



# COMMUNITY POLICING AND CATTLE RUSTLING IN LAIKIPIA

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## ABSTRACT

Cattle rustling poses challenges for farmers, ranchers and communities because of the conflict, loss of life, and the economic damage inflicted on those who rear livestock. Community Policing (CP) has been widely embraced as a solution to the problem of cattle rustling, especially in pastoral areas like Laikipia West Sub County. Although many CP programs are thought to build trust and collaborative relationships between the police and communities, lower crime reporting thresholds, and advance development, there is scant literature addressing the extent to which these initiatives address the problem of cattle rustling. This study aimed to close that gap by establishing the role of CP strategies in addressing cattle rustling in Laikipia West Sub County. The study was based on Rational Choice Theory and Social Learning Theory. A cross-sectional survey research design was employed for both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the research. The target population comprised 140 Community Policing Leaders under the Nyumba Kumi initiative in Laikipia West Sub County. Using simple random sampling, 104 leaders were selected for the study, and 15 informants were selected through purposive sampling. Questionnaires and key informant interviews were used for data collection. Descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative data was done with SPSS, and qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The results provided a mixed evaluation of the effectiveness of Community Policing (CP). The respondents, for example, appreciated the fact that CP had substantially lessened cattle raiding and rustler apprehension. Further positive outcomes appreciated by the respondents include lessened cases and complaints made to the police, improved social relations, and generally a better environment in the community. However, as is often the case with CP, those respondents noted a lack of clarity on the overall impact, inadequate funding, dysfunctional coordination, and political meddling as some of the challenges that thwart CP from maximizing its effectiveness. From this, the case soars is clear: the respondents advocated that the government commits funding for CP activities such as appropriate training, bettering infrastructure, and more importantly, pastoral ICTs for pastoralist communities. Besides, harnessing collective action from law enforcement, local citizens, and CPCCs actively involved in legislation could improve CP, combat cattle rustling, and stabilize the economy.

**KEY WORDS:** Community Policing, Combating Cattle Rustling, Broader Security, Pastoralist Regions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of Community Policing (CP) in combating cattle rustling has gained significant attention in conflict-prone areas like Laikipia West Sub County. Community Policing is a collaborative approach between law enforcement agencies and local communities, aiming to enhance security and social cohesion. Studies indicate that CP initiatives have played a crucial role in reducing crime rates by fostering trust between residents and police officers. However, challenges such as poor coordination, political interference, and resource constraints hinder its full implementation. According to Fikru (2016), limited resources, lack of effective service delivery, and weak community participation, often hamper the success of CP initiatives. Similarly, Adamu and Ekere (2020) found that in Nigeria, CP faced significant setbacks due to inadequate manpower, poor infrastructure, and lack of technological resources. These issues are not unique to Nigeria or Ethiopia, as similar challenges have been documented in Kenya, particularly in Laikipia West, where political tensions and social conflicts affect CP effectiveness.

The economic effects related to national security, particularly in Community Policing (CP) initiatives, are quite evident.

Productivity in pastoralist areas has drastically improved due to lowered livestock theft, and increased business confidence attributed to well-structured CP initiatives. Research conducted in Turkana and other crime-associated cattle ranching areas shows that rampant crime discourages investments and disrupts economic activities. According to Said (2020), conflict is predominantly fueled by poverty in the pastoralist region, which aggravates the cattle rustling problem. Moreover, the study underscored that lack of counter violence, poor disarmament policies, and scanty security personnel set up a zone where CP efforts are bound to fail. Also, Ejore et al. (2020) revealed how significantly cattle rustling stunts school participation for children in pastoralist regions, highlighting the socio-economic ramifications of violence on the populace. Solving these economic problems through CP strategies requires thoughtful investment, policy frameworks, and sustained community engagement to establish enduring security improvements. Community Policing effectiveness relies heavily on the political climate and external relations. During the course of CP evaluation, it was observed that political encroachment is one of the chieftains affecting CP effectiveness. Some local authorities seem to take charge of these initiatives for personal or ethnic



group uses. Indeed, police changes and CP models as Civil Society Governance (CSG) frameworks cannot, according to Ingvild (2020), address the more fundamental issues of systemic and structural political and socio-economic disparities that require change at the level of governance. Further, the study pointed out the impact of conflict over resources at various governance levels. Politics of power, collusion, and even allocation of resources are said to influence the practice of the CP policies at both local and national levels. With regard to the implementation of CP in Nigeria, Haruna (2021) corroborated the findings due to inadequately designed institutional frameworks, poor working conditions, lack of political will, and insufficiently trained staff. Here in Kenya, other factors like poor funding, bad publicity, and lack of faith from the public and uneven resource allocation are to blame for the stalled activities aimed at controlling cattle rustling and pushing for peaceful coexistence.

To improve the effectiveness of Community Policing, policy design and community participation frameworks should be primary focus areas. Enhanced standard operating procedure for CP structures shall increase awareness and improve existing coordination mechanisms to address the encountered challenges. Research underlines the necessity for local government, law enforcement agencies, and policy makers to work in coalition towards enhancing the CP systems. In addition, Said (2020) advocates for the fusion of CP with overarching security frameworks such as more efficient intelligence collection and quicker response time protocols. Community and active involvement coupled with sustained training for police is critical to the long-term achievement of CP systems. The political, economic, and social issues regarding the CP in Laikipia West and other pastoralist regions is multi-faceted and thus calls for a multi-stakeholder approach to build lasting peace and security. This paper seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of CP on cattle rustling activities in Laikipia West Sub County.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The government of Kenya, in conjunction with local citizens, have sought to address the problem of cattle rustling within the CP framework in the pastoralist areas, particularly in the northern Kenya region. Initiated as a national agenda in 2005 and adopted by pastoralist areas by 2010, CP is credited for building positive relations between police and citizens, increasing crime reporting, improving development (Kenya Police, 2010; NPS, 2017). The praise is, however, limited by the shortcomings of the NPS Community Policing Handbook (2017) which fails to consider the variety of crime types and cultures within the societies bordering the pastoral regions, indicating that the relevance of CP is likely to differ in pastoral and non-pastoral areas. This research seeks to assess the impact of CP in Laikipia West Sub County while addressing the problem of cattle rustling. Scholarship reinforces police partnerships with the community in crime reduction. Wanjohi (2014) reports in Machakos County that problem-solving and community engagement are key in reducing crime CP (community policing) strategies. Marigat and Cheruiyotomo (2022) also commend CP's contribution to national security by

addressing internal security threats through community collaborations with security agencies. There is also evidence of CP's success in reducing crime and the fear of crime among the residents in Tanzania and Uganda (Hassani 2016; Khanakwa 2022). With all these, understanding of CP's influence on the cattle rustling in Laikipia West remains sparse, particularly pastoralist areas bound by these movements. This research aims to address that gap by focusing on local perspectives regarding the effectiveness of CP in dealing with the problem.

While CP shows promise in crime prevention, there are still gaps in the available literature. Khanakwa's (2022) research in Bunambutye, Uganda, shows CP's effectiveness in curtailing cattle rustling and land conflicts, but the overreliance on qualitative data is problematic due to limited generalizability. There are also severe conceptual and contextual gaps: the study centres on Bunambutye without providing sufficient historical or comparative context. These gaps highlight the need to consider the adoption and impact of CP particularly in pastoral societies such as Laikipia West. This study looks into these gaps by first assessing whether CP has been beneficial to pastoralism dependent households in the same manner as other non-pastoral communities and assessing its role in the mitigation of cattle rustling for the area.

The inquiry is built upon Rational Choice Theory and Social Learning Theory, which attempt alongside other frameworks to address the persistence of cattle rustling in the era of Community Policing (CP). The frameworks incorporate Rational Choice Theory which states that individuals indulge in crime after assessing the benefits versus the costs. The works of Adam Smith in 1776 inspired this theory, and in this context, the theory explains the sustenance of cattle rustling in Laikipia West.

CP efforts—because the perceived economic gains overpower the apprehension and punishment risks (Cheruiyot & Kipchumba, 2021). The efficiency of polices and the capacity of the raiders to evade arrest reinforce the rationality of the crime. Amid these assumptions, however, lies the cultural and social factors that support cattle rustling—elements missing in the Rational Choice Theory. There is need, therefore, to blend Social Learning Theory into the analysis.

Social Learning Theory posits that people adopt specific behaviours through the processes of observation, imitation, and modelling. This theory was first proposed by Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura in 1977 (Bandura, 1977). In regard to Laikipia West, cattle rustling is not just an economic endeavour but a behaviour that has been learned over a long period of time. It underscores the development of such behaviour as a product of socialization within a pastoralist community, viewing rustling as a mode of livelihood and critical catalytic self-reliant advancement. Community acceptance for such practices has made them persist, reinforced by the community support and perceived rewards associated with raiding livestock from other rival groups. From a pastoralist perspective, Social Learning



Theory provides insight into the interaction between the community and the practice of cattle rustling, increasing the importance of comprehensive CP or Conservation Projects initiatives aimed at breaking these cycles through education, awareness, and alternative means of livelihoods. All these theories foster a discussion on the overarching economic consequences of CP in relation to national security.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross sectional survey research design which captures the extent and effectiveness of Community Policing (CP) to mitigate cattle rustling in Laikipia West Sub County. As noted earlier, data is collected at a single point in time which permits measuring the relationships between CP measures and cattle rustling. A mixed-methods approach was utilized by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to capture the breadth of the subject under study. The quantitative part made it possible to analyze the data statistically while the qualitative part provided additional perspectives directly from respondents.

The target population included 140 Community Policing Leaders under the Nyumba Kumi initiative within Laikipia West Sub County. Simple random sampling was used to sample 104 Community Police Leaders which Yamane's formula guided to ensure a representative sample. In addition, 15 key informants were sampled purposively to participate in the research to provide expert views and contextual information on the effectiveness of CP. The study used structured questionnaires to collect data from CP leaders and prepared interview guides to collect qualitative data for security experts, law enforcement officers, and community representatives.

Analysis of data was done both descriptively and thematically. Utilizing SPSS, quantitative data was processed to produce output statistics like frequencies, percentages, and correlation thresholds. For audience ease the findings were presented in the form of graphs, tables, and charts. Narrative frameworks were employed for qualitative data analysis, facilitating the identification of challenges and success stories pertaining to CP in the context of cattle rustling. All ethical guidelines were followed, including gaining consent, confidentiality, and remaining neutral in the data analysis process.

### 4. RESULTS

There is a mixed response from participants on the effectiveness of Community Policing (CP) on cattle rustling's incidence levels in Laikipia West Sub County. With 33.7% CP users agreeing and 18.6% strongly agreeing that CP has been useful, the average score is 3.51 with a standard deviation of 1.05, which shows a mean value of approximately slight to moderate consensus. A sizeable portion, 31.4%, on the other hand remains neutral. From this, it is clear that a significant number of community members appreciate the role CP plays in mitigating Cattle rustling, but a good number still don't understand or are unaware of it. Abuga (2015) is supported by these findings, noting lack of awareness and lack of understanding of the concept was too low to make

such an assertion, thus making the effectiveness of CP questionable. CP users in this study acknowledged perceiving CP as having effectiveness without baseline understanding which ultimately defined their perception towards it.

The effectiveness of systematic police door-to-door contact with community members appears to have slightly higher impact, with 31.4% agreeing and 18.6% strongly agreeing both raised the mean score to 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.97. This assists in interpersonal relations and gets the police in a trusted position in the view of the community which helps in mobilizing them for enhanced cooperation and sharing of vital information. These findings are consistent with those of Hassani (2016) who stated that personal interaction with the communities aimed at engaging them in enhancing control measures against crime in the county were also important pointers to effective policing activities in Tanzania.

In considering whether CP has facilitated the resolution of cattle rustling issues, 37.2% agreed and 12.8% strongly agreed, which constitutes a mean of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.95. This indicates that the majority, while positive, did not believe CP was effective in resolving such cases. The relatively high percentage of respondents (34.9%) who are indifferent indicates a lack of information or publicity concerning the resolutions of successful cases. This reinforces the conclusion made by Murkomen (2015), where he indicated that though CP and other strategies were put in place to curb cattle rustling, their ability to address fundamental concerns was highly ineffective.

Support for the notion that there has been a reduction in complaints against the police is provided by 33.7% agreeing and 16.3% strongly agreeing, resulting in a mean of 3.50 and a standard deviation of 0.97. This demonstrates that CP impacts police-citizen relations in general and the reduction of grievances in a more positive manner, though moderately. According to Wanjohi (2014), the notable advantages of CP for the community include the trust and improved relationship with the police, which means that better relations are indeed being built through these efforts in Laikipia West.

A considerable fraction of the participants, 36% agreed and 18.6% strongly agreed, holds the view that CP contributes to reduction of resource allocation to the criminal justice system, indicated by a mean of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 1.04. This indicates that CP is regarded, at least in part, as a strategy perceived to incur lesser costs. These findings support the NPS Community Policing Information Booklet (2017) which highlights the resource efficiency as a hallmark of Community Policing (CP) efforts.

Community Policing is regarded as assisting during the social fabric maintenance, where 32.6% and 22.1% agreed and strongly agreed respectively resulting in a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 1.01. This suggests that CP initiatives are positively contributing to enhanced social cohesion and stability. This is



backed by Khanakwa (2022) findings, where CP implementation helped in social stability by controlling crime and other social issues.

The quote "CP lessens fear for the residents" evoked different reactions from the respondents. As per the data, 1.2% strongly disagreed, 16.3% disagreed, 33.7% did not take a stand, 33.7% agreed and 15.1% strongly agreed. The calculated mean was 3.45 with a standard deviation of 0.98. This means that a good number of the respondents overrides community policing as effective in curbing fear among the residents, although a considerable percentage chose the neutral stance. These findings support the study carried out by Hassani (2016), which noted that community participation through Community Policing frameworks lowered the residents' fear of crime. Semboja et al., (2016) also found that CP lessened fear of crime for the residents, supporting the claim. It shows that Community Policing can effectively mitigate insecurity related fear for residents, which is paramount in regions with incidents of cattle rustling. The assertion is that there is need to enhance Community Policing strategies to help reduce fear and improve perception of safety in Laikipia West Sub County.

In response to "CP brings sustainable development," results were diverse too, with 3.5% strongly disagreeing, 10.5% disagreeing, 37.2% being neutral, 33.7% agreeing, and 15.1% strongly agreeing. The average value was 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.99. These findings indicate that many respondents, even though a large part remained neutral, acknowledged the impact that Community Policing has on sustainable development.

Supporting evidence is found in Marigat and Cheruiyotomo's(2022) research, which illustrates the positive impact of Community Policing activities on both national security and sustainable development. The authors argue that active Community Policing significantly improves the collaboration of the community with security agencies, thereby enhancing the levels of security and development in a region. In Laikipia West, these findings suggest that improving Community Policing techniques could be crucial not only for increasing security but also for fostering sustainable development in the region in relation to the long term and short term problems posed by cattle rustling.

The remark "CP increases police-citizen joint security initiatives" met with 2.3% strong disagreement, 11.6% disagreement, 36% neutral response, 26.7% agreement, and 23.3% strong agreement. The average score was 3.57 with a standard deviation of 1.05. This highlights the respondents' positive perception on Community Policing's role in encouraging joint action by the police and citizens towards maintaining security. This finding is consistent with conclusions made by Wanjohi (2014) on the importance partnerships between the police and the community have towards crime reduction. In Laikipia West, the favorable response indicates that Community Policing is helping promote collaboration between the police and the community which is very important to curb cattle rustling. Fostering these relations enhances trust and collaboration that increases crime prevention and security.

Table 4. 1: Usefulness of Community Policing Strategies in Curbing Criminal Activities in Laikipia West

	SD	D	DK	A	SA	Mean	StD
Community Policing has been used to fight cattle rustling	3.5%	12.8%	31.4%	33.7%	18.6%	3.51	1.05
Door-to-door contacts between police and community	1.2%	11.6%	37.2%	31.4%	18.6%	3.55	0.97
Resolving of cattle rustling cases has been made easier	2.3%	12.8%	34.9%	37.2%	12.8%	3.45	0.95
Complaints against police have reduced	1.2%	14.0%	34.9%	33.7%	16.3%	3.50	0.97
CP helps reduce allocation of resources to criminal justice	3.5%	11.6%	30.2%	36.0%	18.6%	3.55	1.04
CP maintains the social fabric	2.3%	9.3%	33.7%	32.6%	22.1%	3.63	1.01
CP reduces fear among residents	1.2%	16.3%	33.7%	33.7%	15.1%	3.45	0.98
CP brings sustainable development	3.5%	10.5%	37.2%	33.7%	15.1%	3.47	0.99
CP increases police-citizen joint security initiatives	2.3%	11.6%	36.0%	26.7%	23.3%	3.57	1.05

Source: Field Data (2024)

### 5. CONCLUSION

Evaluation of the effectiveness of CP initiatives in mitigating the problem of cattle rustling paints a complex picture. While most respondents noted the benefits of CP in facilitating contact and direct police-community relations, improving trust and

cooperation among stakeholders, there is still considerable ambiguity as to the impact of CP. It is said that CP has made the resolution of cattle rustling disputes easier, lessened grievances against the police, and eased social tension and fear among the residents. It also fosters sustainable socio-economic development



and strengthens collective security arrangements. Increased public confidence in police responsiveness and local security after the implementation of CP indicates the growing acceptance of its role in promoting a safe and cooperative environment.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced participation and community awareness in Conservation Program (CP) initiatives should be prioritized by community leaders and local governments. The study notes the violent crime of cattle rustling is strongly rooted in deep social issues and requires advanced community action and action at the higher leadership levels to address it. Unfortunately, social issues such as CP inexperience, a lack of knowledge, or even commitment affect participation. With this, local authorities need to conduct sensitization drives and educational lectures concerning the benefits of CP and how it works. Taking initiative to foster positive relations encourages community members to mobilize towards a single purpose and strengthen the fight against cattle rustling. Dealing with the politics and abuse of CP initiatives by providing effective boundary frameworks and responsibility structures explaining the consequences of wrongdoing will increase the credibility of these actions.

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