Rapid Response Brief

December 2022

What can research evidence tell us about:

Factors influencing high crime rates in Ghetto settings in Kampala, Uganda

Key messages

→ Many complex factors operate at different levels to influence high crime rates in ghetto settings. The factors interact with broad socio-economic and political issues to cause a tipping point to participate in criminal activities.

→ A high unemployment rate, naivety, and a general lack of basic necessities likely influence participation in a crime.

→ Other examples that might fuel criminal activity in ghetto settings include:

   o   prostitution,

   o   risky sexual behavior

   o   mental illness

   o   school environments,

   o   alcohol and drug abuse, and

   o   a lack of community resources.

→ Lack of logistical resources in the police and its failure to investigate cases likely influence crime like murder by mob action.

+ Included:

- **Key findings** from research

- **Considerations about the relevance** of this research for health system decisions in Uganda

✖ Not included:

- Recommendations

- Detailed descriptions

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Summary

Background:

Ghettos are breeding grounds for crime in Kampala. However, despite efforts by several actors, including the Ministry of Gender, labor, and social development, Kampala City Council Authority, Buganda Government, and many private and non-profit organizations, crime in ghetto areas within Kampala city remain a security concern for the leaders. In addition, the high number of slums in Kampala city worries decision-makers about the crime rates. Understanding the contextual factors that increase the risk of crime in ghettos could inform discussions on prevention strategies that are responsive and relevant to the communities.

Rapid Response Question:

What factors might increase the risk of crime involvement within ghetto settings in Kampala city?

Summary of findings:

Many complex factors interact and operate at different levels to influence the high crime rate in ghettos. The factors can be conceptualized at the individual, group, family, school, community, and societal levels.

Individual	School
- Poverty - Prostitution - High level of unemployment - Alcohol and drug abuse - Risky sexual behaviour - Bad personality traits - Mental illness - Victimization - Delinquency behaviour patterns	- School environment - Poor school performance - Low level of education - Exposure to violence at school
Group	**Community**
Peer pressure	- Weak informal social control efforts - Lack of local community resources - Exposure to violence in the community - Place of residence
Family	**Society**
- Family instabilities - Family environment - Lack of parental monitoring - Exposure to violence in the family	- Failure to enforce laws and policies - Exposure to media

Conclusion: Factors that influence participation in crime within ghettos are complex. These factors can be conceptualized to operate at and between different levels, such as individual, peer, family, school, community, or societal. These factors interact with broader, including socio-economic and political issues to tip participation. For example, different parties might easily influence unemployed youths for short-term gains. Also, youths involved in alcohol and drug abuse are likely to engage in risky behavior, have peer pressure, and lack basic needs. There is also concern about efforts to curb crime and the inadequacies of police which often increase the frustration of communities, increasing the risk of murder by mob action.

Background

Experience or fear of crime within ghetto communities is a security and safety threat to individual health and socio-economic livelihood. Crime poses several costs, such as medical, legal, policing, foster care, private security, lost earnings and time, lower human capital, lower productivity, and other non-monetary costs, such as higher mortality and morbidity rates [1]. The Uganda police report estimates that in 2021, of the almost 200,000 crimes reported, more than one of every three were either thefts or assaults [2].

Ghettos are breeding grounds for crime in Kampala. However, despite efforts by several actors, including the Ministry of Gender, labor, and social development, Kampala City Council Authority, Buganda Government, and many private and non-profit organizations, crime in ghetto areas within Kampala city remain a security concern for the leaders. In Uganda, the term ghetto is often synonymously used to refer to sub-urban areas characterized by congestion and temporary makeshift housing [3, 4]. Ghettos are urban settlements characterized by inadequate access to social services, informal sector work, unemployment, poor sanitation, health and education infrastructure, insecure residential status, high pollution rates, criminal gangs, high crime rates, and social exclusion [4-6].

The Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development categorizes more than 50% of urban areas as ghettos [7]. Examples of ghettos in Kampala city include those in Bwaise, Kivulu-Makerere, Katwe, Kosovo, Kamwokya, Katanga, Kosokoso, Kasubi, Kisenyi, Namuwongo (Soweto along the rail line), and Kireku (along the railway in Kireka) among others [3]. With several sprouting slums in Kampala city, crime remains a security threat. However, there is uncertainty about the contextual factors that increase the crime risk in ghettos [4, 6, 8, 9]. The National Youth Advocacy Platform, a non-profit organization, operating within ghettos in Kampala, requested evidence on the factors influencing criminal activities in ghetto settings. The evidence will inform ongoing discussions on designing community and responsive crime prevention interventions.

Rapid Response Question:

What factors might increase the risk of crime involvement within ghetto settings in Kampala city?

Summary of findings

In this rapid response brief, we summarise evidence on the different causes of ghetto communities' involvement in crimes. First, we present the ghetto situation in Kampala and later contextualize the available evidence on the causes of crime in ghetto communities.

Burden of crime in a ghetto context in Uganda

Data on crime in ghettos is not available or not recorded in the surveillance reports. However, using the Uganda police report 2021, estimates show that 45% of the reported crimes in Uganda were committed in Urban areas [2]. Of these, 20% were recorded within Kampala metropolitan region alone. The report further shows that 45% of the thefts in Kampala were mobile phone thefts [2]. A surveillance report of crimes in Kenyan ghettos showed that more than 30% were theft [10]. Other common crimes in Kampala metropolitan areas include aggravated defilement, rape, burglaries, aggravated robberies of cash, cars, and motor vehicles, and economic crimes, such as fraud or white-collar crimes, and murder by assault or mob action institutions [2].

Factors influencing participation in crime among ghetto dwellers

Living in a ghetto poses a significant risk to crime for several reasons. As such, the relationship between ghetto dwellers and their involvement in crime is complex. Factors that influence the risk of crime or involvement can be considered in six domains: individual, peer, family, school, community, and societal. These levels often interact between different levels and with broad factors, such as socio-economic, political, and gender, to cause a tipping point for engaging in crime. The factors are summarised in the table below.

Table1: Reasons for ghetto communities' involvement in crimes [1, 11-17]

Domain		
	Factor	*Description*
Individual	Poverty	Lack of access to basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing, probably influences individuals in ghettos to engage in crime, such as theft, as an option. In addition, due to the failure of some families to take care of the necessities of the children, girls and boys may easily be lured by more affluent men and women into sexual relations resulting in crime, including aggravated defilement or rape.
	Prostitution	When individuals can't meet their own needs, such as paying rent and feeding themselves, they might opt for prostitution for survival. Prostitution increases the risk of committing crimes, such as rape or theft of customers.
	Unemployment	Unemployment or dropping out of school perpetuates a cycle of poverty. In these cases, engaging in criminal acts like theft is seen as a means of survival. Additionally, they are easily persuaded by different parties for short-term gains.
	Alcohol and drug abuse	Behavioural patterns like alcoholism, drug addiction, and smoking are likely to influence aggressive and violent behaviours. This is common among the youths in ghetto settings. The youths believe that alcohol and drugs give them the strength to do casual jobs such as lifting heavy items and working longer hours among other reasons. These youths end up as addicts, and if they can't find money to buy alcohol or drugs, they commit crimes such as theft to get money to buy them.
	Risky sexual behaviour	Risky sexual behaviours such as early sexual initiation, teenage pregnancies, and having multiple sexual partners are highly associated with alcohol use and delinquency. With several individuals abusing drugs in such settings, young girls may be victims of rape and defilement, among other forms of sexual assault.
	Bad personality traits	Bad personality traits like lack of empathy, low self-control, and immorality could result in aggressive behaviours, such as threats and abuse to fulfill their desires.
	Mental illness	Most people with mental illnesses are prone to violent outbursts. They are likely to commit crimes such as Homicides and sexual offenses.
	Victimization	Offenders are more likely to have been victimized through witnessing or experiencing victimization at one point or throughout their lifetime.

	Delinquency behaviour patterns	Likely, individuals who engage early in anti-social behaviours will eventually engage in other criminal acts at a later age. Violent delinquency may include sexual aggression, fights, robberies, and carrying/attacking with a weapon. Non-violent delinquency may include selling marijuana, buying or selling stolen items, pick-pocket, and burglary.
Groups	Peer pressure	Peer pressure encourages delinquent and anti-social behaviours, especially among adolescents. For instance, a girl who sees her colleague prostitute enjoy some luxurious life may be tempted to get involved in the same activities.
Family	Family instabilities	Family instabilities due to divorce, separation, and violence result in broken homes. This creates less family attachment, and some children run away from home. This eventually influences engagement in crimes.
	Family environment	Ghetto settings are congested with single-roomed houses. Most houses have walls not connected to the ceiling so children can easily hear what happens next door. Others share premises with lodges. Children engage in sex with their fellow children, some of whom may be their siblings. Such may also lure young girls into early prostitution, among other criminal activities.
	Lack of parental monitoring	Fatherless family structures and parenting that do not observe or monitor the children's activities and whereabouts pave the way for young children's criminal involvement.
	Exposure to violence in the family	Exposure to emotional, physical, sexual, and life-threatening violence at home is associated with externalizing symptom disorders such as losing one's temper and physical and excessive verbal aggression.
School	School environment	Public schools are considered to be a risk factor for involvement in crimes. This is primarily due to their potential for less focused education and fewer opportunities for taming pupils or students.
	Poor school performance	Poor school performance or school failure may influence one's association with crimes.
	Low level of education	In most cases, a low level of education reflects a poor economic status, increasing the likelihood of being engaged in delinquent and criminal behaviours.

	Low school attachment	Low school attachment can be characterized by frequent skipping school, expulsion, and dropping out. This weak commitment to education increases the chances of being involved in crimes.
	Exposure to violence at school	Exposure to violent acts such as hitting, fighting, stealing, and bullying is likely to influence violent offending.
Community	Weak informal social control efforts	Communities with unclear/no social order, such as easy access to weapons such as guns, or where the social norms no longer control the activities of the members of the society are likely to have a higher crime rate.
	Lack of local community resources	Lack of specific community resources, such as schools, businesses, and health facilities, may influence deviant behaviours.
	Exposure to violence in the community	Exposure to violence, such as witnessing drug dealings, threatening others, and murder, may increase the likelihood of someone being a violent offender.
Society	Failure to enforce laws and policies	Ignorance of the law by the public and failure by law enforcement bodies to enforce laws and policies on crime offenders encourages criminal behaviour patterns. Police activities are limited by a lack of logistics, understaffing, and basic facilities for investigating cases. There have been reports of the police being corrupt and may take bribes both from the offender and the victim. People are also frustrated by the law enforcers because they often claim a lack of sufficient evidence, lost files, and witnesses abstaining from giving evidence.
	Exposure to media	Exposure to how crimes are organized and committed on the media (Newspapers, radio, TV, the internet, and even movies) may appear profitable and exciting and thus influencing criminal behaviour. Children have unlimited access to pornographic materials which promote immorality.

Conclusion

Factors that influence participation in crime within ghettos are complex. These factors can be conceptualized to operate at and between different levels, such as individual, peer, family, school, community, or societal. These factors interact with broader, including socio-economic and political issues to tip participation. For example, different parties might easily influence unemployed youths for short-term gains. Also, youths involved in alcohol and drug abuse are likely to engage in risky behavior, have peer pressure, and lack basic needs. There is also concern about efforts to curb crime and the inadequacies of police which often increase the frustration of communities, increasing the risk of murder by mob action.

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