



# Jamii Thabiti

Towards a safe and secure Kenya

Levies charged on P3 forms a setback to progress made in reporting violence

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Commissioner Wilkister Verah Nyaiyo: Entrenching community security and safety through policing

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# Community Policing

Bridging safety and security

## About the Jamii Thabiti Programme

The Jamii Thabiti Programme is about improving community security and safety. It intends to reduce levels of criminal violence, inter-communal violence and violence against women and girls by working with authorities, service providers and civil society organisations at national and county levels.

The Programme will build on the achievements of improved legislation and police accountability as well as new peace and security architecture at the county level. It will provide a more people-centred, long-term approach to peacebuilding, police reform and community security.

### International support

Jamii Thabiti Programme is being supported by the United Kingdom through the Department for International Development (DFID). It is being implemented by Coffey International in partnership with 30 organisations working closely with the Government of Kenya, including both national and county level institutions.

### Objective of the Programme

Jamii Thabiti will ensure a measureable improvement in the ability of national and county level institutions to tackle violence against women and girls, crime and inter-communal conflict, resulting in improved safety and security institutions at the national level and in eight counties of Kisumu, Bungoma, Kilifi, Kwale, Nakuru, Baringo, Wajir and Mandera.

The anticipated programme results include effective response to conflict and insecurity; improved policing; reduced gender based violence and better crime statistics.

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## EDITORIAL TEAM

### Executive Director

**Arthur Okwemba**

### Managing Editor

**Jane Godia**

### Programme Manager

**Ruth Omukhango**

### Sub-Editors

**Faith Muiruri**

**Joyce Chimbi**

**Odhiambo Orlale**

### Writers

**Faith Muiruri**

**Ruth Omukhango**

**Odhiambo Orlale**

**Joyce Chimbi**

### Design & Layout

**Vieve Omnimedia**



# Levies charged on P3 forms a setback to progress made in reporting violence

BY FAITH MUIRURI

**K**isumu County Government has introduced a new levy that requires survivors of violence to pay up to KSh1500 for P3 forms in all the hospitals.

According to Hon Farida Salim, the new levy is contained in the Finance Bill passed by the County Assembly in the current financial year.

Although Salim introduced an amendment to abolish these charges, members of the County Assembly did not support it. “My colleagues rejected the amendment arguing that waiving certain charges will interfere with the ultimate revenue as the county’s budget is based on revenue collected.”

The levy will undermine reporting of cases since majority of those who are violated and go to public hospitals are from poor families where even affording three meals per day is a challenge.

## Cases compromised

Salim noted that the charges have compromised reporting of cases related to violence against women and girls because most survivors can hardly raise the money required to meet the costs.

Salim spoke as statistics from the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Referral Hospital indicated that the county continues to register high cases of violence against women and girls. Defilement takes the lead with three to four cases being registered at the hospital’s Gender Based Violence Recovery Centre (GBVRC) daily.

Reports from Kisumu Central Police



“The levies on P3 forms are having a negative effective as survivors, who are very poor opt to settle cases of sexual and gender based violence out of court-

HON FARIDA SALIM, MEMBER KISUMU COUNTY ASSEMBLY.

Station indicate that during school holidays, cases of defilement increase to between seven and ten per day with

Kisumu County Assembly has passed a bill imposing levies on the P3 forms making it difficult for survivors of VAWG to pursue justice. PICTURE: INTERNET

majority of the victims coming from the informal settlements.

Salim singled out slum areas for recording the highest rates of sexual violence cases. “The common factor in most of the reported cases, especially of very young children, is that majority of the offenders are HIV positive which brings to the fore the fact that some people believe if they have sex with a virgin it will reverse their HIV status.”

Salim cited the case of a six-month-old baby who was defiled by her father as he tried to cleanse himself from HIV in Nyalenda area. The father had defiled her for the first **PAGE 5>>**



The Naivasha town matatu bus terminus. It has been named as a place where violence against women and girls is very common. PHOTO: STEVE MUCHERU.

## Naivasha community decries rising cases of sexual harassment in matatus

**BY JOYCE CHIMBI**

**W**hen the Sexual Offences Amendment Bill was recently rejected in Parliament as unimplementable, many women watched in horror as one male leader after another cracked jokes out of provisions that could have significantly curbed inappropriate behaviour in Public Service Vehicles commonly known as matatus.

The proposed amendments would have gone a long way in deterring the many cases of sexual harassment including fondling of women and girls in public and

other forms of inappropriate touching that characterize the lives of women when they occupy public spaces.

### **Inappropriate touching**

“More women than would care to admit have experienced some form of inappropriate touching in the matatus than they would care to admit,” said Margaret Mumbi, a resident of Karagita Village in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County.

The issue of sexual harassment especially by those working in the public

transport industry became a major point of discussion during community forum held by African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service in Naivasha to discuss security and safety within the Jamii Thabiti Programme.

Community members noted the torture that women and girls are subjected to in public transport.

“One day I tried to squeeze myself in between seats to access the back and a man pushed me from behind touching my butt,” said Catherine Ndinda, a resident of

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<< **FROM PAGE 4** Viwandani Ward in Naivasha.

The community members, who included both men and women, explained that the men who ply various routes from and to the sub-county become bolder by the day and sexually harass women and girls in broad day light.

Police officers from the Naivasha Police Station noted that cases of inappropriate touching were the most difficult to deal with.

“Unfortunately it is difficult to show evidence of inappropriate touching or crude sexual comments,” said Inspector Samuel Kariuki, head of Administration Police in the Sub-County. The burden of proof, Kariuki explained, is on the woman.

**Harassment unacceptable**

“What can help in dealing with these cases and to prevent them in the first place is to have awareness campaigns at the community level where people understand that it is unacceptable to harass women and that it is a punishable offence,” Kariuki explained.

According to John Bosco Kimani, a member of Naivasha Community Policing Committee, if the culture of matatu operators abusing women and girls continues unabated, rape and defilement cases which are already so high will escalate.

Commissioner of Police Wilkister Vera Nyaiyo, in-charge at the Directorate of Community Policing, Gender and Child Protection encouraged the community to be each other’s keeper. “Once you see something going wrong, take action, make noise about it and provide accurate and timely information to the police.”

Nyaiyo reiterated that even cases of inappropriate touching can be dealt

with if eye witnesses are willing to come forward.

Nominated Member of the Nakuru County Assembly Virginia Gichanga is already proposing various measures to bring sanity to the matatu industry.



“It is not easy to determine evidence of inappropriate touching or crude sexual comments. The burden of proof then lies with the survivor.” - INSPECTOR SAMUEL KARIUKI, HEAD OF ADMINISTRATION POLICE IN NAIVASHA.

“We need all matatu operators to be in registered in Savings and Credit Organisations (SACCOS). They should wear uniform at all times and have identification numbers so that when they harass women, one can just take their number and report,” said Gichanga.

All the same, this dialogue forum held between police officers and the community set the ball rolling towards a sustainable community-police partnership that will significantly address cases of violence against women and girls in Naivasha Sub-County. **JT**

**Levies on P3 forms a setback to progress made in reporting violence**

<< **FROM PAGE 3** time and she was hospitalized for two weeks and discharged. Three days after being released from hospital, he repeated the act which led to the child bleeding to death as she was being rushed to hospital.

Decrying the extent of resultant damages of defilement, Salim also cites the case where the womb of a four-year-old girl was removed after she was defiled, infected with HIV and her womb ruptured.

In Nyahera within Kisumu West Sub-county, a 15-year-old boy was discovered defiling young girls between ages five and eight. He would lure the girls with chips, lock them in a room where they would line up to be defiled one after the other.

**Gains undermined**

Unfortunately, sid Salim, the survivors and their families are now opting to settle these cases out of court following the new development which has also undermined the gains made in educating communities on how to handle cases of sexual violence.

Margaret Omondi, Executive Director at the Women’s Concerns Centre, a community based organisation that is a downstream partner of Jamii Thabiti Programme concurred saying that poor budgetary allocations by the County Government on mitigating gender based violence also posed a challenge.

“This can only be resolved by having both policy and gender based violence laws in place,” said Omondi. **JT**

# Culture standing in the way of addressing VAWG

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

Efforts to address violence against women and girls have remained weak in the face of certain aspects of culture and traditional practices that create an environment for these crimes to go on unabated.

During a meeting organized by the African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service under Jamii Thabiti Programme in Diani, Msambweni Constituency in Kwale County with members of the Diani Community Policing Committee, it emerged that culture remains major obstacle to any efforts towards ending violence.

“In most parts of Kwale County, once a girl begins her menstrual period she is considered ready for marriage,” said Mwanahamisi Juma, a member of the Diani Community Policing Committee.

Child marriages and teenage pregnancies are common to an extent that they are not considered as crime. To lessen these forms of violence, certain measures must be put in place.

“What we need is a lot of engagement with elders, chiefs and the community which can be done through the barazas as we begin talking about the crimes,” noted Juma.

## Retrogressive practices

Respect for culture and tradition is a big issue and those who fail to follow are referred to the old adage that says “*Mwacha mila ni mtumwa*”. Loosely translated from the widely spoken Swahili, this means that those who abandon their culture are slaves.

With high levels of illiteracy being a major problem in the region “lack of exposure is



Zakaria Yusuf, a member of the County Public Service Board during a community forum convened by AWC in Msambweni Constituency in Kwale County. The forum aimed at empowering communities to become champions of their destinies in safety and security matters. PHOTO: OMAR MWALAGO

a big challenge in addressing retrogressive practices that condone violence against women and girls,” explained Mwanaisa Mwania, an Administrative Police Officer at Diani Police Station.

Diani Community Policing Committee members agreed that ignorance coupled with a lack of awareness on what violence against women and girls means is a major barrier on efforts towards ending the violations.

“People know that defilement is wrong but the community is using this issue to make money,” said Rashidi Kondo, a member of

the newly formed sub-committee to address violence against women and girls.

Kondo, who is also an elder, said it is the norm in the community that when a man identifies a woman that he would like to marry, he takes her home with him and seeks consent later. Through this process, girls who are minors are being abused by among others boda boda operators. Should the family raise an alarm, they quickly agree with the perpetrator and are compensated.

Due to high levels of poverty, many people are going this direction completely ignoring the trauma that the girls

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## Culture standing in the way of addressing VAWG

<< FROM PAGE 6 experience.

Even worse is the fact that in many instances, the girl could have been impregnated in the process and there is never justice since the matter is quietly swept under the rag.

“We value tradition but a time has come for us to leave behind what is not right. We must abandon harmful practices in order to give our girls a chance,” said Ali Mwakubo, a chief in the area.

### Embrace progress

Mwakubo noted that culture might appear to be the biggest challenge but the community can embrace progress if given the right information.

“Many times people do the same thing because they have not been shown the right way and it is our duty to teach them,” he reiterated.

Mwakubo hailed efforts that have been put in place by the Jamii Thabiti Programme to work with other community based organisations, police, elders and other members of the community to address violence against women and girls in Kwale County.

“These are different times and we must change our ways. Girls are going to school and getting big jobs, some are becoming leaders, this is what we should teach our girls,” reiterated Mwakubo.

There was, therefore, a commitment to support efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the community as one way of empowering them. **IT**



Fredrick Kere, one of the oldest members of Bungoma Community Policing Committee has served with dedication and passion since 2005. PHOTO: ODHIAMBO ORLALE

# Bungoma community policing committee making greater inroads

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

For slightly over 10 years, Fredrick Kere, currently chairman of the Bungoma County Community Policing Committee has served tirelessly to ensure the area under his jurisdiction is safe and secure.

To enable him progress well, Kere has also established a close working relationship with the police and local chiefs in promoting peace and security in the expansive county that borders Uganda.

Since mid-2016, the work of the Community Policing Committee received a boost and greater visibility following the support of the Jamii Thabiti Programme.

Says Kere: “Through Jamii Thabiti, we

have benefited from several capacity-building workshops and seminars. We have been facilitated to network and hold community forums in some of the nine sub-counties within Bungoma County.”

From the meetings under Jamii Thabiti, and to ensure there is impact in addressing violence against women and girls, each sub-county is expected to establish a sub-committee within the Community Policing Committee to address violence against women and girls. With guidance from African Woman and Child (AWC), the Directorate of Community Policing, Gender and Child Protection, as well as the partner organisation, and Catholic Justice and Peace Commission two sub-committees on violence

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# Commissioner Wilkister Verah

## Entrenching community security and safety



**BY JANE GODIA**

**A**s the Commissioner of Police in Charge at the Directorate of Community Policing, Gender and Child Protection, Wilkister Verah Nyaiyo, with almost 28 years in the service, has her work cut out and it's in the long haul.

Since 2014 when she joined the Directorate, just a few months after President Uhuru Kenyatta signed to the Draft Guidelines for Implementation of Community Policing and Nyumba Kumi, Nyaiyo has been crisscrossing the 47 counties talking to communities and sensitising them on sharing information on safety and security.

### **Priority areas**

However, the entrance of Jamii Thabiti Programme into police reforms with the component of community policing being among priority areas, has added on to the work that Nyaiyo and her team at the police headquarters are doing.

"The main mandate of the Directorate is to plan, organise and move out to the 47 counties, in specific sub-counties and sensitise members of the public and fellow police officers on community policing," explains Nyaiyo. "We also create awareness around laws and policies such as the Children's Act, Sexual Offences Act and Protection Against Domestic Violence Act."

Nyaiyo notes: "We concentrate on women and girls because there are more cases of them being abused and violated. However,

**Police Commissioner Wilkister Vera Nyaiyo heads the Directorate of Gender, Children and Community Policing.** PHOTO: GEORGE NGESA



# through policing

this does not mean we sideline the boy child.”

The Directorate of Community Policing is working within the Jamii Thabiti Programme and its partner organisations to improve safety and security with the intention of making the community safer. This is done through empowering women and girls as well as entire communities to know the importance of reporting violations and conservation of evidence. Among the anticipated results of the Jamii Thabiti Programme is improved community policing and oversight in the eight counties where it’s being implemented.

### Increased prosecution

“Through this, we will have increased reporting and prosecution of perpetrators and eventually lead to a reduction of crime related violence, physical assault and psychological torture,” explains Nyaiyo. “When every woman knows how to handle issues of children within the family they will all be empowered and communities will remain safer.”

Since the Directorate started working within the Jamii Thabiti Programme, Nyaiyo says, they have noticed a positive impact especially with the establishment of the sub-committees on violence against women and girls within the community policing committees.

“These sub-committees are specifically

mandated to create awareness among women and girls as well as the general public by encouraging them to share information with the police and other law enforcement agencies so that perpetrators are brought to book,” explains Nyaiyo. She notes: “Even potential perpetrators who get this information will be deterred from committing any offence in relation to violence against women and girls.”



“Through Community Policing we are empowering communities to know the importance of reporting violations and conserving evidence.”

WILKISTER VERAH NYAIYO, COMMISSIONER OF POLICE.

The Directorate of Community Policing recognises Jamii Thabiti Programme as a one of the community policing agencies. Although Jamii Thabiti is only working in eight counties, Nyaiyo says, when they go to counties outside of the Programme, they sell the idea of setting up sub-committees on violence against women and girls within the community policing committees.

“We do this because Jamii Thabiti is only supplementing the work of community policing. It is our responsibility as a Directorate to ensure that other counties are reached in establishing the sub-committees for the purpose of overseeing violence against women and girls within their larger committees.”

The Jamii Thabiti Programme, under its running theme of improving community security, anticipates improved formal and informal data and statistics on crime and violence including that perpetrated against women and girls.

### Initiative accepted

In comparison to her first year at the Directorate when the concept of Community Policing and Nyumba Kumi Initiative were conflicting, Nyaiyo has seen community policing evolve and receive acceptance.

“Since the approval of the Guidelines for Implementation of Community Policing by President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2013, we have been able to make members of the public understand that there can be no Community Policing without Nyumba Kumi,” she says. Nyumba Kumi is a strategy brought on board to play the role of safety and security awareness at the grassroots level.

Nyaiyo explains: “Members of the community come together at cluster level to form the 10 households (nyumba kumi) which then form the base for community policing from village to sub-location stages, rising to ward and eventually sub-county levels.”

She notes that Jamii Thabiti Programme is enhancing the work of community policing and the recognition that it’s all for their well-being, safety and security.

JT

# Mtwapa Community Policing Committee sits between a rock and hard place



The open sea which borders Mtwapa makes it an ideal conduit for major narcotic dealers who use girls as drug mules. PHOTO: DANIEL KATANA KITHI

**BY JANE GODIA**

**K**nown as the 24-hour-city of the Africa, Mtwapa, lying in the southern tip of Kilifi County, on the northern Coast of Kenya, is a town whose name precedes its popularity.

Accommodating all the 43 tribes of Kenya, and a renowned tourist destination, criminal violence as well as violence against women and girls remain challenges that the town has to grapple with on a daily basis.

The town's Community Policing Committee has its job cut out and it's not easy. Crime driven violence pushed area residents to start their own community policing programme long before the Government

gazetted the initiative.

"Community policing in Mtwapa was established in 2002 at a time when crime was very high and members of the public did not trust the police," said Mr Tarmohamed Kana, chairman Mtwapa Community Policing Committee. "We came together and agreed that our security begins with us and we do not have to wait for the Government to come in."

These revelations emerged during a meeting held by African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service under the Jamii Thabiti Programme. The meeting was held with the intention of establishing a sub-committee on violence against women and girls within the Community Policing

Committee of Mtwapa.

It emerged that the Community Policing Committee has been unable to fulfil its mandate because it's faced many challenges. While members of the policing committee work closely with the Mtwapa Police Station, culture and traditional practices among other barriers hinder their work. The local community, it was noted, treats sexual and domestic violence as normal and do not want to report.

## **Justice for survivor**

"Many members of the community want to protect their own even when they are criminals and perpetrators of violence," said Kana. "Sexual and other forms of violence against women and girls are handled through the traditional systems which do not ensure justice for the survivor."

Where cases have reached the police, victims and parents are more often than not unwilling to follow up or appear as witnesses. This makes it difficult for the investigating officer to manage the case to completion. In addition, most of them move houses to avoid being bonded to appear in court.

Chief Inspector Julius Mbaru, Officer in Charge at Mtwapa Police Station reiterated that members of Nyumba Kumi Initiative and Community Policing Committee who are also police informers remain vulnerable and are constantly being threatened.

Ms Ruth Ndinda, Administration Police Officer in charge of Kilifi South said sexual offences are not taken seriously and mainly handled in Kangaroo courts set at the community level.

"The community does not take rape, defilement and incest **PAGE 11>>**

<< **FROM PAGE 10** with the weight it deserves. Most often the survivors are compromised with cash handouts and then they disappear. The Community Policing Committee takes the burden of following up the case with no headway,” noted Ndinda.

Mtwapa Community Policing Committee also faces the challenge of disco *matanga* (funeral wake disco music) which are held when one dies. Though this has been outlawed, it continues unabated with most people in the community arguing it’s a cultural practice. However, this is the breeding ground for crime and violence against women and girls.



**Many members of the community want to protect their own even when they are criminals and perpetrators of violence,”**

MR TARMOHAMED KANA, CHAIRMAN MTWAPA COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE.

“It’s here that young people are inculcated into drug use. It’s at the disco *matangas* that girls are sexually abused with most of them ending up pregnant,” said Hussein Ali, a member of the Nyumba Kumi Initiative and village elder. He noted: “It’s also the ground where young women fight over men and most of them end up being beaten.”

According to Ali, married women who attend disco *matangas* end up being beaten by their husbands because they are purported to be promiscuous. However, the policing committee members also noted that disco *matangas* form a breeding ground where elderly

men prey on young girls for sex.

The challenge with disco *matanga* is that the community has tied it to culture and tradition, making it difficult to end despite the numerous arrests that the police have made.

The forum also noted that the Constitution was a barrier to accessing justice and this comes to play when perpetrators of violence demand statements given by victims, survivors and witnesses.

“The statements have names and telephone contacts. The situation has seen many survivors and witnesses threatened by the perpetrators to an extent that they fail to appear in court and move to a place where they cannot be traced,” said Kana.

His sentiments were echoed by Chief Inspector Julius Mbaru, Officer Commanding Mtwapa Police Station. “Cases are not completed because complainants take off, leaving the cases pending in court which forces the magistrate to acquit perpetrators.”

Movement by the police is hampered by lack of transportation. With only one car at Mtwapa Police Station, the police cannot go everywhere they are called to by members of the community policing.

The open sea which borders Mtwapa makes it an ideal conduit for major narcotic dealers. “Even when police are tipped, they do not have speed boats to follow up on those bringing drugs into the town,” said Mr Swaleh Salim, a police officer.

With Mtwapa being a major tourism destination, sex tourism is rife and the victims are majorly girls and women. “Not only are vulnerable girls sold to tourists for sex but even when police make arrests, the tourists end up being treated as superior,” said Kana. “This extends to small girls being paid to engage in pornography.” **JT**

## Bungoma community policing committee making greater inroads

<<**FROM PAGE 7** against women and girls have been established.

The Bungoma Community Policing Committee meets once a week to review cases and issues touching on peace and security, especially now that the country is preparing for the General Elections on August 8.

### Speaking with one voice

“I have attended many Jamii Thabiti forums in Bungoma County where we have been taken through what the law and Constitution say about our mandate,” says Kere. “We have also been regularly attending the chief’s *barazas* (meetings) and giving our input.”

These forums have helped them speak with one voice on issues of security and crime as well as violence.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission is the Jamii Thabiti partner in Bungoma County and Kere says they frequently hold meetings together to discuss concerns on violence against women and girls. Ever since, the community was made to understand that the police is on the ground for their own good, Kere says the number of tips they are receiving on criminals and perpetrators of violence against women and girls has gone up.

He notes: “We are appealing to Jamii Thabiti to expand the programme to make a bigger impact as the General Election draws closer.

Says Kere: “It’s during the electioneering period that we experience electoral violence where women and children end up being the biggest casualties.” **JT**



Community Policing Forum organised by the National Police Service. PHOTO: COURTESY

# Challenges place barriers to effective community policing

BY JANE GODIA

Working under the theme of improving community security, the Jamii Thabiti Programme emphasises that safety and security at any one point can only achieve results if law enforcers and the community join hands.

With the on-going police reforms taking place in Kenya, success can only be registered if the community believes and embraces the Community Policing Initiative.

Wilkister Vera Nyaiyo, Commissioner of Police at the Directorate of Community Policing, Gender and Child Protection Unit says success of Community Policing and Nyumba Kumi initiatives depend on the public's attitude.

Says Nyaiyo: "Members of the public still

have negative perceptions towards police officers. They have not realised that the police as human beings can be friendly and are part of the community. The mistrust that is exhibited makes passing of information a challenge."

## Hoarding information

She notes: "If the community perceives the police positively, they will be able to work together. However, if they are seen as enemies and brutal, then fear will reign and the public will end up keeping all the information to themselves."

Reiterates Nyaiyo: "Hoarding of information poses a challenge with many cases ending up unreported and trends of violence going up in the community."

Members of the public still have a problem

of attending community policing meetings because most of them demand transport reimbursement as well as lunch allowances and airtime which the National Police Service does not cater for and the national government has not budgeted for.

"However, we advise members of community policing committees to include the challenges facing them in the minutes of their meetings which end up at the National Security Council," says Nyaiyo. "As time goes by, we are hopeful that the Government will be able to take these concerns into consideration."

Cultural practices among communities also inhibit the work of community policing through traditional practices. Officers face challenges in communities that practice female genital mutilation as well as early and forced marriages.

"While all these are forms of violence against women and girls, communities that practice them are not ready to stop though the practices have been outlawed. The officers find it hard to agree with elders who are custodians of culture," explains Nyaiyo.

She notes that language is an obstacle to community policing especially in communities where illiteracy levels are high. "An officer who is not from within the community will not be able to carry out sensitisation effectively because they are unable to communicate in the local language and members of that community do not understand the national languages," explains Nyaiyo.

She notes that even as they meet challenges in the community, within the National Police Service there are certain barriers that hinder the success of community policing.

"Vehicles that have been allocated for police service are few such that if you want to go out to the field, one has to wait for others to finish doing their work before they can access a car," explains Nyaiyo.

She says there is also a problem of staffing with the Directorate of Community Policing. The shortage of staff then means they cannot do all that is expected of them effectively.

However, despite all these challenges, Nyaiyo says community policing has made an impact to the point where there are success stories that can be quoted such as Ruai area in Nairobi. **JT**



Kwale Community Policing Committee during a forum to establish VAWG Sub-Committee at a meeting organised by AWC under the Jamii Thabiti Programme.  
PHOTO: JOYCE CHIMBI

# Terror gangs impede efforts to address abuse of women and girls

BY JOYCE CHIMBI

Though statistics by the most recent Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2014-2015 show that cases of violence against women and girls are rising rather than reducing nationally, the situation is dire in minority and marginalized communities.

This is the case in Msambweni Sub-county of Kwale County where the plight of women and girls is appalling.

“There is a lot of poverty in this region and our children do not have many options. They either farm or go to the beach but farming is not viable due to the prolonged drought,” said Zeituni Bakari, Chairlady of Maendeleo ya Wanawake (a national women’s grassroots organisation).

Bakari, who heads the Msambweni Constituency branch of the organisation, says poverty and desperation has driven vulnerable young people to join terrorist groups that are easily recruiting them.

## Lured by monetary gains

“These are young people and teenagers who have never earned even as little as KSh5,000 (£40) and they are promised from KSh50,000 (£400) to KSh70,000 (£548) per month. This is too tempting and many are rushing to join the terror groups,” Bakari expounded.

The relationship between terrorism and efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls might appear strange and farfetched but to the Diani Community Policing Committee, it is as clear as daylight.

“We address issues like rape, defilement and forced marriages as members of the Community Policing Committee. However, these committees are also viewed as being made up of people who are eager to collaborate with police in order to punish terror gangs within the community,” explained Katiba Mkungo, a member of the community policing community and an elder.

Community policing committees in Kwale were started in 2002 even before the Government directive that formally established them in 2005.

“In Kwale, we started three years earlier because organized and violent crime was very high. These same crimes affect how women and girls are treated,” explained Mkungo.

To address crime including those perpetrated by terror gangs that are rife in Kwale, the Community Policing Committee must be willing to provide information to the police.

Unfortunately, in so doing they have become targets of violent attacks from terror gangs and their sympathizers.

Kwale is close knit and community members are

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# Sub-committee on VAWG commit to working with police



Members of the Bungoma Sub-Committee formed to address VAWG within the Community Policing Committee. PICTURE: GEORGE NGESA

## BY JOYCE CHIMBI

**B**ungoma is a fast growing County due to its strategic position as a transit town. However, with this growth and exposure also come challenges.

Though violence against women and girls is a national pandemic, the proportion is higher in some regions and this calls for urgent multi-prong approaches. Bungoma County is one such region, going by the most recent Kenya Demographic and Health Survey

2014-2015 statistics which indicate it has the highest proportion of women who suffer from one form of abuse or other.

In some regions within the County at least 45 percent of women and girls have suffered one form of abuse.

### **Establish sub-committee**

These issues became the basis of discussion at a meeting between the African Woman and Child (AWC) Features Service and Bungoma Community Policing Committee.

The objective was to establish a sub-committee within the community policing committee that would deal with responses and preventive measures towards elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

“The biggest problem that we have is that many cases are not reported because they are too many and seen as normal,” explained Frederick Kere, chairperson of the Community Policing Committee.

Committee members echoed his sentiments noting

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<<**FROM PAGE 14** there are a number of violations against women that are viewed as normal.

**Violence treated as normal**

“Issues of wife beating, or even widow disinheritance are viewed as normal although we have a duty to raise the alarm and educate the community that violating women in any way is a crime,” he expounded.

The committee expressed challenges that they face while addressing cases of violence against women and girls.

“This is a rural area and many people, even committee members’ lack exposure on what the law says and this limits our responses,” said Rachel Chebet.

Though statistics show that the number of women and girls who have been violated is high, Abdullahi Maalim, Deputy Officer Commanding Bungoma Police Station says many cases go under-reported.

**Action can be taken**

“We encourage the community, especially through the policing committee to report to us cases of violence against women and girls so that action can be taken,” said Maalim.

He noted the high rising numbers of street children as a contributing factor “and this is a matter that I am personally handling”.

Maalim reiterated that addressing other forms of crimes such as criminal violence is important because it has an impact on safety and security in the community.

“In the absence of peace and security, women and girls are usually the first casualties,” Maalim warned.

Substance abuse, unemployment and the many boda boda (motorbike taxi) operators that roam the county were noted as factors contributing to the challenges experienced.

**Girls are lured by riders**

“Teenage pregnancies are on the rise and these girls end up dropping out of school, they are cheated by these young men who ride boda boda,” said Chebet, who was chosen as the Secretary of the new sub-committee.

However, Chebet noted that the gap between the community and police has been the major challenge in addressing such cases.

“**The community still fears the police and people are afraid to go to the station to report. However, from here we are going to be the champions who will help improve the relationship.**” - RACHEL CHEBET, MEMBER COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEE BUNGOMA COUNTY

Though their work in improving the lives of women and girls by addressing violence targeting them will not be easy, the Community Policing Committee expressed a commitment to support the sub-committee.

“We will all work together as a team since violence against women and girls is a big issue that cannot be left to one person since even the police officers need our support,” concluded Patrick Kondo, chair of the sub-committee. JT

**Terror gangs impede efforts to address abuse of women and girls**

<<**FROM PAGE 13** expected to protect each other even on issues that are harmful to society.

The people here are highly secretive community making it difficult for the police officers to penetrate and hence the importance of partnerships.

“We have had members of community policing committees shot dead. We have been threatened and many of us have decided to step aside for fear of being killed because these gangs mean business. If they say they will kill you, they surely will,” said Rashid Choka, a member of Community Policing Committee and an elder.

The members were speaking at a forum organized by the African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service under the Jamii Thabiti Programme where they established a sub-committee that would primarily address violence against women and girls in Kwale County.

**Gangs monitor activities**

“Terror gang members and their sympathisers are joining community policing committees just to monitor our activities,” revealed Choka.

This context has, therefore, presented challenges in addressing violence against women and girls. Officer Commanding Diani Police Station, Inspector Simon Ndeti notes that this has been an obstacle for police officers in preventing and responding to these crimes.

According to Ndeti, even members of the community who are only focusing on addressing abuse of women and girls are afraid of visiting police stations.

“Their mere presence at a police station could send the wrong message that they are here to whistle blow on gang members,” explains Ndeti. “The community is very fearful of being seen to be relating with the police.”

Although these fears could not be fully addressed in the one day forum, it was a good beginning since there was a show of commitment to create awareness in addressing violence against women and girls within Diani. JT

# Know Jamii Thabiti Programme Partners

This is a programme being implemented in Kenya with about 30 local organisations on board. In every Issue, we will be profiling partner organizations. In this issue, we profile the following partner:

## Haki Centre

Founded in 2006 by a group of young vibrant human rights activists at the Coast, Haki Centre is geared towards promoting progressive realisation of human rights in the region.

It does this by ensuring community ownership and active engagement in the struggles for justice, good governance and equity.

Since its formation, the organisation has been managed by young people who have worked promoting peaceful co-existence among communities at the Coast; increasing communities' access, use and benefits to land and natural resources; enhancing citizens' participation in good governance and social accountability as well as promoting equity and non-discrimination.

Within the Jamii Thabiti Programme, Haki Centre is one of the three downstream partners implementing activities in Kwale County with a focus on peace-building under the thematic area addressing inter-communal conflict.

The target being communities served by Msambweni, Diani, Kwale and Kinango police stations.

Haki Centre started implementing the

Jamii Thabiti Programme in July 2016 and completed its first milestone in September. The implementation of milestone two started at the beginning of May 2017 and is currently ongoing.

Kwale County, where Haki Centre is implementing Jamii Thabiti activities, has a host of unresolved issues that have a potential of blowing up into conflict. These include competition over resources including land, lack of understanding between locals and multinational firms, violent extremism, ethnic based politics and perception of marginalisation.

Among other things that Haki Centre is doing within the Jamii Thabiti Programme is training peace monitors, reconstituting peace committees and training the new members as well as holding informal inter-faith conversations.

Within Jamii Thabiti activities, Haki Centre has helped in establishing 36 new Nyumba Kumi clusters in Msambweni Sub-county that address violence against women and girls, drug abuse, teenage pregnancies and school dropouts, disaster preparedness as well as early warning in conflict.

Through the efforts of the newly created clusters Haki Centre lobbied for the establishment of an Administration Police Post in Mivumoni Location.

Within the peace building efforts, the youth working with Haki Centre are intervening in community conflicts and reporting cases to the police.

Unfortunately, Haki Centre has registered low participation of women in its activities but there are deliberate efforts to ensure women effectively engage in subsequent activities.

While the Jamii Thabiti activities were positively received, Haki Centre experienced safety challenges working within the Nyumba Kumi Initiative. In July 2016 two Nyumba Kumi members were killed in Gambato Bongwe-Ukunda on claims that they were spying and sharing information with the police. This forced Haki Centre to suspend activities involving Nyumba Kumi Initiative to safeguard the safety of its staff.

Floods that came in the backdrop of a long dry spell wreaked havoc in parts of Kwale County compelling Haki Centre to suspend activities in certain areas.

Intense political activity as a result of the forthcoming General Election has created tension and full-blown violence in some cases as witnessed during the political parties' primaries. This has made Haki Centre to be more vigilant.

With the launch of the Kwale County Violence Extremism Policy, the County security team led by the County Commissioner has advised Jamii Thabiti partners to align their work to the document, making the interaction between Haki Centre and government to be closer in terms of addressing peace, safety and security. JT