-demographic characteristics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Study Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	114	82.6
	Female	24	17.4
Age	18-30 years	42	30.4
	31-45 years	72	52.2
	46-60 years	24	17.4
Education Level	Secondary	48	34.8
	Post-secondary	90	65.2
Area of Residence	Township	108	78.3
	Shopping Centre	30	21.7
Area of specialization	Police service	132	95.7
	County security team	6	4.3

Duration of service	1-5 years	18	13.0
	6-10 years	48	34.8
	11-15 years	18	13.0
	16-20 years	18	13.0
	21-25 years	24	17.4
	26 years and above	12	8.7
Department	KPS	36	26.1
	APS	36	26.1
	CID	66	47.8
Rank	CIP	6	4.3
	CPL	12	8.7
	Detective Constable	6	4.3
	Inspector	6	4.3
	Police Constable	60	43.5
	Police Inspector	24	17.4
	Sergeant	18	13.0
	Superintendent	6	4.3

3.2 Reforms Implemented in Mandera County

From the key informant interviews the senior police officers reported the existence of police reform initiatives which are currently in operation in Mandera County. These reforms include housing improvement, the introduction of armoured vehicles, mock drills designed to help increase alertness, the purchase of police equipment, improved response and increased deployment of police. Police welfare has been significantly improving due to the implementation of the reforms. This has in turn motivated the police officers who have increased their responsiveness and have increased their interaction with the public. However, it is essential to note that police remuneration is still described as being low by the respondents.

3.3 Challenges to Implementation of Police Reforms in Mandera County

Implementation of police reforms was met with various challenges that hindered effective provision of security to the public. Firstly, intelligence was mainly acquired from the public due to lack of policing equipment that would help gather intelligence like air surveillance. The public at times is reluctant to provide such information for fear of their own safety or police victimization.

Secondly, there is a shortage of personnel in Mandera County which at times limits the extent through which security can be ensured. Additionally, the police service is yet to embrace new technology which is detrimental as terrorists have sophisticated weapons contrary to the old weapons that the police have. Lack of funding also limits the police ability to achieve to provide security service to the public. The channel through which orders are made are long which limits response time and puts the public in danger.

Additionally, the police salary is insufficient which demotivates them from effectively performing their duties. Mandera County also faces issues related to poor infrastructure which hinders the police ability to respond in time e.g. poor roads and poor network. Lastly, office work at times limits the interaction with the public.

3.4 Impact of Police Reforms on Police Response to Terror in Mandera County

A majority of the respondents noted that the county was enjoying good security status attributed to the fact that a number of threats have been neutralized, the area is peaceful and the living conditions of the residents has improved. However, two of the major challenges that respondents reported were an increase in the number of radicalized individuals and the porous border. In terms of impact, almost three-quarters (73.9%) of respondents indicated that police reforms have had a positive impact on the response to terror activities in Mandera County (Figure 1).

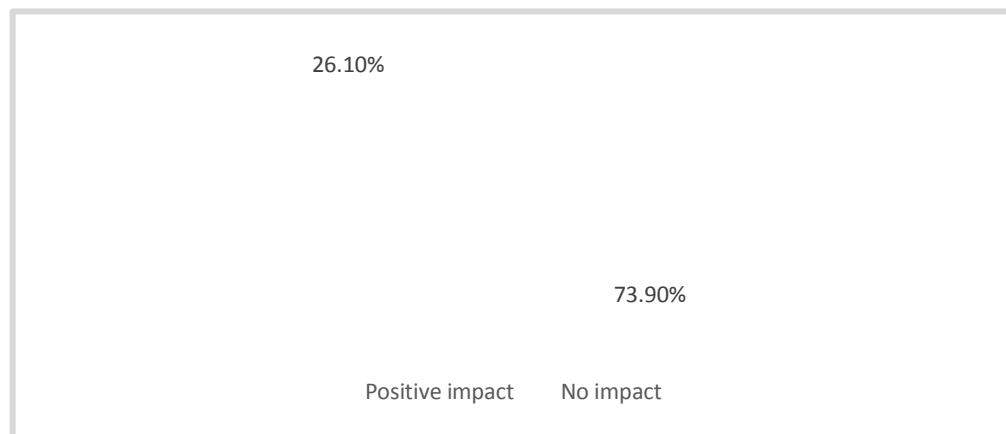


Figure 1. Impact of Police Reforms on Response to Terror Activities

Respondents were asked to characterize their responses by indicating their level of agreement to various statements on police response to terror activities in Mandera County. The distribution of their responses is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Status of Police Response to Terror Activities in Mandera County

Statement	Agree (%)	Unsure (%)	Disagree (%)
Police at county level are well resourced to respond to terror activities.	72.7	9.1	18.2
All stations are equipped to respond to terror activities efficiently and effectively	82.6	8.7	8.7
All police are trained to respond to terror activities.	65.2	4.3	30.4
Police at county level have embraced technology to respond to terrorism	56.5	17.4	26.1
There is up to date intelligence on terrorist activities.	31.8	4.5	63.6
Intelligence on terror activities is promptly actioned as it's received.	34.8	4.3	60.9
The current organization structure is very clear on response to terror activities	52.4	19.0	28.6
Police response to terror activities is slow and disjointed	56.5	0.0	43.5

County police get close support from higher headquarter during operations	34.8	17.4	47.8
Police at county level lack community support during response to terror activities.	40.9	4.5	54.5
Geographical terrain, poor road network affect response.	4.3	0.0	95.7
Some police lack confidence in their weapons	39.1	4.3	56.5
Police lack specialized equipment to respond to terror activities.	17.4	0.0	82.6
Some police officers lack sense of duty, bravely or training on response to terror attacks	27.3	13.6	59.1
Communication equipment's are major contributor to ineffective response	26.1	4.3	69.6
Police lack planning or reinforcement strategies in case of terror attacks	26.1	4.3	69.6
Police need continuous training on response to terror activities	8.7	0.0	91.3
Police lack sufficient armoured vehicles and equipment to respond to terror attacks	8.7	4.3	87.0
Slow dissemination of intelligence affect response	18.2	0.0	81.8
Not all police are trained on response to terror threat and attacks	18.2	4.5	77.3
Police lack armed air support during response	4.3	4.3	91.3
Lack of political will to diffuse ethnicity, religion and political tension affect police response	9.1	9.1	81.8
Police and other security agencies work in hand during response terror activities	17.4	0.0	82.6

4. Discussion

The implementation of the police reforms has been tied to bringing about a positive impact when responding to terror activities in Mandera County. The respondents noted that police at county level are well resourced to respond to terror activities, all stations are equipped to respond to terror activities efficiently and effectively, all police officers were trained to respond to terror activities, improved technology to respond to terrorism and the current organization structure is very clear on response to terror activities. Police reforms bring about a number of benefits only to the public but also play a great in ensuring accountability mechanisms by ensuring proper and effective service provision (KNHCR, 2015).

The senior police officers reported the existence of police reform initiatives which are currently in operation in Mandera County. These reforms include housing improvement, the introduction of armored vehicles, mock drills designed to help increase alertness, the purchase of police equipment, improved response and increased deployment of police.

Additionally, through improved police welfare has been significantly and the police officers are motivated to increase their responsiveness and interaction with the public. The county was also enjoying good security as threats have been neutralized, the area is peaceful and the living conditions of the residents has

improved. Kihiko, (2013), reveals that these reforms introduce better systems of accountability, improving regulations, addressing issues among the police and increasing the access to police services.

Nonetheless, there still remains work to be done to win the public confidence. In addition, there is a need for the police response to move from curative to preventative – that is – preventing terror attacks in the first place. This may only be achieved through enhanced community collaboration and seeking to provide redress for previous harms caused to the public and by so doing win back the public confidence.

Establishment of Police Reforms

The police were unclear on when the police reforms were initiated however the establishment of the reforms was attributed to the need to improve the living conditions for police officers, the number of extra judicial killings and the need to bridge the gap between the Kenya Police Service (KPS) and the administration police service (APS). Additionally, the regular provision of intelligence from the public which was critical in capturing critical information on terror activities in the area. However, the public selectively gave out the intelligence due to fear of exposure to the assailants. Police reforms are mainly implemented in order to transform the state of security of a country for the purpose of restoration of peace after conflict and for the purpose of public good (11). The establishment of police of reforms are mostly influenced through the need to improve professional service and to protect citizens from their aggressors (12)

Implementation of National Police Reforms in Mandera County

Police reforms in Mandera County are yet to be fully implemented as a result of poor sensitization of police officers and poor police infrastructure. There has been significant increase in the logistical capacity in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in responding to terror activities. Police reforms have however brought about a number of significant benefits in the provision of security in the county. This is through the introduction of modernized equipment, increased top command accountability and a reduction in the level of harassment among senior officers. There are however significant challenges like poor remuneration, climatic challenges and partial implementation of funds. Challenges which limit the implementation of police reforms in Mandera County include poor communication, poor housing, lack of funds and lack of support from the police officers. One study noted that police reforms in African countries can only attain partial success due to the level of insecurity and the pervasive nature of police institutions in the nature (13). There are a number of significant issues and challenges which are linked police reforms which include factors lie organization culture, the level of commitment of the implementers and inadequate capabilities (14). Challenges like insecurity, poor economy and political instability which reduced the legitimacy of policing efforts. Additionally, shortages in training, motivation corruption and weak states create instability in the implementation of successful police reforms (15).

Impact of National Police Reforms on Response to Terror Activities in Mandera County

Implementation of reforms is mainly directed towards the provision of positive impact in the response of terror activities in Mandera County. At the county level, the police officers are well equipped with sufficient resources to respond to terror activities, stations are also equipped to respond well to terror activities. The police reforms also made it critical Police reforms like housing improvement for officers, armoured vehicles, mock drills and increased deployment of police officers bring about a number of benefits only to the public but also play a great in ensuring accountability mechanisms by ensuring proper and effective service provision (16). The inclusion of reforms introduce better systems for accountability, improvement in regulations and addressing

issues which increase the accessibility of police services (17).

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