

Village Leaders in Combating Cross-Border Smuggling at Namanga Border, Tanzania

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Abstract:

This article assessed the role of village leaders in combating cross-border smuggling at the Namanga border in Tanzania. The study's objective was to examine the level of awareness of village leaders on cross-border smuggling, and the level of collaboration between village leaders and law enforcement agencies to outline challenges affecting village leaders in preventing cross-border smuggling. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to obtain 110 respondents. Data was collected by using interview guides and questionnaires. Findings show that communities and their leadership along the Namanga border are well aware of the illegal smuggling activities; however, they do not share intelligence and cooperate well with the law enforcement agencies. This is due to cultural practices that view smuggling activities as a normal livelihood activity, and hence, when grassroots leaders attempt to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, they receive backlash from the communities. This works against government efforts to curb smuggling. The study recommends that enhanced community education on the effects of smuggling, enhanced community policing, and sensitization programs would enhance trust between village leaders and communities in the study areas.

Keywords: Village leaders, cross-border smuggling, smuggling awareness

1.0 Introduction:

Cross-border smuggling can be traced back to ancient times. In ancient civilizations, smuggling was prevalent as goods were transported across borders, both legally and illegally, to avoid taxes and restrictions (Pack, 2022). The Silk Road, a network of trade routes linking East Asia with Europe, witnessed various forms of smuggling, including the illegal trade of goods and contraband items (Hansen, 2014; Kazemi, 2022). In more recent times, cross-border smuggling has been influenced by socio-economic and geopolitical factors. Globalization and the

liberalization of trade have led to both legal and illegal movement of goods across borders. The emergence of organized criminal networks has also contributed to the growth of sophisticated smuggling operations, including drugs, firearms, and human trafficking (Felbab-Brown, 2009; Kastrati, 2022).

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the illicit drug trade alone was estimated to be worth \$426 billion in 2018, accounting for around 1.4% of the global Gross

Domestic Product (Babalola & Yelwa, 2020). Additionally, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that in 2020, over 100,000 migrants were detected at borders worldwide, with many falling victim to human smugglers (Lockhart & Money, 2021). These alarming statistics highlight the urgent need for enhanced international cooperation, border security measures, and targeted interventions to combat the multifaceted challenges posed by cross-border smuggling.

In Tanzania, cross-border smuggling is a persistent issue at the Namanga border with Kenya, leading to various negative consequences for the surrounding villages and the country as a whole (Aluoch, 2014; Moraa, 2021). According to Chouvy (2013) and Bruwer (2020), smuggling activities involve the illegal transportation of goods, such as drugs, firearms, contraband, and even human trafficking, across the border. These activities not only undermine the economic development of the region but also pose a significant security challenge. The smuggling activities lead to a loss of revenue for the government, hinder economic growth, and contribute to the increase of illegal goods and activities (Kulish et al., 2021; Andriichenko et al., 2020). Moreover, smuggling can also lead to an increase in crime rates and exploitation, and endanger the safety and well-being of the local population.

To combat the problem, Tanzanian government has implemented various measures to prevent cross-border smuggling, including strengthening border controls (Rutachokozibwa, 2017), enhancing collaboration with neighboring countries (Manyasi, 2021), conducting regular patrols (Justin, 2022), implementing stricter customs regulations, investing in technology and infrastructure (Manyasi, 2021; Green et al., 2023), and raising awareness among the public about the negative impacts of smuggling (Kagimbo, 2021).

While national authorities play a crucial role in preventing cross-border smuggling, village leaders along the border have a unique understanding of the specific challenges and dynamics within their

village. Empirical studies have recommended village-based border policing (Idris et al., 2024), and others have recommended that village leaders' involvement in combating smuggling is fundamental for developing effective and sustainable solutions (Magallanes-Gonzalez, 2021; Roe & Booker, 2019). The village involvement includes information sharing by village leaders and collaboration between village leaders and law enforcement agencies in enforcing border control measures to prevent cross-border smuggling (Idris et al., 2024; Anyim, 2019).

Studies by Kariuki (2023) and Kahariri (2018) have identified cross-border smuggling as a significant challenge affecting both the local and national economies. The problem has also affected the National Five-Year Development Plan by undermining economic growth and stability (URT, 2016). However, the specific mechanisms and channels through which cross-border smuggling operates at the Namanga border were not well known. To address this issue, various initiatives have been undertaken, including those focusing on the patterns and trends of cross-border smuggling (Mahmoud & Augustine, 2022; Aziz & Monzini, 2015) as well as on the socio-economic impacts of cross-border smuggling (Kola, 2024; Babajide & Opakunbi, 2022). However, little was known regarding the role of village leaders in preventing cross-border smuggling at the Namanga border in Tanzania.

Therefore, this study examined the role of village leaders in combating cross-border smuggling at the Namanga border in Tanzania. It had three main objectives;

- 1) Examine the extent of awareness of village leaders on cross-border smuggling at the Namanga border in Tanzania.
- 2) Examine the level of collaboration between village leaders and law enforcement agencies in enforcing border control measures to prevent cross-border smuggling at the Namanga border in Tanzania.
- 3) Outline challenges affecting village leaders in preventing cross-border smuggling at the Namanga border in Tanzania.

2.0 Methods:

The study employed a convergent design, which enabled the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, which were then separately analyzed and compared for convergence and complementarity. The study was conducted in two villages of Kimokouwa Ward (Kimokouwa and Eworendeke). Purposive sampling was used to obtain eleven (11) respondents for in-depth interviews of key informants such as village leaders, the head of the Namanga immigration office, and the head of the Namanga police station, who offered in-depth insights into their experiences, challenges, perceptions, and strategies related to cross-border smuggling. A stratified sampling method was used to obtain 99 respondents for a questionnaire survey. In total, 110 respondents participated in the study. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

3.0 Results:

3.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Age of the respondents: 29(26.4%) of the respondents were between 18 and 30 years old, 38 (34.5%) were between 30 and 40 years old, 24 (21.8%) were between 40 and 50 years old, and 19 (17.3%) respondents were 50 years old and above. Sex: 67 (60.9%) respondents were male and 43(39.1%) were female. Regarding the *occupation* status of respondents, 22(20%) of the respondents were employed, 64(58.2%) were self-employed, and 24(21.8%) were unemployed. As for the *education* status of respondents, 57 (51.8%) had primary education, 38 (34.5%) had secondary education, and 15(13.6%) had tertiary education.

3.2 Awareness of Village Leaders on Cross-Border Smuggling at the Namanga Border in Tanzania

The knowledge base of village leaders on cross-border smuggling was assessed using four (4) statements to gauge familiarity with prevalent smuggling routes, familiarity with prevalent smuggling methods, types of goods commonly smuggled, and knowledge of key individuals or groups involved (Table 1)

Table 1: Awareness of Village Leaders on Cross-Border Smuggling (n=99)

Sn	Statement	Yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Awareness of paths or roads often used by smugglers to transport illegal goods across the border	72	72.7	27	27.3
2	Are you aware of the techniques or ways that smugglers use to move illegal items across the border	63	63.6	36	36.4
3	Ability to identify the kinds of items that are usually smuggled across our border	71	71.7	28	28.3
4	Awareness of the main people or groups in the community who are involved in smuggling activities	67	67.7	32	32.3

The findings indicate that residents in the surveyed areas were more than 50% aware of

basic aspects regarding smuggling paths, techniques used by smugglers, as well as

individuals participating in the activities. During an in-depth interview, a village leader from Kimokuwa Ward corroborated the findings by saying:

“Indeed, we are well-informed about the routes utilized by smugglers. For instance, the stream behind the maize farm near the river is a famous path for illegal activities. Similarly, the abandoned farmhouse near the border serves as a strategic point for smuggling operations. Moreover, the rocky footpath leading to the hills is another common route known to village leaders.”

This result resonates with prior research by Ahimie *et al.* (2023), who noted that generally, communities in border areas have high awareness of smuggling activities taking place in their localities. The question, however, is if

communities and their leadership are well aware of illegal cross-border smuggling activities, why are the activities still prevalent? This calls for an in-depth study of how local socioeconomic dynamics affect counter-smuggling activities.

3.3 Collaboration between Village Leaders and Law Enforcement Agencies in Enforcing Border Control Measures to Prevent Cross-Border Smuggling at the Namanga Border in Tanzania

The existing partnerships between law enforcement agencies and village leaders to prevent smuggling were explored. Three key indicators were investigated, namely participation of village leaders in providing intelligence information, joint development of strategies, and collaboration in organizing community awareness, and results are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Collaboration between Village Leaders and Law Enforcement Agencies in Enforcing Border Control Measures to Prevent Cross-Border Smuggling (n=99)

Sn	Statement	Yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1.	Village leaders share information they know about suspicious activities or smugglers with the police or border patrol.	53	53.5	46	46.5
2.	Village leaders and law enforcement agencies are working together to create strategies to stop smuggling across our borders.	31	31.3	68	68.7
3.	Village leaders and law enforcement agencies are educating the community about the dangers and consequences of smuggling activities	22	22.2	77	77.8

Results show that 53(53.5%) of the respondents agreed that village leaders share information they know about suspicious activities or smugglers with law enforcement officers. This means the

intelligence sharing is, on average, which may affect strategic efforts to fight smuggling.

Results from in-depth interviews reveal that village leaders are uncertain about universal

information sharing, citing concerns such as repercussions, cultural influences, and trust issues. In contrast, an interview with a law enforcement officer placed critical importance on intelligence sharing. This suggests a mixed response regarding the extent of information sharing, highlighting potential barriers that village leaders may face in providing intelligence to authorities despite their critical role in enhancing community safety and security.

About working together between village leaders and law enforcement agencies, Table 2 indicates only 31(31.3%) of the respondents agreed that village leaders and law enforcement agencies work together to create strategies to stop smuggling across borders while 68 (68.7%) disagreed. An interview with village leaders shows that the majority feel that law enforcement is the responsibility of government agencies alone. *"You know, some may feel it's primarily the responsibility of the government and security officers to address these issues,"* Noted the leaders in Eworendeke village.

Further, when asked about collaboration in organizing community awareness, findings in Table 2 indicate that only 22(22.2%) of the respondents agreed that village leaders and law enforcement agencies work together to educate the community about the dangers and consequences of smuggling activities, while the rest, 77 (77.8%), disagreed. During interviews, village leaders cited constraints and perceived responsibilities of government and security officers as reasons for limited joint community awareness initiatives. However, interviews with law enforcement officers revealed that despite the resource constraints, joint efforts in raising awareness to empower community members in recognizing and reporting illicit activities are critical. This suggests a potential gap in community education on smuggling risks, highlighting the need for enhanced collaboration to promote a safer environment and combat illegal activities effectively.

These findings indicate that despite many years of government efforts concerning community

policing and emphasis on grassroots security, communities still hesitate to share intelligence with law enforcement agencies. Community policing and local grassroots security in Tanzania date back to 1973, when the government introduced the People's Militia popularly known as Sungusungu under the People's Militia Act of 1973 (amended in 1989) and revised in 2002 under Penal Code Cap. 112. In 2006, a special community police department was established within the Tanzania Police Force.

The hesitance of grassroots communities to collaborate and share intelligence with law enforcement agencies could be because ward police officers who are spearheading the concept of community policing do not blend with the community, or are simply not available, as reported by Mussa (2019) in the assessment of community policing in Zanzibar. Further, the findings signify a missing vital link between community leaders and enforcement agencies. Potential reasons for this engagement could include trust, community safety concerns, or established communication channels.

To enhance this collaboration, fostering stronger relationships through regular meetings and information-sharing platforms could strengthen efforts to combat smuggling effectively. This finding aligns with Coleman's Social Capital Theory (1994), which illustrates how robust social networks among village leaders could facilitate cooperative behaviors and information exchange, enhancing collective actions in combating smuggling. However, further research could explore the effectiveness of information-sharing mechanisms between village leaders and law enforcement agencies in enhancing border security measures.

3.4 Challenges Affecting Village Leaders in Preventing Cross-Border Smuggling at the Namanga Border in Tanzania

Challenges affecting village leaders in preventing cross-border smuggling at the Namanga border were investigated. Respondents were asked to respond to three statements, and the results are indicated in Table 3

Table 3. Challenges Affecting Village Leaders in Preventing Cross-Border Smuggling (n=99)

Sn	Statement	Yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1.	Adequate training for village leaders on how to detect smuggling activities in our community	23	23.2	76	76.8
2.	Resistance or threats to village leaders when trying to address smuggling issues	69	69.7	30	30.3
3.	The presence of cultural practices in the community that negatively affect village leaders in their efforts to prevent cross-border smuggling	67	67.7	32	32.3

Results in Table 3 show that respondents 76 (76.8%) were of the view that village leaders had little or no training on smuggling detection findings. Only 23(23.2%) of the respondents agreed that village leaders had adequate training. In this regard, lack of training is one of the major challenges of village leaders in supporting the combating of smuggling.

Concerning resistance or threats to village leaders, findings in Table 3 indicated that 69(69.7%) of the respondents agreed that village leaders indeed experienced instances of resistance or threats when trying to address smuggling issues in their community, while 30 (30.3%) disagreed. A law enforcement officer from Namanga Town corroborated these findings by saying;

“Often, they encounter resistance or threats when tackling smuggling issues. Backlash from those involved in such illicit practices is very common in this area.

The resistance could arise from disrupting criminal networks, economic interests, or fear of retribution as correctly reported by Kagimbo (2021) and Bahuguna *et al.* (2024). The authors also emphasized collaborative strategies between law enforcement agencies and local communities as the only sure way to mitigate the resistance. Further, the findings underscore the risks and complexities involved in combating smuggling,

highlighting the need for enhanced community engagement and support. Coleman's Social Capital Theory (1994) also highlights the significance of trust and solidarity in navigating such adversities, suggesting the vital role of strong social networks in fostering resilience and collective action in addressing illicit activities.

When asked about whether cultural practices were an obstacle to village leaders in their efforts to prevent cross-border smuggling, findings indicated that 67(67.7%) of the respondents agreed that some cultural practices negatively affect village leaders when trying to address smuggling issues in their community, and 32(32.3%) disagreed. This finding resonates with Ismail and Rabi (2022), Kagimbo (2021), and Charles (2023), who noted that cultural complexities could be an obstacle in combating cross-border crimes and the necessity for collaborative approaches.

4.0 Conclusion:

This paper concludes that communities and leadership along the Namanga Border are well aware of the illegal smuggling activities. However, they hesitate to share intelligence and cooperate well with the law enforcement agencies. This is due to cultural practices that view smuggling activities as a normal livelihood, and hence, when grassroots leaders attempt to

cooperate with law enforcement agencies they receive criticism from the communities. This works against government efforts to curb smuggling.

5.0 Recommendations:

The study recommends that enhanced community education on the effects of smuggling, enhanced community policing, and sensitization programs would enhance trust between village leaders and communities in the study areas.

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