

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

THE CITY VICTIM SURVEY

Background

In March 2000, two studies were conducted into crime and violence in Dar es Salaam – a victim survey and a series of in-depth interviews on violence against women. The studies were initiated by the Safer Cities project in Dar es Salaam and UN Habitat in Nairobi to gain an understanding of crime levels in communities within the city council's area of jurisdiction to assist in the development of a crime reduction strategy for the city.

Based on methodologies similar to those used in South African cities for gathering crime information and supplementing police statistics, the study consisted of a household victim survey of 1 000 interviews and 42 in-depth interviews with women who had experienced violence and abuse. The questionnaires, refined through the experiences and results of surveys conducted in South Africa, were adapted to the Dar es Salaam environment.

Crime levels

The most prevalent crime in Dar es Salaam was burglary. High levels of burglary were recorded by the victim survey, with 43% of victims saying their households were burgled over the past five years. Simple theft was the second most common crime in the city, with 32% of people having been victimised. Other categories of theft, namely crop and livestock theft, which occurred largely in the city's rural districts, were reported by 20% of all respondents. Vehicle theft and car-hijacking rates were particularly low in Dar es Salaam, although the theft of vehicle parts was more common, with 19% of respondents saying they experienced this crime.

Violent crimes were less prevalent than the property crimes mentioned above. Sixteen per cent of people said they were assaulted and 14% reported being robbed in the past five years. Only 1% of respondents said a member of their household was murdered during this time. With the exception of assault, violent crime in Dar es Salaam was less prevalent than in South African cities where similar victim surveys have been conducted. The high levels of assault in Dar es Salaam are cause for concern.

Reporting to the police

Car theft followed by other serious property crimes were offences most likely to be reported to the police. Reporting rates for violent crimes were relatively low. Those crimes that occur mainly in rural areas such as crop theft were the least likely to be reported. The need to claim insurance benefits did not appear to be the main motivation for reporting crimes against property. Factors such as the perceived seriousness of the crime, the experience of violence and access to the police also influenced reporting patterns.

Burglary

People living in new or established suburbs were more at risk of burglary than those living elsewhere in Dar es Salaam. Generally people with higher incomes and those owning houses were more at risk. Burglaries were likely to happen during the times when people are usually at home. Half of all burglaries took place on Fridays and Saturdays and the majority of cases occurred between midnight and 06h00. In 78% of incidents, victims reported that someone was at home when the burglary was committed. Levels of violence experienced and subsequent injuries sustained were consequently high.

Simple theft

Young women were particularly at risk of simple theft as were residents living in the inner city. Simple theft occurred most often on Saturdays between 12h00 and 18h00 and accessories such as jewellery, followed by money were the likely targets of these thefts. Victims tended to be alone when thefts occurred. The likely location was streets outside shops and offices (in the central business district), or streets in residential areas.

Theft of livestock, crops and farm equipment

Of these predominantly rural crimes, livestock theft was experienced by 20% of respondents, crop theft by 19% and farm equipment theft by 7%. These crimes occurred primarily in the rural parts of the city and, to a limited extent, in the new suburbs. The seasonal distribution of crop theft followed the growing cycle of crops, whereas livestock and farm equipment theft were evenly distributed with peaks at the end of a year. Farm equipment was usually stolen during the day and livestock at night. Crop thefts were more evenly distributed throughout the day. All three types of theft typically happened over weekends and violence was infrequent.

Theft of vehicle parts

Home owners and residents living in the inner city were more vulnerable than those living elsewhere. These thefts occurred throughout the day, with the least likely time being the early hours of the morning. Residential streets and public parking lots were the areas most often cited as the place where thefts occurred.

Assault

People living in established suburbs and those with a secondary school education were most at risk of assault. Assault mainly occurred in two places – in the home (58%) and in places of entertainment (18%). The offender was most likely to be known to the victim. Offenders were most often neighbours (36%) or partners (33%). Assault occurred mostly on Fridays, Saturdays and, in particular, on Sundays between 12h00 and 06h00. The vast majority of assaults resulted in injury. Physical strength was mostly used (as opposed to weapons) and most victims were treated in a hospital for their injuries.

Robbery

People living in new or developing suburbs, with a post secondary school qualification and formal employment were most at risk of robbery. These crimes commonly occurred at night over the weekend. Victims reported that the likely location for a robbery was in residential streets, while they were walking alone. Money was most likely to be taken during the robbery. Violence was used in 69% of the attacks, with knives followed by physical strength being the most likely weapons. Injuries were nevertheless limited.

Fear of crime

Nearly two-thirds of people felt unsafe in their residential areas after dark. This finding shows lower levels of anxiety about crime compared to South African cities. Women, young people between 15-25 years, those with the least education and those living in 'new suburbs' and 'established suburbs' felt the least safe after dark in their areas of residence. Two-thirds said crime had increased compared to previous years and people living in both new and established suburbs were twice as likely to think crime had increased than residents from the inner city or rural settlements. Over half of the respondents accurately estimated that housebreaking and theft followed by mugging were the most common crimes in Dar es Salaam. These were also the two crime categories feared by most people in the city.

Perceptions on policing and safety

Most people (80%) said they used some form of protection against crime, mostly burglar-proofing, fences or walls, a dog and/or a weapon. Although these measures are not particularly sophisticated, 68% said they felt fairly safe as a result of these measures.

Over half of the respondents (56%) said that the government should provide more visible police and security guards and a better distribution of police posts to enhance safety. People were most likely to think that, compared to previous years, the quality of policing had stayed the same (44%), while 39% thought it had become worse. Access to the police was less of a problem than the lack of visible policing and patrols, with 36% saying they never saw a police officer on duty and 17% reporting that they saw an officer less than once a month. Visible policing should be targeted in the suburbs. In new suburbs, 62% said they never saw the police and 48% in established suburbs said the same. Moreover, these people were much more likely than those in other parts of the city to think crime had increased. They also displayed high levels of fear of crime.

When asked about how individuals can improve safety, 62% said they could cooperate with or join the police, security guards, SunguSungu or neighbourhood watch organisations. People seemed more inclined to support SunguSungu-type initiatives than the police. Despite this and the fact that 53% thought these community initiatives improve safety, only 25% said such initiatives exist in their neighbourhoods. Between 14% and a quarter said there was nothing they could do to improve safety. None mentioned taking precautions or being more alert, which suggests a limited knowledge about crime prevention and risk avoidance behaviour.