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POLICY BRIEF

Regulating Boda-Boda Stages and Routes as Security Spaces with Strengthened Stage Governance and Anti-Corruption Measures

Target Audience: *County governments (county transport departments), boda-boda associations, “SACCOs” and stage leadership, National Government Administration Officers (NGAO), County Police Commandants and County Security Committees.*

1.0 Background and Context

Stages are the organisational heart of the boda-boda sector. They are where riders gather, where passengers seek transport, where leaders exercise authority and where informal rules are enforced. When criminal actors capture these spaces, they gain surveillance, recruitment, concealment and intimidation capacities. The study found that stage and route control is not merely a governance problem; it is a criminogenic mechanism in its own right. Logistic regression analysis established that criminal control over stages and routes more than doubled the odds of organised criminal activity (odds ratio ≈ 2.30 , $p < 0.001$).

At the same time, the study documented that well-governed stages reduce crime. In Nyeri, structured registration and direct communication between stage leadership and senior police officers were credited with a seventy per cent improvement in sector security. In Busia, strong stage leadership, collaboration with chiefs, intelligence-sharing mechanisms and the inclusion of boda-boda representatives in local security committees were identified as the most effective interventions. This policy brief makes the case for regulating stages and routes as security spaces through strengthened stage governance and anti-corruption measures.

2.0 Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods comparative design across seven counties (Bomet, Busia, Kirinyaga, Machakos, Marsabit, Mombasa and Nyeri). Quantitative survey data were collected from 2,631 respondents. Qualitative data were obtained through Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with riders, stage leaders, SACCO officials, county transport officers, NGAO officers, police officers, prosecutors, border and security officers, community leaders and CSO representatives. Archival records from police crime registers, law court case registers and a health facility in four counties provided independent documentary evidence, while GIS-based spatial analysis, including DBSCAN clustering, mapped crime-risk sites. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, reliability testing, logistic regression and thematic analysis.

3.0 Key Findings

3.1 Criminal control of stages and routes doubles the odds of organised crime. Respondents who reported criminal control of stages and routes had more than twice the odds of being associated with organised criminal activity (odds ratio ≈ 2.30 , $p < 0.001$). Territorial control, role specialisation, fake registration, protection by influential people, links to smugglers and sharing of proceeds were less common but highly significant indicators of developed criminal organisation.

3.2 Territorial control is visible across counties. In Bomet, territorial control by certain groups of riders was identified as a sign of emerging organised criminality. In Marsabit, key informants reported that criminal actors control specific stages and routes that function as nodes in trafficking networks. In Mombasa, unregistered riders who commit crime operate outside recognised stages.

3.3 Corruption undermines stage security and public trust. Key informants in Mombasa reported that suspects are released because of phone calls from powerful offices, while community leaders stated that information is given to police but no action is taken since arrested individuals are released within few hours under unclear circumstances. In Kirinyaga, a key informant described the justice system as very ineffective, with no justice in court and a lack of strategy, policy or legal framework.

3.4 Well-governed stages work. Nyeri's structured registration and stage leadership-police communication produced a seventy per cent security improvement. Busia's stage leadership, chiefs' collaboration and inclusion of boda-boda representatives in local security committees were identified as the most effective interventions. In Kirinyaga, a key informant proposed restorative discipline over exclusion: instead of chasing a person from the stage, conduct a session and suspend the person for a period so that he returns to work with discipline. FGD

participants in Bomet recommended adopting a regulatory framework similar to the Michuki Rules, including mandatory rider identification systems, SACCO registration, training and certification requirements, and stronger enforcement. FGD participants in Mombasa proposed unique identification codes for every boda-boda stage to improve monitoring, accountability and identification of riders and their areas of operation.

3.5 Institutional effectiveness is moderate and uneven. Overall institutional effectiveness was moderate (mean score of 2.87), with Mombasa recording the highest score (3.34) and Marsabit the lowest (2.45). Weak stage discipline, corruption and collusion, political interference and poor coordination were identified as major institutional risk factors.

4.0 Policy Recommendations

4.1 Recognise boda-boda stages as local governance units. County governments should formally recognise boda-boda stages as local governance units with accountable leadership structures, verified rider registers, operational guidelines and transparent disciplinary procedures. Each stage should have recognised leadership, a rider register, clear operating rules, complaint channels and mechanisms for disciplining non-compliant riders.

4.2 Conduct joint stage-security reviews. Stages with repeated crime reports should be reviewed through joint security meetings involving stage leaders, local administrators, police and community representatives. Where there is evidence of territorial control, role specialisation, intimidation or protection systems, the response should be intelligence-led and targeted at the controlling actors rather than the entire rider population.

4.3 Institutionalise restorative discipline. Stage discipline should prefer restorative measures, such as time-bound suspension with re-entry upon behavioural change, over permanent exclusion, which pushes disciplined riders into unregulated operations.

4.4 Introduce unique stage identification codes. Counties should adopt unique identification codes for every boda-boda stage to improve monitoring, accountability and easy identification of riders and their areas of operation, as proposed by participants in Mombasa.

4.5 Strengthen anti-corruption measures through regular security forums. Regular security forums involving stage officials, SACCO leadership, security agencies, NGAO and community representatives should continuously assess security risks, coordinate interventions and curb corruption. Enforcement should focus on those responsible for organised criminal control rather than targeting compliant riders.

5.0 Primary Implementation Pathway. County transport departments, in collaboration with boda-boda associations and “SACCOs”, should lead the recognition and regulation of stages. NGAO officers and County Police Commandants should convene and support joint stage-

security reviews, while County Security Committees provide oversight and political-level coordination.

6.0 Conclusion

Stages and routes are the decisive governance points of the boda-boda sector. Where they are governed with registers, accountable leadership and cooperation with security agencies, crime declines; where they are captured by criminal actors, organised criminality doubles. County governments, NGAO, police and boda-boda associations can implement these measures within two years using existing structures and the models already working in Nyeri and Busia. Regulating stages as security spaces is the most direct way to break the link between territorial control and organised crime while protecting the majority of legitimate riders.

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