

Experiential Manifestation of Youth Violence in Tanzania: A Case Study of Commando Yosso Notorious Youth Gangs

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Abstract: *In many societies youth constitute presumably large segments of the population and loci of dependable breadwinners. The majorities do not however represent monolithic and organized social order, designate instead mundane performances such as rural-urban migrations, forming gangs for notorious activities and carrying out uncontrolled street-level informal economic operations. An increased trend of rural-urban migration annually exacerbates the common problem of youth unemployment. Problems of street-level employment opportunities force many youth to join notorious gang activities aimed at terrorizing communities barely for the sake of making ends meet. They formed nefarious gangs that assumed a common name of Commando Yosso deviously engaging in night licentious activities. A full-fledged program for eradication of violent gangs was established and implemented victoriously. The escalation of perilous activities of the Commando Yosso gangs paradoxically attracted many more rural youth who swarmed with alacrity in Dar es Salaam City in anticipation of making quick fortunes. Alas! Uncovering the dissolution of notorious youth gangs' activities, the naïve new city comers joined in desperation street level petty businesses. The urbane former Commando Yosso conjoin other unrepentant youth to become regular street-level petty business marchers, hence took up an assumed name of Machinga or Wamachinga¹. Therefore, it is significant for relevant authorities to enforce policies of an early warning intervention as a way of restraining notorious youth gangs before they become uncontrollable. This is of paramount importance because in most cases dangerous escapades start as a dot on the horizon.*

Key words: Notorious youth gangs, Commando Yosso, Sungusungu, legalization, informal sector, Wamachinga, violence, crime, juvenile delinquency.

INTRODUCTION

The youth constitute the majority of the most economically active-able-bodied population that nation states depend on for re-energizing and revitalizing development processes. For example, according to Marttila (2011). the population structure of Tanzania indicates that more than 50% of the youth fall within the age group of less than 18 years of age, around 45% less than 15 years; whereas the annual population growth rate was around 3%². Totten (2009) contends that societies cannot afford to wait and assume that gang activity is a “reserve problem”. Hence the cost of rescuing the young generation from falling into crime, violence and delinquency is much less than quitting and rehabilitating already warring gang members.

¹ Refer to Table No. 1 of the Appendix

² According to the national census (2012) population composition of Tanzania, the young generation below the age of 0-17 years accounts for 50.1%; whereas the youth between the ages of 15-24 years account for 19.1 %, and age groups of 15-64 years are 52.2 %; while age groups over 60 years form only 9.5 % of the population. Therefore, the young generation composes of over 60 % of the total population. The population density and growth rate are 51 and 2.7% respectively.

Greene and Pranis (2007) argue that it is more justified to pursue education-related prevention measures that reduce the prevalence of criminal activities, violence and juvenile delinquency than the cost of leaving gang members in a one-way-street leading them to jail and death inevitably. The country was engulfed with widespread incidents of homicide, violent crimes and other serious index crimes (rape, robbery, murder, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and arson). This trend exacerbated the emergence of Commando Yosso gangs in the nineties. Enforcing rules for reducing tensions with community participation was thus a justifiable measure.

The defunct Tanzanian Daily Mail broadsheet of April 4, 1998, carried a thrilling story written by a professional and seasoned journalist, Kajubi Mukajanga,³ about the rise of notorious youth gangs in Dar es Salaam, the commercial city of Tanzania. With great *éclat*, the writer coined an eruditely discreet title of the story captioned: *How the Captain took on the notorious Commando Yosso gangs and stopped them dancing away with all the loot they could get hold of.*⁴ The youth gangs carried out wanton operations mainly in a populous district of Kinondoni, turning the area into a battlefield between terrorizing gangs and the police, assisted by the local militia, while keeping other inhabitants at bay.

The emergence and escalation of notorious youth gangs constitute an alarming social, economic and political threat globally. Many gangs are increasingly involved in incidences of crime and violence. Redwood (1999) argues that criminal activities and violence erode physical, natural, and social capital, undermine the investment climate, and deplete state's capacity to govern. In our society crime and violence are no longer deemed to be issues related to undermining human rights *per se*, but they are perceived also as problems affecting micro-cum-macroeconomic performance.

Review postulates of the Commando Yosso youth gangs' activities

Both structured and unstructured methods of data collection were used to determine the real nub of Commando Yosso operations in the affected areas. Members of the Defense and Security Committee were tasked to investigate discreetly the whereabouts, names of group gangs, names of ringleaders and sponsors, time of operations and other details related to the *modus operandi* of the gangs. General interviews (planned and unplanned) of Divisional Secretaries, Ward Secretaries, Government Street Chairpersons, Ten Cell Leaders and the general public, were carried seriously for a fortnight. Interview groups submitted reports to the District Defense Committee without further ado for immediate action. Ironically, all reports vindicated common phenomena.

The self-styled Commando Yosso gang members organized frequent midnight attacks, following deliberate arrangements of extravagant funfair sprees that usually attracted more young people than adults, who joined the local tunes of *mchiriku*, *chakacha*, *kigodoro*, *khanga moja* or *mnanda*⁵; where drinking of illicit brew of *gongo* and puffing of *marijuana* were also

³ He is currently the Executive Secretary of the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) and President of World Association of the Press Councils (WAPC).

⁴ He referred to the author who apparently championed the dissolution of the Commando Yosso youth gangs in Dar es-Salaam when he served as District Commissioner for Kinondoni area.

⁵ These are simply names of popular coastal local dances that in many instances portray the likes of obscene styles of social practice.

expended indiscriminately. Adopting measures of extricating communities from the lethal practices of robbery and housebreaking by Commando Yosso groups was therefore impossible without disbanding first the ignominious night dances. According to Richani, N., (1997) violence in its criminal and political aspects largely reflects the contradictory impulses set in motion by modernization and serves as an expression of various distortions – social, economic, psychological and cultural – which accompany that process. By this assertion, violence whether domestic, ethnic, racial, or physical, presupposes an act or behaviour that intends to ruin others physically, socially, economically, psychologically and culturally. A sociological approach was thus applied to determine the effects of Commando Yosso youth groups' involvement in society and how that changed their ability and behaviour destined for diabolical objectives.

In this context, primary and secondary school finalists and dropouts made conjuring migrations into urban and suburban areas of cities and municipalities in anticipation of seeking employment opportunities. However, many of them dolefully grizzled about harsh living conditions of urban life after experiencing slim and intractable possibilities of seeking jobs. The majority joined the street-level informal business of selling petty merchandise, niggling of meager fortunes available on the streets; whereas many youth who could not make ends meet even with derisory fortunes joined street-level violent gangs. Some gang factions promoted actively and participated in vicious criminal activities and sex trade work (Totten, 2009).

The Commando Yosso gangs formed well-defined hierarchical structures. Gang groups were identified by pseudonyms such as *PLO*, *Black September*, *Sadam Hussein*, and *Red Army*⁶. Each gang carried out operations in a specific slum area. The *PLO* gang's operations were confined to Kigogo slum area, while *Black September*, *Sadam Hussein* and *Red Army* made their operations in the slum areas of Mabibo, Manzese and Tandale respectively. Gang activities were mostly carried out in slum areas probably because there was high propensity of personal cover and concealment unlike other heavily urbanized and well-built locations when they could very easily be exposed.

The gangs maintained the principle of inter-gang *esprit de corps* or team spirit for keeping secrecy and protecting the identity of fellow members when raided and apprehended by police. They even used the traditional method of taking blood oaths of loyalty. Sometimes two gangs attacked a single target jointly and shared the loot proportionally. Different gangs identified themselves by specific passwords, like *Oya – Oya*, *Mambo – Poa*, *Dingi – Noma* or *Mti – Mkavu*. Inadvertently, some of these slangs have now been incorporated in the mainstream of common Swahili street language vocabulary mostly used by the young people. The popular slang, *Mambo! – Poa!* has been included in the mainstream political chants as it is commonly used by many politicians in public rallies.

Adopting and speaking the language of the youth was an important phenomenon in the sense of grasping the challenges they posed. The focus was to enhance the struggle on

⁶ Recent pseudonym concoctions are *Mbwamwitu*, *Panyaroad* and *Bunyelobunyelo* sharing however similar street-level gang activities that led to the arrest of 49 culprits between age groups of 18-27 in mid-2014. The expanse of gang operations increased that includes other slum areas of Ubungo Side River, Temeke, Mbagala, Tabata and Msimbazi valley.

behavioral change rather than making futile attempts to wipe out the gangs that seemed to be ineradicable. However, the research was not destined for suggesting ways of eradicating the Commando Yosso youth gangs *per se* – a virtually impossible undertaking – but simply recommending ways of rehabilitating them, promoting and guaranteeing people's well-being (Greene and Pranis, 2007). A formidable political challenge was routinely observed when youth street-gang members indulged themselves in attending political rallies *en masse* both in stadia and other premises. They gathered at the airport lawns and on the streets during state visits of foreign dignitaries willingly. Yet some suffered the indignity of being arrested for taking advantage of public gatherings to indulge in criminal activities. An indignant member of a Commando Yosso group once grizzled in a querulous voice by chanting antics that if the police could not stop harassing them; as they were forced to commit burglary and larceny in a bid to find their 'daily bread' only; they would consequently boycott to line-up on the streets and elsewhere, simply for the sake of chanting praises and exalting heads of state and government from other countries!

DEFINING VIOLENCE

According to the World Health Organization (2015), an individual or larger group of individuals with an intention of self-abuse or suicide can commit violence; it can also be committed for political, social and economic reasons. Therefore, violence can be defined as intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm or deprivation. In order to measure risk and prevention for victimization, perpetration and intervention, it is important to monitor the incidence of youth violence, examine trends over time and determine the magnitude of youth violence across jurisdictions. In essence, youth violence may include violent acts, such as bullying, slapping, or hitting. This can cause more emotional harm than physical harm. It can also be robbery and assault with or without weapon, which can lead to injury or even death. From this context, three types of violence can be derived:

- (a) Self-directed violence signifying that the perpetrator and victim are the same individual, subdivided into self-abuse and suicide.
- (b) Interpersonal violence, which is violence between individuals, subdivided into family members, intimate partners, community violence and violence at work places.
- (c) Collective violence, which is committed by larger groups of individuals; subdivided into social, political and economic violence.

EXAMPLES OF OTHER NOTORIOUS YOUTH GANGS

It is important first to make a brief analysis of other youth gangs. The tendency of increasing the incidence of violence, crime and delinquency caused and intensified by youth gangs is a typical challenge of all societies whether rich or poor. For example, almost every state in the USA and Canada has criminal youth gangs of various ethnic backgrounds – White, Black, Spaniard Latino or Aborigine. In many areas or *barrios* of Latin American countries the formation and escalation of violent youth gangs called *pandillas* was noticeably common.

Defining the nature of contemporary youngsters in Asian societies, Henry (2010) argues that while violent youth behaviour is not of the ordinary, certain recklessness among city youth today is a direct effect of urbanization where nothing seems to be enough to satiate one's

greed for more. Many youth gangs in the west started in the USA and later spread out to Latin American countries; though some gangs that dealt with drug trafficking moved back into the US where there were lucrative market opportunities for drugs.

Analyzing the relationship between state welfare programmes and the rising of youth gang violence in Canada, the USA and the UK, Valentine (2002) argues that such programmes engendered an explosion of teenage motherhood over the past two decades, whereby their children had no contacts with their fathers. The offspring were literary prone to gang membership and drug addiction at a young age. Many such gangs evolved in school institutions and communities and as a result preyed on other more vulnerable peers.

The researcher further argues that it was a deliberate policy of the apartheid regime of South Africa to create groups and sub-groups of people, including dispossessed or outcast elements. He also contends:

Young girls born into outcast sub-groups had little or no education. Despite an absence of state welfare programmes, they gained status amongst their peers by becoming mothers. The ability to bring forth life was something significant, despite them being emotionally unprepared to nurture and raise an infant. They depended on charitable hand-outs and scavenging for survival. Fathers of the offspring were often both physically and emotionally absent. The mothers usually lacked the necessary parental skills to care their infants, whom they rarely caressed but often neglected or abused. Gentle caressing and touching of these infants were rare (Valentine, 2002).

The groups and sub-groups mentioned above belonged undoubtedly to African and other coloured communities that ended up in joining notorious gangs. Tens of thousands of gangs evolved in South African cities where the rites of membership often included ritual killings and rapes. IRIN (2011) asserts that violent gangs in South Africa compete for control of a lucrative drug trade frequented by bloody turf wars. The most widely known gang is the *Thug Life Gang* with a different composition from other gangs because it included family members; the youth, parents and grandparents belonging to the same gang just like a religion. IRIN estimates that in 2006 there were 2,182 children under the age of 18 incarcerated in the South African prison system – 1,109 pending trial and 1,073 served sentences. The total number of young people incarcerated was estimated to reach 60,703 (IRIN, 2006).

Recently, the Pontiff of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis I (2014). argued unequivocally about the staggering world economic system that ignores the destiny of the young generation but instead prioritizes the lust for the idol of money even if it amounts to making profits through mischievous manipulations of waging wars globally or regionally. He discarded the seemingly moribund world capitalist system that leaves over 50% of the unemployed youth helpless while many of them wander the streets of European cities seeking work but all to no avail.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Two hypotheses were tested as to whether the emergence and escalation of the Commando Yosso violent activities had any impact upon the problems of rural-urban migration and juvenile delinquency. Both hypotheses postulated a false negative or type II error, meaning that the null hypothesis is accepted because the upshot of youth rural-urban migration and increasing trend of delinquency and crime. Previously, many youth migrations were noticeable from the southern regions of Mtwara and Lindi. Following the escalation of the Commando Yosso notorious paradigm, rural-urban migrations have attracted many youth from almost all other regions, especially those with relatively high incidences of poverty and squalor. There about 1 million school leavers who migrate into urban areas annually.

INTERVENTIONS LEADING TO THE NOTORIOUS ACTIVITIES OF COMMANDO YOSSO YOUTH GANGS

a) Economic factors

In the 1980s Tanzania was imbued with a multiplicity of problems that had shaken the macroeconomic fundamentals of a country that was evolving from a socialist central planning economy to a liberalized capitalist system; following the demise of the socialist Arusha Declaration in 1979 and the promulgation of the capitalist Declaration of Zanzibar. In 1984, the World Bank imposed stringent conditionality on economic reforms through the structural adjustment programme; followed by signing the IMF membership agreement two years later, for the purpose of improving inflows of financial and other external resources in the country. The WB conditionality package included making producer price reforms, removal of subsidies for agricultural crops, making currency devaluation and contraction of public firms. Prices of agricultural export crops like coffee, cotton, tea, cashew nuts, sisal and tobacco slumped drastically. This made the agricultural sector unattractive and life in the countryside difficult (Havnevik, 1993). Many young people flocked into urban areas in search of employment. Coincidentally, the country was hit by severe drought in 1984 that caused a depletion of agricultural produce. This factor facilitated also big movements of the youth from the rural areas into urban slums to seek "green pastures."

This analysis tries to expound on the universality of factors that helped notorious youth gangs spring up, mushroom and escalate similar to the commando Yosso paradigm. It is plausible to justify that in the 1980s, ecological, social and economic difficulties that plunged the country into financial doldrums facilitated to a large extent the emergence of the Commando Yosso gangs. The factions – *PLO, Sadam Hussein, Black September and Red Army* – that carried out criminal activities under the guise of the Commando Yosso umbrella were well connected and organized. They carried out their operations mainly during the night.

The general public did not have a clue about the origin of the terrorizing gangsters and other accomplices. Many people were hazy about the ins and outs of the nature of the gangs and hence bogged down in rumours, gossips and innuendoes. The magnitude of fear was great. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to access reliable information about the cost inflicted by raids of gangs upon affected families, as they were scared and declined to respond to direct questions, fill in questionnaires about inflicted cost; lest it was a clandestine process of reviving the lethal youth gangs. Many people who sustained attacks of the Commando Yosso factions were apprehensive of reprisal and vendetta from the "unknown" youth gang members because they operated at night under maximum cover. During gang attacks, undercover police apprehended some young people purported to be gang members.

Many cases lacked strong evidence to convict the suspects because arrests were often done when the youth rampaged through the streets following brutal attacks of Commando Yosso gangs. Few gang members who were nabbed maintained a strong group cohesiveness, total loyalty and secrecy by keeping the blood-oath enshrined in them, as is also the case for other notorious youth gangs in other countries (Greene and Pranis 2007). They rebuffed with impunity to disclose the identities, status and whereabouts of their fellow gang members.

b) Confounded Arrests by the Police

In most cases, the police arrived late at the attack points. They ended up arresting few youth who were rampaging through the streets during the night. At first, it was incomprehensible to discern that the focal points of the attacks were the nocturnal dances of *mchiriku*, *kigodoro*, *chakachaka* or *mmanda*. Such occasions were also infiltrated with illicit brew (*gongo*) and marijuana. Some adults, infatuated with feelings of hedonism, ineluctably conjoined the youth in the infamous nocturnal dancing. But an interesting phenomenon to note was that the gang members themselves who participated in the midnight dances refrained forthwith from boozing, puffing away and womanizing. They only used the dancing, drinking and smoking as a transitional scapegoat prior to making attacks of predetermined targets.

An enquiry conducted by the district⁷ authorities unveiled this organic link between Commando Yosso night attacks and the nocturnal dances lavish boozing of the illicit brew and indiscriminate puffing of marijuana. A recondite plebiscite was conducted for the sole reason of shortlisting the possible patrons or sponsors of the Commando Yosso gang factions. The shortlisted patrons of all factions were obsessed with frequent questioning and interrogation by relevant district officials' man-o-a-man-o; up to the point that they yielded and apologized for their injudicious misdeeds. They promised to abandon all operations of their notorious gang factions instantly. These range of factors caused the notorious Commando Yosso factions to fade in oblivion unutterably. Nonetheless, a national campaign was groomed for an ardent desire to establish paramilitary security units known as *sungusungu* under the guise of community involvement locally christened *ulinzishirikishi*, a locally-based popular defense system. This defense structure was invigorated and replicated in Kinondoni district for the purpose of abating the intensity of youth gang manoeuvrings. The author of this paper formed part of a team appointed by the minister for home affairs to streamline a blueprint for the promulgation of *UlinziShirikishi* conducted at the police college in Moshi back in 1982.

⁷ The author was District Commissioner of Kinondoni district in Dar es Salaam during the Commando Yosso graft dispensation.

(c) Cult Affiliation

A new trend was gradually unfolding as some youth opted to become neophytes by joining cults of covert institutions. An anti-cult legislation was non-existent in Tanzania since no much harm of cult affiliation had been detected by then. However, Oruwari (2006) argues that Nigeria has enforced an anti-cult bill to control the proliferation of such groups especially in university campuses. He maintains that the magnitude of the gang problem is seen in the 103 groups listed as banned organizations in the River State anti-cult bill. Among the groups are the university campus cults like the Viking, Pirates Confraternity and Black Axe. Perusing online public discussions and opinions in some media, a quick-witted perception dictates that an affiliation of some youth with cult organizations was emerging in Tanzania unobtrusively or clandestinely, notwithstanding divine repercussions. It was not uncommon to come across billboards of tradition healers who claimed to have spiritual powers for zealots to join cult organizations for the sake of acquiring quick affluent status.

d) Crime Escalation in Dar es Salaam

In 1996 and 1998, the police conducted a research about the rate of crime in Dar es Salaam city. The project underlined that some crimes heightened public fear during the period under review. Major crimes committed were robbery, armed robbery and burglary that sometimes resulted in loss of life; mugging, neck-lacing of muggers, violence against women and children, manufacture, consumption and sell of illicit liquor (*gongo*); crimes associated with alcoholism, riot and unrest among informal traders, students and other groups; embezzlement of public funds, corruption and bribery, and traffic offenses including fatal accidents. The report further reveals that between 1990 and 1999, about 378 and 16 crime incidents were reported to the police daily and hourly respectively. These accounted for a 53 percent increase in the ten-year period or an annual crime rate increase of 5.3 per cent.

Perhaps the most notable crimes with an unprecedented scale that occurred during that time were the armed streetriots and pavement vendors' unrest around Kariakoo area in September 1995, the Muslim sectarian riots in April 1998 at Mwembechai that left two people dead and the atrocious terrorist bomb blast at the American Embassy in Dar es Salaam in August 1998. Ten people were killed and 70 others injured. The first incident occurred in the center of the city while the latter two incidents took place in Kinondoni district. During this period the research area was also plunged into other social quagmires of kidnappings, mass rape, computer fraud and robberies; strange phenomena not in conformity with social and traditional etiquettes of the Tanzanian citizenry. Poverty breeds crime and many other damnable vices. Weak macro and micro economic performance may lead to inadequate social infrastructural services. The mushrooming of crime favourable slums in urban areas was a product of slow economic growth. The police report testifies that in the 1980s, the majority of the inhabitants in Dar es Salaam were earning a per capita income of US \$ 260 only. The average annual inflation rate was 30% and about 23% of the households were living below the poverty line. The economic situation was even critical in the rural areas where wages were abysmally low and the hand-hoe agricultural practice was not an attractive income earning activity for the youth. This enticed many youth into migrating to urban areas where they believed could afford abundant employment opportunities that offered higher wages unlike the whirlpool of destitution and squalor experienced in the countryside.

CONSTRAINTS

(a) HIV/AIDS Scourge

The first victim of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania was detected in 1983 in the northwestern area bordering Uganda; whence the first infection is believed to have originated. The scourge of this pandemic later spread across the country like bush fire attacking mostly the youth. In some instances though many children who lost their parents or guardians were left to fend for themselves. For example, there were many “children families” in Makete district, Iringa region, located in the southern highlands of Tanzania. It was discovered to be one of the areas with higher incidence of HIV/AIDS infection.⁸

According to Mwaipopo (2005). with a population of 106,061 (2004) inhabitants of Makete district lived in excruciatingly abysmal conditions of poverty. At current prices, the per capita income was Tshs 113,000 or equivalent to 71 US dollars.⁹ In 2002, 1% of the total district’s population constituted orphans aged 0-7 years actually with both parents dead. She also argued that in 2004, the total number of children in the district was 41,413, while 13,867 or 35% were orphans. Some 2,506 children were “double orphans” in the sense that they lost both parents and later both guardians died too. Yet there were 6,889 most vulnerable children in orphanage groups. The number of child headed households (children aged below 14years) increased from 561 in 2004 to 630 in 2006. Some orphans were enrolled in primary and secondary schools. There were 7,226 and 715 orphans in primary and secondary schools respectively.

The Makete HIV/AIDS paradigm signified an alarming trend of youth and adults who fled *en masse* the rural areas and migrated into urban areas; while others moved to agricultural and forestry plantations with an anticipation of finding jobs. In many cases they were prone to contract HIV/AIDS infections and when they returned to the villages they became the infecting agents to their female partners. This analysis unveils how the HIV/AIDS killer disease was spreading fast from urban areas to rural destinies. In many cases, these orphans moved into urban areas and joined groups of street boys and girls. Some of them resorted to prostitution and petty or grand larceny.

(b) The Adolescent Factor

The difficult period of the 1980s onwards was also characterized by the aftermath of the 1978/79 Kagera War between Tanzania and the dictatorial regime of Amin Dada of Uganda. During this period there were increasing numbers of adolescent pregnancies. For example, analyzing the problem of adolescent pregnancies in Tanga region, Peter (2008). argues that 57.1% of secondary school girls interviewed attributed the problem of unwarranted pregnancies to low socio-economic status. Other factors were highlighted including financial difficulties, unemployment, poverty among girls, lack of proper information about sexual matters, lack of exposure, illiteracy, low level of girls’ education and too much leisure. The complexity of unwanted adolescent pregnancies in many cases caused foetal abnormalities and even stillbirths. Normally, a great percentage of unwanted pregnancies ended up in miscarriage or abortion and those who afforded to give birth eventually dumped the newly born in dustbins or toilets. This horrendous riddle has up till now become a public *cause*

⁸ The author was Regional Commissioner for Iringa region in 2006

⁹ 1 US \$ = Tshs 1,590/- roughly (December 2011).

célèbre or heated discussion among many communities in Tanzania, manifesting the causality of the aftermath of Kagera War and economic hardships of the 1980s.

The crux of the problems that occurred in all societies, rich or poor, was nothing less than the universal buzzword of employment. Joblessness fueled the propensity of young people and adults to engage in crime and violence, and finally became victims of physical hazards (Commission for Africa, 2005). Poverty and employment are mutually inclusive and presuppose each other. As African families have networks of extended families, joblessness and low economic status of single parents have comparatively direct causal effect to many affinity (spouses and in-laws) and consanguine dependants -children, grandchildren, and other siblings.

EXAMINING THE GENERAL SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMANDO YOSSO

It is however incorrect to deduce that the fading out of the Commando Yosso *nom de guerre* in the minds of some people amounts to the eradication of notorious youth gangs in urban premises. It is difficult and inconceivable to think of getting rid of youth gangs for good. It is notably a no-no phenomenon. Greene and Pranis further argue that ganging has always been an adolescent pursuit – a developmental phase through which many youth pass on their way to adulthood. Big numbers of youth completed primary and secondary education. On the way, there were many dropouts. The majority of these youth joined the seemingly inexorable *déjàvu* of urban jobless groups. There was actually no single predetermined variable or set of variables that can predict correctly and successfully who would join and become gang members. Most of them lived on high-density or low-income neighbourhoods and marginal squatter settlements.

A number of notorious youth regrouped in loose network factions carrying out armed robbery mostly in urban areas and highways. Some unscrupulous victims of the retrenchment quagmire within security state organs are purported to foment the countrywide bloody operations; owing to the nature and quality of modern weaponry used by the robbers and bandits. The main targeted infrastructures were financial institutions, mining sites, supermarkets and big shops. Theft of vehicles was also a rampant occurrence.

On the other side, a new phenomenon of a dynamic cultural economy is emerging in Tanzania with its positive and negative consequences. The phenomenon can be summarized by the following attributes: Burgeoning bonanzas of the *bongo flava* music and jazz band groups, changing flavour of *taarab* music, revival of traditional music dancing groups, forming modern religious music groups, development of modern film industry, development of sports, revival of scout groups in schools and development of tourism.

These anecdotes should be viewed from the context of both entertainment and opportunities for employment. But the impact of the globalization dimensions concerning the paradigms of juvenile delinquency and adolescent complexities must also be considered seriously.

(a) Burgeoning Bongo Flava Music and Jazz Band Groups

The contemporary so-called Bongo flava medley is gaining fame countrywide and *mêlées* of big crowds of the youth are common whenever performances are staged. Many such groups

are mushrooming rapidly and some are even still in the offing. Bongo flava groups with good management and sobriety make good fortunes. Incidentally, the most famous composers and singers are used in public rallies for political mobilization purposes. Although most of the lyrics and songs are written and sang in Kiswahili, yet the rhythm, chanting and dancing styles of almost all bongo flava hits are basically western oriented copied lyrics. There is a common criticism that bongo flava tracks lack traditional originality. They are portrayed as being tentacles of cultural imperialism and neo-colonial hangover. Even in discotheques youths tended to favour beats with western flavour.

One could not refrain from inveighing against the injudicious addiction of the Tanzanian youth, for imitating western obscene cultural norms and practice that are inconsistent with indigenous customs and traditions. It is palpable really to come across the male youth who imitated alien customs of plaiting hair, wearing earrings and dressing indecently in public. It is not uncommon to come across girls walking around with impunity almost half naked. Indigenous culture, customs and traditions are fizzling out rapidly due to western mendacious neo-colonial, cultural propaganda.

This is all done in the name of modern civilization and globalization! A nation that does not safeguard and respect its culture, traditions and customs is indeed in slavery. There is a mundane argument that these cultural antics usually evolve and disappear during specific historical epochs. The validity of this contention does not however consider the leftovers of untold negative cultural impact on society. Repudiating one's culture and instead instilling an obscene borrowed cultural mix jeopardizes in the long run the existence of the society itself. Much as it is good to have an alien cultural mix, the *status quo* of the *je ne sais quoi* national traditions, ethics and cultures should by leaps and bounds be maintained, preserved and defended.

With regard to jazz band groups, involvement of the youth is dominated mostly by copying chants of previous Latin American and African lyrics especially the Congolese. Few bands like Mlimani Park Orchestra, Msondo Ngoma, TOT plus and Vijana Jazz Orchestra somehow train the young generation to keep abreast with original and traditional lyrics and beats. These Jazz Bands follow the footprints of the defunct but once popular groups like Super Volcano, Cuban Marimba, Atomic Jazz, Band Jamhuri Jazz Band, Tabora Jazz Band and Kiko Kids to mention but a few.

(b) Changing flavour of *taarab* music

From time immemorial *taarab* music was a medley of people living on isles and along the coastal areas of the Indian Ocean, particularly Zanzibar, Tanga and Dar es Salaam. Many *taarab* concerts were attended in large numbers by old men and women, who enjoyed listening to instructive compositions of slow music rhythms. Yet of late some youth now run own *taarab* groups. Others joined the existing groups but the original *taarab* lyrics, rhythms, and beats are gradually being changed and fading away rapidly. They are replaced by new musical beats, *mipasho*, accommodating a cocktail mix of bongo flava, reggae and jazz flavour that the youth like most. The enchanting compositions of Jahazi Asilia by Mzee Yusufu or TOT Plus by Hadija Omar Kopa are good example of this contention.

(c) Revival of traditional music dancing groups

With more than 120 tribal groups, Tanzania boasts of having more or less similar numbers of tribal traditional music groups. Again the youth would classify traditional music as a congruent of old folks. But being an effective mobilization tool these groups are used in many political rallies where the youth tend to join willy-nilly. Street-level traditional drumbeats normally pull huge crowds of young people and women. The universality of traditional music was previously promoted by institutional groups of the military and other public firms that largely involved the youth as part of employment fortunes. Schools were also encouraged to institutionalize extra-curriculum cultural activities including traditional music dancing groups.

(d) Forming modern religious music groups

The Christian evangelization crusade is gaining momentum in the country. Many youth religious music groups are proliferating with powerful rhythms of intercession. In the beginning these evangelical groups were formed by born-again Christian denominations. Many other charismatic and non-born-again denominations now follow suit too. Apart from the intra-cum-inter-faith services and entertainment offered by these groups, young people also benefited by some levels of employment and solemnity of spiritual life among chosen individuals particularly the born-again Christians.

(e) Development of modern film industry

Some Tanzanian youth are hitherto displaying their talents of film making and starring emulating largely western and Nigerian cultural patterns. Though still in its embryonic stage of development, the industry seems to capture the support of the young generation and adults. The industry can offer lucrative employment if the invidious piracy of the final products is restricted and controlled to enable the youth benefit from their sweat. The outstanding local film laureates include the late Stephen Kanumba, Jacob Steven, Single Mtambalike, Joyce Uwoya and many other renowned film stars and suffragan film producers.

(f) Development of sports

Sports organizations sometimes recruit young people who migrated into urban areas and those with sports talents elsewhere for the purpose of improving skills for the development of the sports industry. The most notable sports activities include soccer, athletics, basketball, netball and boxing. The youth are now growing interest in rugby, hockey, volleyball, tennis, cricket, badminton and swimming. However, the five sports activities in the former group are most famous involving many evolving talents of the young generation. Both male and female soccer groups and clubs enjoy the support of many fans from all walks of life; especially the legendary Dar es Salaam-based Simba and Young African (Yanga) Sports Clubs and the upcoming female national soccer team called Twiga Stars¹⁰. In the yester years, the country produced highly talented sports laureates and legends especially in athletics. Some of these sports wizards who received international recognition include Philbert Bayi, Juma Nkangaa, Suleiman Nyambui, Mwinga Mwanjara and Nzaeli Kyomo, to name but a

¹⁰ Many soccer stalwarts in different regions of Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar are now investing in sports seriously. Some of soccer clubs, such as Azam, Mtibwa Sugar, Mafunzo, are posing a stiff challenge to old clubs, namely, Yanga, Simba, Shangani and KMKM, to mention but a few.

few. The country had produced prominent sports legends in football and boxing too. In short, sports activities employ many young people in different scores to date.

(g) Revival of scout groups in schools

Scout organizations are important for developing talents and imparting practical skills among the youth. A sense of discipline and patriotism was also invigorated. Many schools have started to revive scouts and girl guides societies through which the youth are modeled accordingly to be exemplary future citizens. In order to underline the preponderate significance to the scout organizations, its national patron was one of the former heads of state of the country.

(h) Development of tourism

Youth involvement in the bullish tourism market could be explained in twofold. Firstly, the formal tourism sector employed the youth in the multipurpose booming business of tour operators' functions that included preparing schedules of visits for tourists and offering guide services to tourist attractions. Chauffeur business was very lucrative among young people. Some savvy tourist guides mastered well foreign languages like English, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian, thus making it easy to communicate with the visiting tourists. Secondly, self-indulging informal tourism operations were developing fast, ranging from unregistered businesses like selling old coins and artifacts to carrying heavy belongings for tourists. The tourism market offers reliable employment opportunities to young people.

CONCLUSION

The remorseless notorious youth gangs pose an alarming threat to the credibility of governance in many societies. Crimes constantly ripple from urban areas to other neighbourhoods and the rural countryside. As Kami Rwegasira (2014) correctly argues that for an economy or nation to grow it needs to achieve social peace and minimize costs of conflict. Lack of effective policies and legislations overindulge the young people to invoke ruthless actions of lynching other suspects even for petty offenses. Some youth get bitten, stoned or burned to death without fear of reprisal. This trend started in urban centers but it is all pervasive and now spreading rapidly to the rural areas. It erodes not only a significant proportion of human capital but also increases the government's cost burden of adopting frequent measures to abate ever sporadic youth gangs' nefarious activities.

Humanity is currently passing through a period of great strides of scientific advancement. Innovations on information and communication technology (ICT) have developed by leaps and bounds. The contemporary youth are extremely *au fait* with the laborious electronic networks, namely internet, blogs, face book, twitter, Skype, Viber, Whatsup, Instagram, mobile phones and the like. Likewise, invidious notorious youth gangs change their mischievous tactics and methods, sometimes they use the modern facilities for planning and executing unlawful and criminal activities. They also integrate easily with other sober youth groups through internet networking; connoting an upsurge of demanding political, social and democratic rights against corrupt, undemocratic and dictatorial regimes. The advent of rapid scientific and technological changes calls for governments to enforce similar attitudinal changes and novel procedures for dealing with notorious youth gangs' activities technologically, and at the same time mainstream the rule of law and popular democratic

rights upsurge. A tripartite episode of rural-urban migration is inherently a unique Tanzanian phenomenon.

Firstly, many school leavers in the countryside areas flock into urban centers in anticipation of making fortunes but most of them end up joining notorious street-level gangs, ultimately being trifled with government's reprisals and repressive measures.

Secondly, an interface between the sporadic youth gangs and resurgence of the Wamachinga network engendered an apprehensive social reaction lest unrelenting pressures of unscrupulous elements such as felony and misdemeanor cropped up. However, an escalation of street-level petty trade was a common phenomenon though the emergence of both youth groups that possibly accentuated the mushrooming of contraband activities, drug trafficking and addiction. Nonetheless, the easing of cross-border trade restrictions largely help promote youth bilateral trade arrangements, thus anticipating in the offing great qualitative changes of the Wamachinga business.

Thirdly, an obscure trend of rural-urban complex concerns the privy inertia of public retirees who regard their birth places in the countryside as Cinderella of modern life, teeming settlements of urban centers instead; most of which are duly overcrowded.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In dealing with the subtle nuances of juvenile delinquency and youth gang crimes a multifunctional intervention approach needs to be institutionalized. Families, schools and societies in general should take central roles in the socialization process of the moral aptitudes of children. Discreet community-based educational programmes both formal and informal must by and large invigorate positive social, ethical and moral etiquettes.

The 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal adopted an education for all 'fast track initiative' that called for nations to provide primary and secondary education on equal basis both to girls and boys and halve adult illiteracy by 2025. But as leverage for lower crime rates providing education should correlate with absorbing many youths in formal and unregulated informal employment services. The rule of the thumb dictates that there is an asymmetrical convergence between education failure and employment. Education failure leads to unemployment or underemployment and consequently to law-violating and delinquent behaviours. Benefits for at-risk young people and societies accrue from providing suitable educational and employment opportunities as well as reasonably remunerative wage rates (Greene and Pranis, 2007).

The right policies and direction adopted by the Tanzanian government to streamline the legality and formality of the informal sector do help immensely abate the acute problems of crime and violence. The economic potential of the informal economy is proportionately great. Hence mainstreaming it in the formal sector would have a dual advantage: to include a sizeably big part of the microeconomic wealth in the national economy and updating the social and economic indicators so that an accurate picture reflecting economic growth of the country is effectuated.

Therefore, punitive responses of youth crime and delinquency do not necessarily amount to public safety and change of behaviour. Lawmakers and law enforcement institutions should

support the community-based educational programmes for reforming young people who are inherently in conflict with the law. It is thus important to assert that the informal economy is not a citadel of criminality. Enforcing proper development policies, reforms and programmes would dramatically impact on behavioral qualities of the young people. Consequently, involving communities in safeguarding their security interests through the formation of well-managed *sungusungu* paramilitary units is of paramount importance.

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Appendix 1: Origin of the Wamachinga Immigrants into Dar es Salaam

Place of Origin/Region	Percentage
Mtwara	8.4
Morogoro	15.2
Coast	14.0
Tanga	10.8
Kilimanjaro	8.4
Lindi	8.0
Dodoma	4.4
Mbeya	4.4
Ruvuma	4.4
Iringa	3.2
Singida	1.6
Mara	1.2
Tabora	1.2
Kigoma	0.8
Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Kagera	0.8

Source: Youth Migration and Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study of Petty Traders (Wamachinga) in Dar es Salaam, REPOA, Research Report No. 98.5