

Challenges Faced by the Kenya Police Reservists in Security Operations in Tiaty Sub-County, Baringo County in Kenya, 2013-2023

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ABSTRACT

The Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) in Kenya are characterized by cattle rustling and banditry. Since independence in 1963, the Kenya government has engaged the services of the Kenya Police Reservists (KPRs) to boost regular police in maintaining security in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). In spite of the important role played by the KPRs, its operations have faced several challenges. These range from indiscipline, misuse of government issued firearms and involvement in cattle rustling. This study specifically examined the challenges faced by the KPRs in security operations in Tiaty sub-County, Baringo County in Kenya, between 2013 and 2023. Anchored on the theory of ungoverned spaces this study argued that ASALs in Kenya defined by low levels of state presence and inadequate state security resources have constantly experience constant insecurity and banditry. This has necessitated the engagement of KPRs in security operations. This study took the form of an explanatory research design. This study selected total 380 respondents through random and purposive sampling techniques. The study employed the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. It was established that despite the significant contribution by the KPRs in local security, a number of challenges which included; poor remuneration and lack of a clear formula for compensation, lack of proper of modern weapons and uniforms, conflict of interest among the KPRs, poor infrastructure in ASALs have impacted negatively on the effectiveness of the KPRs force in security operations in Tiaty, Baringo County.

Key Words: Ungoverned Spaces; Resource based conflict; Insecurity

INTRODUCTION

The modern police force in Kenya is a product of the British colonial regime. The colonial police force was officially established in 1895. The main role of the colonial police in Kenya was the provision of security through maintenance of law and order, protection property, and crushing resistance from African natives (Ruteere (2011). According to Mkutu (2005) colonial police officers were primarily stationed in the emerging urban areas, around railway tracks, and in areas inhabited by the propertied class, which was primarily composed of Europeans. The APS Known as "the chiefs' police," was founded in 1902 and tasked with supporting chiefs in the management of rural and mostly native areas.

After independence in 1963, the Kenya Police Service (KPS) and the Administration Police Service (APS) became the two main law enforcement agencies in Kenya. Subsequently, the office of the President took over command of the APS previously under chiefs. In spite of the significant role played by the police in security maintenance, emerging security challenges have necessitated the drive towards new forms of policing. The realization that policing is no longer the sole responsibility of the mainstream state police embraced the idea of community policing whereby the regular police, local leadership and the local community work together to enhance security in areas where government presence is minimal (Burger, 2007; Wisler and Onwudiwe, 2008).

Fleming and Wakefield (2009), divide community policing in two fold, namely informal and formal community policing. Informal community policing is community-initiated and often occurs outside the influence of government and necessitated feelings of insecurity by a particular group due to government

inadequacy to provide adequate security. Formal community policing on the other hand is an official strategy used by government to involve the local community in security matters. Formal community policing provides the local community with a voice in the security discourse. The inclusion of the local community can improve policy-community relations and at the same time decentralize command by creating sub-divisions in the police force to effectively incorporate the community in local security matters. Increased participation of the local community in security matters tends to lessen the work of the police (Klockars, 2005).

The KPRs was created in 1948 as an unpaid volunteer force with its own rank system and hierarchy. The KPR is an essential component of the administrative framework in rural areas. More than 80 per cent of Kenya consists of arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL). The main visible security force in ASAL is the KPRs as opposed to the regular police (Mwasaru, 2011). The KPRs is an auxiliary force comprising volunteers undertaking security operations within their local communities and operating independently of the regular Kenya Police Service. The KPRs are recruited trained and armed by the state to boost security in areas where police presence is low. KPRs guard pastoral communities against cattle raids from rival pastoralists in ASALs.

Scholars have widely documented on the challenges facing the KPRs in security operations. Mwasaru (2006) cites lack of the absence of a defined compensation mechanism. Ndung'u (2010), notes of the lack of or poor adherence to norms governing their deployment and recruitment. Mkutu and Kizito (2007) observe of lack of professionalism in recruitment of KPRs which compromises the effectiveness of involvement in security operations. Wepundi (2012) adds that poor supervision, management and poor accountability have created room for incompetency, corruption and abuse of power by those recruited in the KPRs. Mutemi (2014) identifies poor remuneration and poor recruitment procedures as the main challenges facing KPRs in Loima sub-County, Turkana County. Such challenges have had a negative impact on security operations by the KPRs.

Tiaty in Baringo County has for years experienced resources based conflicts and cattle rustling between rival pastoral ethnic communities. Migration and herd mobility in Tiaty brought about by the depletion of pasture and water resources have led to conflicts and insecurity. The government of Kenya has for a long time employed the services of the KPR to boot police efforts in security operations in Tiaty, Baringo County. Despite efforts by the government to reduce insecurity in Tiaty, the KPRs face several challenges in security operations. It is against the above background that this study examined the challenges faced by the KPRs in security operations in Tiaty, Baringo County, between 2013 and 2023.

Statement of the Problem

The KPS was formed in 1895 to provide security through maintenance of law and order, protection of property, and crushing resistance from African natives. On the other hand the APS was founded in 1902 was tasked with supporting chiefs in the management of rural and mostly native reserves. In spite of the significant role played by the police in security maintenance, emerging security challenges after have necessitated the drive toward community policing. This led to the formation of the Kenya Police Reserve Force (KPR) in 1948.

Upon independence in 1963, the Kenya government retained the KPRs as an auxiliary force comprising volunteers undertaking security operations within their local communities and operating independently of the regular Kenya Police Service. The KPRs serve as the link between the government, local authorities, and the community. The KPRs are recruited trained and armed by the state to boost security in ASALs where police presence is low.

Questions have been raised as to the recruitment and training of the KPR and how they manage state issued arms. In most cases their selection is based on their familiarity with the pastoralist terrain. Furthermore they are recruited on the basis that their existences in areas occasioned by violent conflicts gives them the ability to handle and use weapons. Challenges ranging from, poor recruitment procedures, poor adherence to norms governing their deployment, absence of a defined compensation mechanism, lack of modern weapons, lack of professionalism in handling government issued arms among other has had negative implications on the effectiveness of the KPRs in security operations. This study filled this gap by examining the unique challenges faced by the KPRs in security operations in Tiaty, Baringo County between 2013 and 2023.

Specific Objective of the Study

Challenges Faced by the Kenya Police Reservists in Security Operations in Tiaty sub-County, Baringo County in Kenya, 2013-2023.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The police are tasked with maintaining public order globally, controlling and preventing crime, providing public aid, and protecting persons and property. The police have a crucial role in bridging the greater justice sector, which includes court systems, prisons, and other penal and correctional institutions. The police act as a bridge between state security and the administration of justice (Baker, 2002). The sentiments above helped this study underscore the important police contribution to the upkeep of peace and order. Security is essential for socio-economic development to be fully realized. However, there is need to involve the local community in policing in areas where government and regular police presence is minimal.

According to Mkutu (2008) community policing, is the method by which, in the most basic form security problems in a community are found and addressed with the help of the police and the local population. Since the police are no longer the only ones in charge of upholding law and order; instead, everyone in the neighborhood joins forces with them as active allies in the fight to increase neighborhood quality and safety. Collective action has been shown to be more effective in some regions than others, and both the community and the police must play a share in maintaining their collaboration. Mkutu sheds light on the understanding of what community policing entails.

According to Baker (2008) non-state actors are the main sources of protection, deterrence, investigation, resolution, and punishment for the majority of Africans. States should evaluate the non-state sector's possible contributions in the future and how they might fit into any national security plans given this situation. In Africa, community policing is defined by a system where non-state actors were given authority by the state to provide security. From the above it can be deduced that. There are many potential partners, and these alliances can be leveraged to achieve the twin objectives of boosting public confidence and problem-solving through group collaboration. Public input should be sought when prioritizing and resolving issues affecting public safety.

Cossyleon (2019) notes that three factors must be taken into account when deciding whether to involve police reservists in joint security operations. These factors are; lowering the cost of policing, fostering positive relationships and fostering communication between the police and the neighborhood in case of emergency. Since police are rarely able to address concerns with public safety on their own, community policing encourages direct collaborations with relevant parties. Whether the essence of cost reduction, fostering positive relationships between the local population and the police; and supplying adequate security personnel in case of emergency informs the recruitment, training and deployment of KPRs in ASALs in Kenya was interrogated.

Muhumed (2013) examines Kenya's community policing and national security. The researcher comes to the conclusion that policing techniques that were successful in the past have remained unsuccessful because of shifting crime and violence trends that have an impact on communities and changing community situations. From the above this study explored new perspectives in security management that incorporate emerging contemporary challenges. This current study argued that even though the police play a crucial role in maintaining security, new security challenges have made the move toward community policing necessary. Local administration, police, and residents initiate effective methods to promote public security in order to raise community living standards. Non-state policing organizations can be quite effective in security operations since they work with local knowledge.

Chimbal and Muna (2021) undertake a study of community policing in Kinango Kwale County According to the research, local security management techniques were impacted by community policing members' attitudes, information exchange about community policing, and knowledge of the effort among community members. Kariuki (2016) interrogates the prospects of community policing in Teso south sub-county. The author notes of how the County's constraints on police-citizen cooperation work against the attainment of local security and

the success of the community. The role played by community policing members' attitudes, information exchange about community policing was tested for the case of police reservists in Tiaty, Baringo County.

According to studies, a number of nations use police reservists for three main reasons: lowering policing costs, fostering good ties between the community and law enforcement, and guaranteeing a manpower pool large enough for emergency situations (James et al, 2010). According to Mkutu (2008), reserves protect local populations from attacks from the inside as well as the outside since they are readily available, quick to respond, familiar with the area, and able to handle the difficulties of the terrain. The presence of police reservists has been extremely beneficial to the governments in ASALs where regular police presence is low.

Studies have identified that impact the effectiveness of Police Reserves in Kenya. According to Mwasaru (2006) police reservists are prone to ineptitude and misconduct due to the lack of a clear remuneration. Ndung'u (2010) notes of the lack of a clear procedure in the recruitment, training and deployment of KPRs. Mkutu and Kizito (2007) on their part cite lack of professionalism in recruitment of KPRs which has led to the recruitment of un-vetted persons further compromising the ever increasing levels of insecurity. Wepundi (2012) adds that poor supervision and management of KPRs that had been made worse by poor accountability has created room for incompetency, corruption and abuse of power by those recruited. Although the Reservists are supposed to be equipped, supervised, trained, and motivated to work for the community, these challenges are largely ignored. As a consequence of these challenges, KPRs have fallen short of tackling the rising insecurity in the regions that they have been assigned. This study specifically examined the challenges faced by KPRs in security operations in Tiaty, Baringo County.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the ungoverned theoretical perspective. Using the theoretical framework of ungoverned areas, the study explained why criminal organizations and armed bandits have emerged in ASAL primarily inhabited by pastoral tribes. The state's incapacity to control violence on its soil is the cause of the situation according to this theory. The state's inability to enforce order on its area of jurisdiction allows plenty of freedom for loosely coordinated, nasty armed gangs to wreak havoc on surrounding populations. Those who hold this viewpoint invariably advocate using military force to address the security issue.

This study argued that in ASAL mostly dominated by pastoral communities in Kenya, an enormous need for security, both personal and communal, was produced by the ungoverned zone the disinterested state left behind. The Kenya Police Reserve has occupied this space. KPR a "quasi state-quasi non-state actor" took charge of the ungoverned territories of Northern Kenya. The fact that KPRs exist in Kenya's ASAL as an alternative to state authority shows that the Kenyan state is unable to provide security. High degrees of insecurity, the presence of quasi-state security forces, and the existence of non-state players who fill the security gap left by the state are all connected with ungoverned regions.

METHODOLOGY

This study took the form of an exploratory research design employing the use of both primary and secondary sources. A total of 380 respondents were selected for field interviews. Probability sampling selected 360 respondents while purposive sampling was use to select 20 respondents.

Category of Respondent	Frequency
KPRs	120
Residents (Men)	120
Residents (Women)	120
TOTAL	360

Category of respondent	Frequency
Community and Leaders	5
Religious Leaders	3
Security Experts	2
Government Security Agencies	5
Local administrators	5
TOTAL	20

The main research instruments for this study comprised structured questionnaires and interviews schedules with both closed and open ended questions. Questionnaires were semi-structured and composed of closed ended question. Data from questionnaires was analyzed quantitatively.

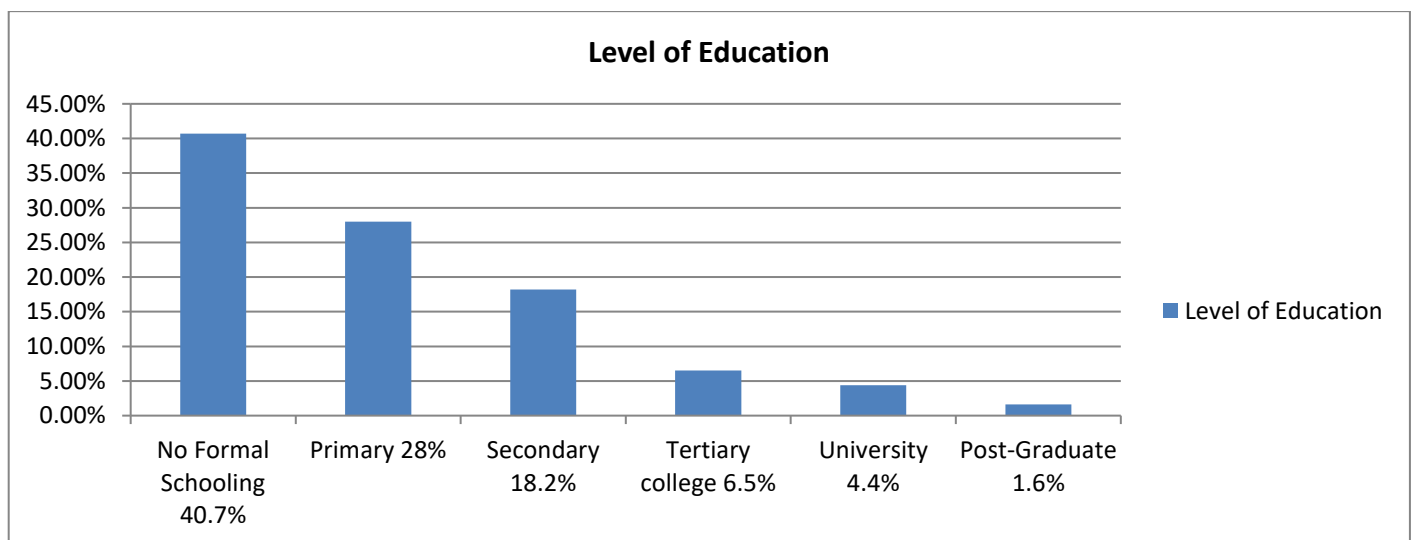
Key informant Interviews were conducted among 20 purposively selected lead respondents who included community leaders, religious leaders, security experts, government security agencies and local administrators. Data from Key informant interviews was analyzed qualitatively. The response rates in the study are represented in the table below.

Challenges Faced by the KPRs in Security Operations in Tiaty, Baringo County

This study attained a response rate of 275 out of the 360 questionnaires administered representing 72.4%. The high response rate by respondents in the questionnaires is reflective of the high level of awareness on conflict and security issues among residents of Tiaty in Baringo County. The response rate from questionnaires is depicted below.

This study further attained 100% response from interview schedules that were administered to lead respondents. The 100% response rate from in-depth interviews was possible considering that lead respondents were easily available and showed keen interest in conflict and security issues in Tiaty, Baringo County. Respondents were also grouped in six levels of education as presented in the table below.

Graph 1.1 Respondents Level of Education



Studies have identified several challenges affecting the performance of Police Reservists in Kenya. Mwasaru (2006) asserts that the absence of a defined compensation mechanism exposes the police reservists to incompetence and misconduct, which exacerbates the security issue. Ndung'u (2010) further noted that there is

a lack of adherence to and lax norms governing their deployment and recruitment. The features of the Reservists, such as age, gender, education level, and economic status, have been undermined by poorly coordinated recruitment with unclear policy rules. These qualities have an unexpected impact on their performance (KHRC, 2010).

Mkutu and Kizito (2007) on their part cite lack of professionalism in recruitment of KPRs. This according to them has resulted in un-vetted persons being recruited further compromising the ever increasing levels of insecurity. Wepundi (2012) adds that poor supervision and management of KPRs that had been made worse by poor accountability has created room for incompetency, corruption and abuse of power by those recruited. Although the Reservists are supposed to be equipped, supervised, trained, and motivated to work for the community, these challenges are largely ignored. As a consequence of these challenges, KPRs have fallen short of tackling the rising insecurity in the regions that they have been assigned.

To achieve this objective the researcher asked respondents seven questions on the challenges faced by the KPRs in security operations. The first question was whether poor remuneration negatively impacted on the effectiveness of the KPRs in security operations. Out of the 275 respondents interviewed, 89 representing 32.4% strongly agreed that poor remuneration negatively impacted on the effectiveness of the KPRs in security operations while 151 representing 54.9% agreed. On the other hand 19 representing 6.9% strongly disagreed while 16 representing 5.8% disagreed. In total 240 representing 87.3% were in agreement that poor remuneration negatively impacted on the effectiveness of the KPRs in security operations while 35 representing 12.7% argued to the contrary. The findings above concur with those of Mwasaru (2006) in a study of community policing in West Pokot County who cites the lack of a clear pay plan for KPRs. Ndung'u (2010) further points out that the lack of or poor remuneration for KPRS has had negative implications on their effectiveness. KPRs interviewed complaint of poor, irregular and unstructured remuneration.

Second respondents were questioned on whether lack of proper equipment like modern arms affect security operations of the KPRs. The following were the responses. Out of the 275 respondents interviewed, 64 representing 23.3% strongly agreed while 146 representing 53.1% agreed. On the other hand 41 representing 14.9% strongly disagreed while 24 representing 8.7% disagreed. Cumulatively 210 representing 76.4% were in agreement that lack of proper equipment like modern arms affect security operations by the KPRs while 65 representing 23.6% were of contrary opinion. The above results are supported by Wepundi (2012) in a study of availability of small arms and perceptions of security in Kenya who argues that the KPRs have had a serious challenge in terms of the firearms they are issued with. Respondents interviewed argued that the superior arms used by bandits and other criminals have given them advantages over the KPRS deployed in those areas. Despite this, KPRs are expected to be prepared to protect the community.

Third respondents were asked whether the government does not seriously take into account the welfare of the KPRs. Out of the 275 respondents interviewed, 72 representing 26.2% strongly agreed while 158 representing 57.5% agreed. On the other hand 29 respondents representing 10.5% strongly disagreed while 16 representing 5.8% disagreed. Cumulatively, 230 respondents representing 83.6% were in agreement that the government does not seriously take into account the welfare of the KPRs while 45 representing 16.4% were of contrary opinion. The above findings concur with those of Mutemi (2014) in a study of KPRs in Loima Sub-County in Turkana County who notes of the poor welfare of KPRs. Respondents noted that in spite of such a serious challenge the government of Kenya seems not concerned with the welfare of KPRs.

Fourth respondents were questioned whether conflict of interest affects security operations by the KPRs. Out of the 275 respondent interviewed 56 representing 20.4% strongly agreed while 144 representing 52.4% agreed. In contrast, 48 representing 17.5% strongly disagreed while 27 representing 9.8% disagreed. In total 200 respondents representing 72.7% were in agreement that conflict of interest affects security operations by the KPRs while 75 representing 27.3% were of contrary opinion. According to Mkutu (2008) in a study of guns and violence in the Rift Valley of Kenya, conflict of interests has in most cases led to KPRs taking sides in inter-ethnic conflict ignited by cattle rustling. The above results also replicate those of Bevan (2008) in Turkana District who notes of the existence of illicit ammunition. Respondents interviewed noted that illicit ammunition mostly in the hands of KPRs in Baringo has been the greatest source of insecurity. This study noted that this has led to misuse of government issued firearms. This study noted of instances in which KPRs

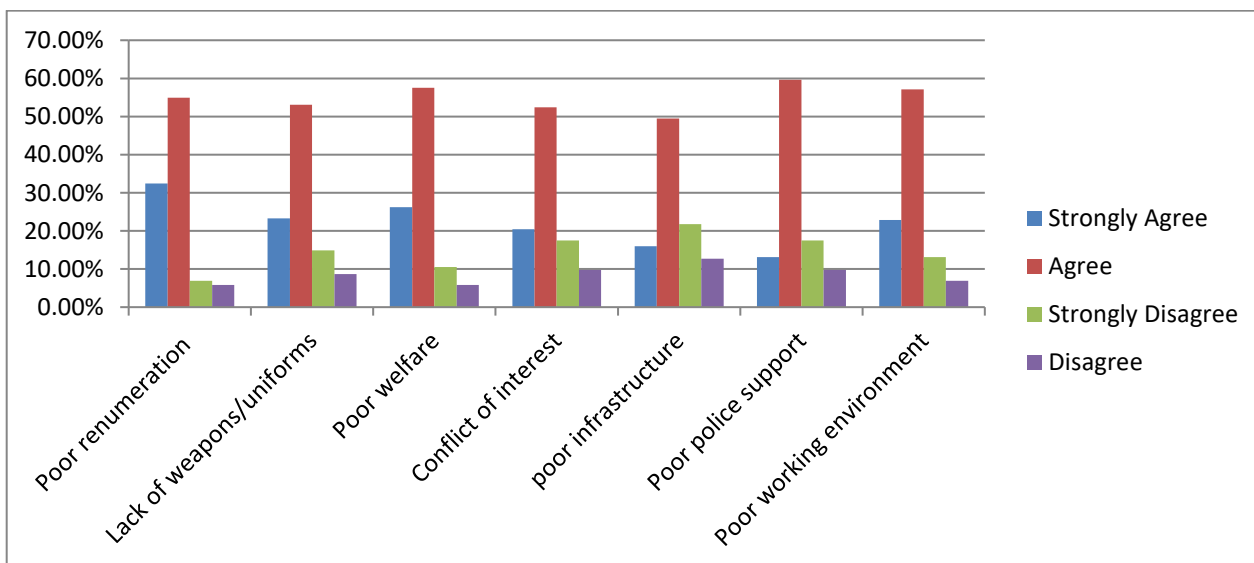
would engage in cattle rustling and highway robberies using government issued firearms.

Fifth respondents were asked whether poor infrastructure in ASALs affects security operations by the KPRs. Out of the 275 respondents interviewed, 44 representing 16% strongly agreed while 136 representing 49.5% agreed. On the contrary, 60 respondents representing 21.8% strongly disagreed while 35 representing 12.7% disagreed. Cumulatively, 180 respondents representing 65.5% were of the opinion that poor infrastructure in ASALs affects security operations by the KPRs while 95 representing 34.5% were of contrary opinion. The findings above concur with those of Mkutu and Wandera (2013) in study of challenges and opportunities for KPRs who note of the poor accessibility and poor road network in bandit prone zone in the North Rift and North Eastern Provinces in Kenya. This has in effect hampered security operations by the regular police and the KPRs.

Sixth respondents were questioned on whether regular police do not give enough support to KPRs in security operations. Out of the 275 respondents interviewed 36 representing 13.1% strongly agreed that the government taken measures to curb misuse of firearms by the KPRs while 164 representing 59.6% agreed. On the other hand 48 respondents representing 17.5% strongly disagreed while 27 respondents representing 9.8% disagreed. In total 200 respondents representing 72.7% were in agreement that regular police do not give enough support to KPRs in security operations while 75 respondents representing 27.3% were of contrary opinion. The findings support those by Ndung'u (2010) in study of the KPRs in Kenya who notes of the lack of enough support for the KPRs by the regular police in security operations. KPRs interviewed lamented that the regular police only came up in security operations as a backup leaving the KPRs to be at the battle front.

Finally respondents were questioned whether the working environment of KPRs negatively affect security operations. Out of the 275 respondent interviewed 63 representing 22.9% strongly agreed while 157 representing 57.1% agreed. In contrast, 36 representing 13.1% strongly disagreed while 19 representing 6.9% disagreed. In total 220 respondents representing 80% were in agreement that conflict of interest affects security operations by the KPRs while 55 representing 20% were of contrary opinion. The above findings concur with those of Mkutu (2013) in Loima, Turkana County who notes of the poor working environment for KPRs. Respondents noted of lack of proper uniforms, housing and even basic necessities such as meals during security operations.

The results are tabulated in Graph 1.2 below



This study noted that KPRs undergo approximately three weeks of training. The duration and quality of training however depends on the location. Training also depends on government allocation of funds. Lack of refresher training was noted. Uniforms are not routinely available to KPRs in Tiaty. A long serving KPRs noted that the last time he was issued with uniform was like five years ago forcing them to wear civilian clothes. KPRs are forced to borrow uniform especially jungle jackets from either the army or the APS. Despite a legal requirement to carry with them identification cards, very few KPRs interviewed had them.

KPRs do not receive salaries from the state. This has created a great deal of resentment and disorder among KPRs in these harsh economic times. The new Police Act makes provision for KPRs who have been deployed to serve in policing roles to receive pay and allowances as may be prescribed for a police officer of corresponding rank and seniority. However there is no legal provision for compensation for families of those killed or injured in the course of duty.

Many KPRs use their skills and government issued firearms to look for additional jobs. KPRs have frequently been called in to guard private establishments, NGOs, churches, schools, and businesses, especially those located outside of urban areas. Subsequently, the KPRs have evolved into a state-armed, commercialized force. When the KPRs face financial difficulties, they escort private vehicles using state-issued fire arms. KPRs are also compelled to work as paid security guards and escorts in order to support themselves because they are not paid salaries by government. The hiring of KPRs as private security guards deprives herders of the security back-up as they need to traverse pasturelands during the dry season. It exposes herders to attacks, especially when livestock have to trek long distances in search of pasture and water. Instances of the KPRs abandoning their core responsibility of providing security to pursue other interests can be blamed on the volunteer and non-remuneration nature of the task.

This study noted that KPRs in Tiaty, Baringo County are also increasingly being hired as bodyguards by politicians, thus shifting their loyalty and main responsibility from the protection of whole communities to that of the individual. Cases of privatization of KPRs have been found to expose their villages to the possibility of attacks from rival communities and to deny the villages a channel through which information on insecurity incidences can be relayed, especially those that take place in the grazing fields.

The KPR struggles to shed its image as an unruly and disruptive force amid reports of arms misuse, banditry, renting of state-issued weapons and livestock raiding (Campbell et al., 2009). KPRs have been accused of participating in highway banditry, lending their government-issued firearms to raiding parties, selling of ammunition, joining raiding parties with their guns, and using their weapons to apply for jobs as private security guards (Mkutu 2015). The use of government-issued firearms for criminal activity for personal gain, lack of devotion to the state, and lack of discipline among KPR ranks have all been brought up by cases of KPRs being killed during raids.

Many of the KPRs join raiding parties in an attempt for personal benefit since they are not kept under observation when and where they use their weapons and ammunition,. This demonstrates the institutional weakness in the management of KPRs. The claim about the dual nature of KPR authority is strengthened by their involvement in local cattle raids. Individually, possession of a gun and ammunition issued by the state provides the KPRs permission to employ violent weapons. However, raids are social gatherings, and KPR involvement in raiding parties signifies the employment of collective weapons of violence as a justifiable tactic against "enemies."

There have been incidences where KPRs have been disarmed owing to what police describe as illegal use of state firearms. In other cases, political meddling by rival groups have led to pressure forcing the police to disarm KPRs in certain administrative areas while leaving other areas fully armed with their rifles. This precipitates the imbalance of power and encourages raiders to attack areas perceived to be vulnerable.

Poor record-keeping within the NPS has led to an absence of accountability at the armouries. A 2018 report from the Independent Policing and Oversight Authority (IPOA)²⁴ noted the 'manipulation of Arms and Ammunition Movement Register' to be one of several schemes in which 'concerted efforts by officers to cover-up crimes' take place.²⁵ The report recommended that the place review the policies controlling the arms ammunition register. Special security operations can also be the source of arms and ammunition leaks. The Kenyan government at the time of the study had dispatched special units of the General service Unit, Administration Police and the military backed by KPRs to restore order in areas marred by conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study noted that the low presence or absence of police in Tiaty, Baringo County has given rise to

emergence of banditry groups and cattle rustlers who engage in criminal acts leading to insecurity. The KPRs it was noted was recruited, trained and deployed in Tiaty, Baringo County to boost the regular police in security operations. Despite the significant contribution by the KPRs in local security, a number of challenges faced by the auxiliary force were identified. This included; poor remuneration and lack of a clear formula for compensation, lack of proper of modern weapons and uniforms, the government not seriously taking into account the welfare of the KPRs, conflict of interest among the KPRs, poor infrastructure in ASALs, regular police not giving enough support to KPRs in security operations and the working environment of KPRs. This study recommended that The Government of Kenya should improve the recruitment procedures and training of the KPRs for the force to be effective in security operations. The study further recommends that the Government of Kenya should take serious measures to address the numerous challenges that hinder the success of the KPRs in security operations.

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