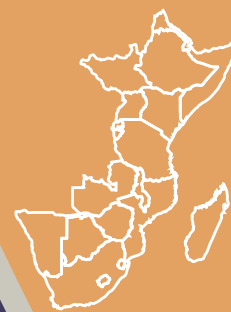


# CIVIL SOCIETY OBSERVATORY OF ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



## RISK BULLETIN

### TRACKING CRIME AND COVID-19

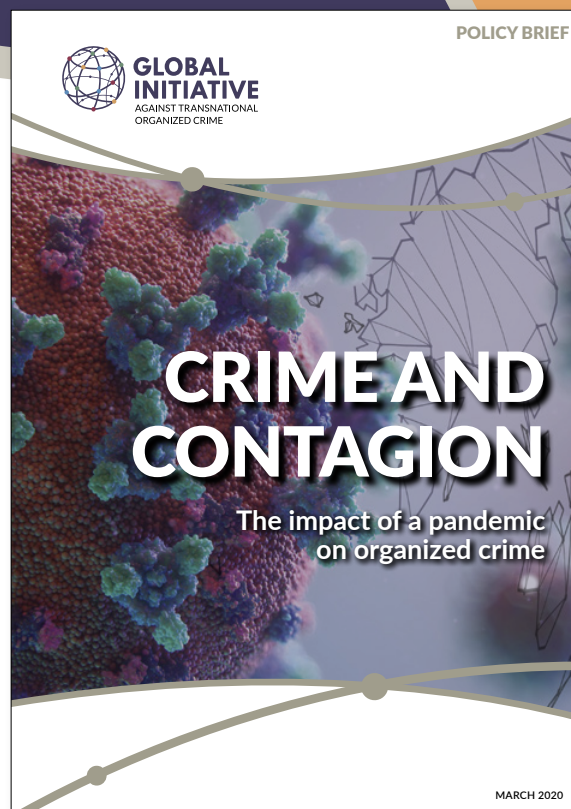
The coronavirus pandemic will have a profound effect on the global economy, and illicit economies will be no exception. Already from other regions which are currently worse-hit by the virus, stories are emerging of criminal groups either exploiting the fear of the epidemic to defraud people, or providing black-market access to medical supplies which are now in high demand.

Examples of this predatory behavior are beginning to emerge from East and Southern Africa. South Africa's Reserve Bank has released a warning against scammers claiming to be representatives of the bank 'collecting' banknotes they claim as 'contaminated' with the virus.<sup>2</sup> In Nairobi, police have raided a shop which was allegedly selling fake coronavirus testing kits.<sup>3</sup>

Traders based in China and Laos have been observed offering rhino horn products as a 'cure' for the virus, reigniting fears that demand for traditional medicines containing rhino horn drives poaching of East and Southern African wildlife. China has enacted a ban on the consumption and import of wildlife into the country in light of the information that the virus may have transferred to humans via imported wildlife, though time will tell whether restrictions will curb consumption of species such as pangolin.

As legal commerce and travel slows, so too do trafficking and smuggling routes which covertly use legitimate transport routes and infrastructure. The knock-on effects for some of the most vulnerable groups: people who use drugs, or migrants looking to use the services of people smugglers, may be catastrophic.

We would expect that in the event of coronavirus-related travel restrictions, heroin prices will increase and purity will decrease as it becomes more difficult to smuggle drugs into the region. This may drive more users in the region to turn to injection as a more economically efficient way of use, raising the risk of overdose and transfer of blood-borne diseases.



Illicit heroin use environments are often hidden, crowded and confined spaces, ideal for coronavirus transmission, and communities of people using drug may struggle with effectively self-isolating or social distancing.

Criminal justice systems will also bear the strain of increased workload in enforcing isolation measures and a workforce reduced by sickness and self-isolation. As South Africa's authorities restrict visits to prison inmates to shield facilities from infections, and the country's court systems are operating on reduced capacity, the virus is already beginning to take a toll.

We will continue to monitor the repercussions of coronavirus on criminal justice systems in the region, on trafficking routes and organized-crime groups, and vulnerable communities who rely on criminal markets during this time of flux.

For more on our #COVIDCrimeWatch initiative, visit [www.globalinitiative.net](http://www.globalinitiative.net)



**GLOBAL  
INITIATIVE**  
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME

## SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

### 1. **Murder of Cape Town gang leader Rashied Staggie brings an uneasy peace as assassination theories abound.**

When gang leader Rashied Staggie – founder of the Hard Livings, one of Cape Town's most notorious gangs – was gunned down outside his home in December 2019, some predicted gang warfare would ensue. While theories abound about why Staggie was assassinated, it seems that his death has in fact brought order to Cape Town's gang landscape. His attempts to live what some saw as a double life as both a criminal figure and a religious convert had caused friction with other gang leaders.

### 2. **The normalization of political killings in KwaZulu-Natal poses a threat to South Africa's democracy ahead of the 2021 local government elections.**

Since South Africa's 2011 local government elections, the country has seen a sharp rise in election-related violence and political assassinations.<sup>1</sup> While most of the killings have been of governing African National Congress office holders and have occurred in KwaZulu-Natal province, parts of the rural Eastern Cape have also been affected. Community leaders and activists have also become targets. In the past 10 years, at least 345 people have lost their lives in politically linked hits across the province. Although motives for these murders can be multifaceted, representing one's community – either as an elected party member or as a grassroots activist – is an increasingly high-risk endeavour. Potential candidates are now thinking twice about standing for political office. This does not bode well for South Africa's democracy.

### 3. **Groundbreaking new study of East and Southern African heroin markets out in April.**

In April, the Global initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime will release a unique study of heroin pricing, distribution and market dynamics in East and Southern Africa. The first of its kind, the

study is intended to address significant knowledge gaps that hinder policy responses to the alarming growth in heroin trade in the region. The research has revealed a significant diffusion of heroin supply and use across the region and a proliferation of supply channels. Heroin has been ubiquitous across large swathes of Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa for many years, but use is now proliferating in neighbouring Zambia, Lesotho and eSwatini and is emerging in rural areas across Zimbabwe.

### 4. **Heroin, cocaine and marijuana markets in Uganda are changing.**

The volume of heroin transiting Uganda has risen sharply in the past few years, entering overland from coastal states such as Kenya and leaving predominantly through Entebbe airport. Fieldwork conducted by the Global Initiative in December 2019 identified new heroin outflows from Uganda, including a nascent route to India, which correlates with recent reporting from Mozambique. Uganda also has a growing domestic heroin market and serves as a transit route for cocaine and as a producer of medical marijuana.

### 5. **The deaths of 64 migrants in a truck container in Mozambique is a ghastly reminder of smuggling risks.**

Mozambican immigration inspectors on the country's border with Malawi made a grim discovery on 24 March, of the bodies of 64 Ethiopian migrants in an airtight lorry container, alongside 14 survivors. This ghastly tragedy is a reminder of the daily risks faced by migrants using the services of human smugglers, both along the southern route from the Horn of Africa to Southern Africa, and beyond. A string of similar incidents worldwide in recent years demonstrates how travelling in this way can be a potentially fatal risk for migrants.

## 1. Murder of Cape Town gang leader Rashied Staggie brings an uneasy peace as assassination theories abound.

When the infamous gang boss Rashied Staggie was gunned down outside his home in the Cape Town suburb of Salt River in December 2019 – on the same street where his twin brother, Rashaad Staggie, was murdered 23 years before<sup>4</sup> – some predicted a blood-bath. The Staggie brothers were the founders and leaders of one of Cape Town's largest and most violent gangs, the Hard Livings.

Immediately after Staggie's death, the Cape Flats and social media came alive with various theories on who was behind the murder, and potential doomsday scenarios of how the situation would unfold.<sup>5</sup>

Yet the citywide gang warfare some predicted has not yet come about. Staggie's death has, in fact, been welcomed across the Cape Flats by both gangs and the community. His perceived attempts to live a double life – by claiming to have converted to Christianity while in fact continuing his criminal activities – had instilled anger in opposing gangs. Three months on, the situation in the Cape Flats communities still feels precarious, but Staggie's death seems to have returned some fleeting order.<sup>6</sup>

### THE MOTIVES FOR STAGGIE'S MURDER

Research into the Cape Flats gang landscape conducted for this *Risk Bulletin* – 10 interviews with community leaders, activists, gang members, and gang leaders, all with intimate knowledge of the case – unearthed three possible motives, sometimes overlapping, for Staggie's death. These involve (1) a relative of Staggie's upset at not being promoted within the ranks of the Hard Livings, (2) Staggie's deteriorating relationship with the 28s gang and (3) his alleged defrauding of Nigerians seeking entry into the Cape Town drug market.

In the lives of high-profile criminal figures who are surrounded by mystery and legends, it is often difficult to separate truth from fiction. Whatever the immediate motive for Staggie's killing, it is clear that his criminal business interests and his relationships were deteriorating before his death.

The first theory (which came up in every interview) involves a relative of Staggie's, who aspired to rise up the ranks of the Hard Livings.<sup>7</sup> Those aspirations were ultimately frustrated and it is claimed that he plotted with a rival gang to arrange the hit.<sup>8</sup>

The second theory relates to the failing relationship between Staggie and the 28s gang.<sup>9</sup> Years before, the Staggie brothers had worked closely with the 28s under the Firm and CORE, two alliances of gang leaders. The Firm focused more on regulating the drug trade, while CORE's aim was ostensibly to contribute to community development in partnership with government.<sup>10</sup> The strength of this relationship apparently largely rested on Rashaad Staggie's good standing with the 28s. However, Staggie's relations with the 28s eventually deteriorated, and rumours link him to multiple recent gang hits or attempted hits.

The third theory relates to allegations that Staggie defrauded foreign nationals. Because of his reputation as a prominent and well-connected figure in the drug trade, Staggie was apparently approached by Nigerians trying to invest in Cape Town's drug industry. Staggie is said to have taken their money but failed to deliver on his promise to invest the money in the drug trade for them, instead keeping it for himself.<sup>11</sup>

### STAGGIE'S DOUBLE LIFE AND RIVALRIES

Amidst the conflicting narratives around Staggie's death, what emerged clearly was that a variety of interests in the Cape Town underworld were pleased with the outcome: not only those mentioned above, who might have been directly implicated in the killing, but gang and community leaders from all over the Cape Flats expressed their approval.<sup>12</sup> It was said that people had become frustrated with what was termed his double life. While Staggie had supposedly left gang life behind and converted to Christianity, in fact he was more active than ever in various criminal markets across Cape Town.

Staggie's 'double life' dates back to his spell in prison following his conviction for the gang-rape of a 17-year-old girl in 2003. This attack was reportedly in revenge for her informing on the gang and revealing where firearms were stashed. She was also shot in an apparent hit attempt years later and still lives in hiding.<sup>13</sup> Before Staggie's release from prison for good behaviour in 2013, he supposedly changed his life and converted to Christianity.<sup>14</sup> He claimed to no longer be a gang boss or involved in the drug trade in any way, but to have refocused on giving back to the community which he admitted having wronged. But behind this public persona, he is said to have continued his business as usual.





- ▲ An alleged Clever Kids gangster sits behind a number of upturned benches that are used as a shooting barricade during skirmishes with rival gangs in Manenberg, Cape Town.

© Shaun Swingler

- Confiscated home-made firearms are booked into evidence at the Grassy Park police station, Cape Town. © Shaun Swingler



- ▼ Metro Police officers arrest two people suspected of drug dealing in Manenberg, Cape Town.

© Shaun Swingler





Very few people believed that his conversion was genuine, and his new image upset a lot of people in the community. Most of all it was problematic for rival gangs.<sup>15</sup> Staggie's business was in fact growing while he profited from his new low profile, and the gangs weren't happy about it. As one gang leader said, 'lots of people wanted him dead, and this goes back to his previous relationships with other gangs, but also because he wanted control of the whole city.'<sup>16</sup>

As one of Cape Town's religious leaders put it, 'the gangs allowed Staggie to live as a civilian. They gave him leeway to a certain extent, but when he tried to operate in both domains, his death was inevitable. There is only one way to exit the gang life, and that is up through the porthole to God.'<sup>17</sup> This means that the gangs will accept it if members leave for genuine religious conviction and actually change their lives, but they will not tolerate someone living a double life. 'Gangs don't allow you to block the porthole.'<sup>18</sup>

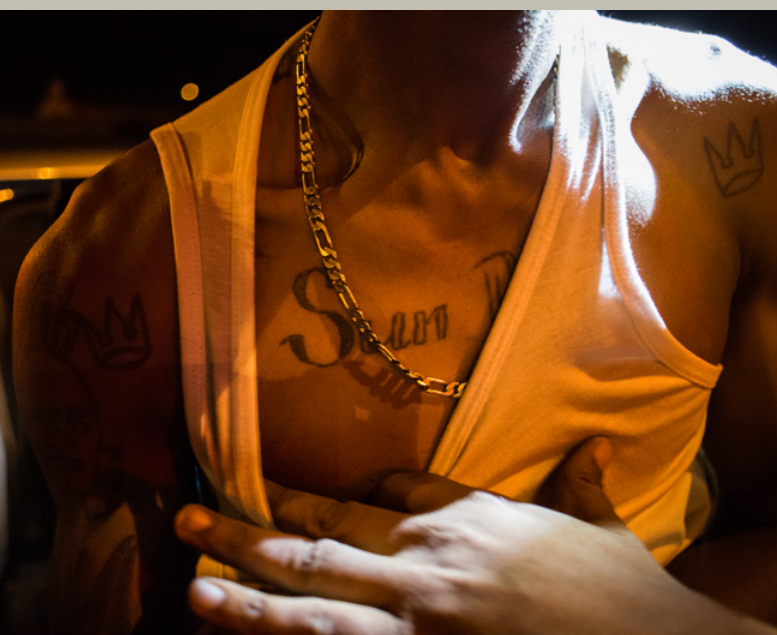
Earlier Global Initiative research also suggested that Staggie was profiting from stirring up gang rivalry in the western areas of Johannesburg and supplying drugs to the two main opposing gangs in the area. Competition between the two groups is said to have benefited Staggie, who allegedly also supplied Cape hitmen to

both factions, apparently to ensure that no individual achieved complete dominance in the area.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, local church and business groups are said to have been implicated in the ongoing drug trade through the laundering of drug profits, suggesting that Staggie's religious connections also turned out to be directly lucrative for his drug business.

Staggie was also facing dissent from within the ranks of the Hard Livings. Although the Hard Livings have managed to establish themselves over the past three decades as a strong and well-managed gang, in recent years infighting, power struggles, shifting alliances and Staggie's reputedly inauthentic exit from the gang life resulted in instability, ultimately leading to his death.

### THE AFTERMATH

The immediate aftermath of Staggie's death was significantly quieter than expected. Although gang violence continued, it did not increase.<sup>20</sup> As of this writing, three months after his death, communities are still cautious and slightly unsettled. They are expecting something, although they are not sure what.<sup>21</sup> One community leader said that 'people thought that there was going to be backlash after Staggie's death, but there wasn't and there won't be. It was quiet after his death because his death was predetermined by the gangs. That's how the gangs wanted it.'<sup>22</sup>



A sergeant in the 26s gang is questioned by police during an operation in Lavender Hill, Cape Town. © Shaun Swingler



A Metro Police officer looks on as residents are searched in Lavender Hill, Cape Town. © Shaun Swingler

Time will tell whether this peaceable outcome will endure. Interviews with Hard Livings gang members and leaders revealed a definite division within the gang's ranks, and they expect more infighting in the future. Some also predicted that the Americans (another Cape Town gang) would make use of this transition period to gain back power. One source said they were stocking up on firearms for this purpose so that 'the Hard Livings can see them again,' meaning that the increased fire-power would help them be noticed and feared. Another interviewee mentioned that the Hard Livings were going to hold Staggie's implicated relative accountable.

When asked what that meant, the response was that 'he must watch himself.'<sup>23</sup>

To date, there have been no publicly reported arrests for the murder (some interviewees suggested that arrests had been made but that the police were not disclosing this). What is clear is that Staggie's desire to dabble in multiple markets and with multiple players, while claiming to live a crime-free life, ultimately led to his death. Only time will tell what the long-term impact will be on the Hard Livings' strength, structure and alliances; perhaps over time it will also become clearer who ultimately ordered the hit.

## Who are the Hard Livings?

The Hard Livings have the third-biggest territory of any gang in Cape Town, after the Americans and the 28s. Our research on Cape Town's gangs found that the Hard Livings are present in 35 neighbourhoods throughout the city, although their origins and stronghold are in Manenberg.<sup>24</sup> The map shows the Hard Livings' territory, which stretches across the city of Cape Town from Strand to Kraaifontein and Sea Point. Although they have a significant geographic presence, they are still far less widespread than their biggest rivals, the Americans, who are present in 73 areas, covering most of the city.

The Hard Livings have the fourth-biggest gang membership (following the Americans, 28s, and Terrible Josters, respectively) with an estimated total of 6 040 members,<sup>25</sup> mostly concentrated in Manenberg, Mitchell's Plain and Delft.

Although the Hard Livings are smaller than the Americans in terms of turf and membership, they are far more centralized, hierarchical and organized. The Americans, by contrast, have multiple leaders operating in different areas.<sup>26</sup> According to interviewees, the Hard Livings have secured large drug and firearm shipments that smaller or more fragmented gangs have been unable to achieve.

Other than dealing in drugs and firearms, the Hard Livings operations also include protection rackets, extortion, prostitution, and the taxi business, though drugs remain the most important business. To keep their strength and business connections, gangs need to form alliances with other gangs; such alliances change frequently. The Hard Livings are currently allied with several other Cape Town gangs, including the Laughing Boys, Ghettos, Jesters, Junky Funky Kids, and Mongrels. The Hard Livings also have connections with suppliers in Johannesburg and Durban, as well as an alliance with the 28s prison gang. Since the 28s' street presence has grown, this relationship is also constantly changing, especially as the 28s continue to establish themselves more independently from their aligning street gangs.<sup>27</sup>



## 2. The normalization of political killings in KwaZulu-Natal poses a threat to South Africa's democracy ahead of the 2021 local government elections.

South Africa's 2021 local government elections are almost certain to be marred by political violence, assassinations and instability. Over the past decade, municipal elections have proven significantly more volatile than general elections, in part because local-level political offices present opportunities for unscrupulous officials to enrich themselves by controlling lucrative government contracts.

In South Africa's imploding economy and rising unemployment, politics can offer a way out of poverty. This, in addition to factional infighting within the African National Congress (ANC) and lack of accountability throughout all levels of government, is likely to lead incumbents to fight with more desperation to retain their positions and therefore render the 2021 elections more violently contested than ever.

Despite President Cyril Ramaphosa's commitment to cleaner governance, cadre deployment (the placement of unqualified but loyal cadres in public administration and state-owned enterprises by the political elite), corruption and political patronage networks – which often operate in the same manner as criminal syndicates – continue to divert funds away from much-needed basic services and infrastructure maintenance and development.

During the 2016 local government elections, at least 60 people were murdered across KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, and politically linked killings there have risen steadily. There are early signs of political turbulence, as communities brace for branch and regional elections ahead of the ANC's National General Council, to be held later this year.

Power struggles within the governing party have had a knock-on effect at the local level. Respected local community leaders are becoming increasingly reluctant to stand as candidates in next year's elections, especially if it means aligning themselves with the ANC. For many poor communities, the ruling party has become synonymous with violence and corruption.<sup>28</sup>

When principled, committed individuals who could bring much-needed vitality and change to what has become a toxic political arena are deterred by the threat of violence from representing their communities, it poses a significant threat to political diversity, the representational system of governance, electoral credibility and the future of South Africa's democracy.

*Voting for the ANC is like digging our own grave. A vote for the ANC is a vote for the izinkabi, for the gangster councillors.*

ABAHMALI BASEMJONDOLO PRESS STATEMENT<sup>29</sup>

Mkhokeli Ndamase is a community activist from the rural Eastern Cape who has fought since 2009 against corruption and for his people's right to basic services, particularly water. Bhekizizwe Zungu is a senior South African Communist Party (SACP) leader at Glebelands hostel in Umlazi, south of Durban. Both names have been changed to protect their identities.<sup>30</sup> A vast and squalid low-cost housing complex built to accommodate migrant labour during the apartheid era, Glebelands gained notoriety as a base for hitmen who operate across the province and beyond.<sup>31</sup> Between 2015 and 2016, violence rooted in intra-party conflict flowed from the hostel across the province, leaving more than 130 people dead, some of them councillors from other parts of KZN.<sup>32</sup>

Both Ndamase and Zungu are former ANC activists. Their communities remain loyal to the ANC – despite its many failed promises, corruption and scandals – not because they harbour lingering love for the party but in the absence of what they feel are viable political alternatives.<sup>33</sup> Fear also plays a part.

Both men are acutely aware that serving their communities could be fatal for them and their families. Whereas they would previously have leapt at political office, they now say they are worried that any official association with the ANC may damage their reputation and credibility among their constituents. They are also concerned that their attempts to improve their communities' lives may become subject to the party's factionalism.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
<b>ETHEKWINI</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>UTHUKELA</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>37</b>
Inkosi Langalibalele	0	7	3	1	12	0	3	0	2	1	29
Alfred Duma	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	3	7
Okhahlamba	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>KING CETSHWAYO</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>
uMlalazi	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
uMfolozi	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
uMhlatuze	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	8	4	15
Mthonjaneni	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>ILEMBE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>
KwaDukuza	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Ndwedwe	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mandeni	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	0	0	7
<b>UGU</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>
Umdoni	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
Umzumbi	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ray Nkonyeni	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	10
uMuziwabantu	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
<b>ZULULAND</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
Abaqulusi	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4
Nongoma	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
Ulundi	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
uPhongolo	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>UMGUNGUNDLOVU</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33</b>
Msunduzi	0	0	1	1	0	1	4	2	1	5	15
Mpofana	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Mngeni	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
uMshwati	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Richmond	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	4	0	0	9
Mkambathini	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	4
<b>UMZINYATHI</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>
Endumeni	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Msinga	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	6
Nquthu	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Umvoti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Maphumulo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>UMKHANYAKHUDE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
uMhlabyalingana	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Mtubatuba	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>AMAJUBA</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>
Newcastle	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	2	6
Dannhauser	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15	30
<b>HARRY GWALA</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
uBuhlebezwe	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Umzimkhulu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	5
Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>UNKNOWN LOCATION / UNIDENTIFIED VICTIMS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>345</b>

**FIGURE 2** KwaZulu-Natal political killings, 2010–2019

**SOURCES:** Data obtained from: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's Assassination Witness report, *The rule of the gun: Hits and Assassinations in South Africa, January 2000–December 2017*, University of Cape Town, March 2018, [www.assassinationwitness.org.za](http://www.assassinationwitness.org.za); KwaZulu-Natal Violence Monitor; Mary de Haas unpublished research data; press reports; South African Police Service records, including docket lists presented to the Moerane Commission; local government submissions to parliament and political parties' media statements 2010–2018; the Moerane Commission of Inquiry into KZN's political killings report, transcripts and oral evidence presented during public hearings; interviews with community sources, and the author's personal records and observations.

Ndamase, who previously mobilized his community to oppose a local mining project, says he has received death threats (in the form of photos, sent via Whatsapp, that appeared to show suspects shot dead by police), and was assaulted by police members, allegedly at the behest of local politicians and the mine owner. Similar incidents have been widely reported by other communities who mobilize around housing issues or against mining.<sup>35</sup>

When asked if he thought he would face much opposition from the incumbent ward councillor, Ndamase replied: 'He's vowed to fight to the end; he has nothing else. If he comes back to the community he will be a nobody. And remember, he has friends in high positions with all the resources who put him there. They want him to stay so they can still get tenders. This is what I am up against.'

Both men fear their nomination could be an attempt to co-opt them and neutralize their stance against corruption, especially relating to lucrative tenders. Zungu put it like this: 'The SACP – although it is a member of the Alliance – we can throw stones at the ANC. If I am inside the ANC, I can no longer throw stones.'

From 2015 to 2016 at least 12 SACP members were killed at Ntshanga, just outside Durban, in violence linked to the SACP-ANC leadership contest at the city and regional levels.<sup>36</sup> Although some prominent SACP leaders have since been assimilated into President Cyril Ramaphosa's cabinet, others claim they were purged from local government positions by forces loyal to Ramaphosa's predecessor, Jacob Zuma, who is due to stand trial on corruption charges.<sup>37</sup> Communities continue to bear the brunt of the ANC's obsessive factional battles, unceasingly subjected to divide-and-rule tactics, manipulation and misinformation while the bodies pile up.

Another worrying factor is the militarization of democratic processes. In remote rural areas, far from media attention, electoral freedom is under fire.<sup>38</sup>

For many years Ndamase's community has agitated for improved access to basic services, especially clean water. His village relies on a filthy trickle it is forced to share with livestock. Even this meagre supply is now threatened by local quarry operations. His community believes money meant for water infrastructure development has been misappropriated. Hitmen, including

those linked to the taxi industry, are used to silence witnesses in corruption investigations, undertaken, according to Ndamase and his community, by an increasingly complicit local police force.<sup>39</sup>

After years of being ignored by government departments, Ndamase's community declared they would not participate in the 2019 general elections. According to Ndamase, this elicited a heavy-handed response from government. With photographs and real-time running commentary via Whatsapp,<sup>40</sup> Ndamase described events at his village during a voter-registration weekend held in January 2019. His observations, including what appeared to be a clear case of political interference in Independent Electoral Committee (IEC) operations, are instructive in their portrayal of what democracy has come to mean for many poor communities:

The ward councillor is driving around the village escorted with heavily armed police, the very same unit that beat me, and other unknown vehicles. They are putting up IEC banners. People heard him [the councillor] saying: 'People will go to register whether they like it or not, [he] is going to make sure of that.'

People are running for their lives or locking themselves in their yards, nobody knows what is going to happen. The police are supposed to protect us ... It's like they are forcing people to go and register.

Ndamase confirmed there were no protests – the community had simply stayed away. His photographs showed roads empty of all but police vehicles, a deserted registration station and a community in lockdown.

At least three assassinations as well as the disappearance of one of Ndamase's associates ahead of the ANC's 2017 elective conference have left in him in little doubt as to the danger he faces, should he agree to represent his community in next year's elections. He put it like this: 'They wanted to kill me when I was fighting the ANC for water for my people. Now they want me to fight to change the ANC from inside. They don't know who to turn to anymore. What must I do? I can't turn my back on them. But either way, the ANC will probably kill me.'

This does not bode well for the 2021 polls or the participation of principled individuals in the critically needed restoration of what has become a lethal political arena. The threat to democracy cannot be overstated.

## Murder by numbers

*In the first three months of 2020, at least six people have already been killed, including councillors, hostel leaders and mining-affected community activists.*

Frequent elections – local, national and the ANC's internal elective conferences – subject communities to high levels of tension and volatility that can be easily exploited and channelled by unscrupulous politicians against rivals. They also undermine municipal administration.

Our data suggests there is significant overlap between ANC-led municipalities that experience regular community protests, local councils that are financially distressed or have been placed under administration, and elevated assassination numbers.<sup>42</sup> Analysis of circumstances around some of these killings suggests that protest leaders are systematically targeted to silence their usually justified demands for improved service delivery and an end to corruption, reinforcing perceptions of a predatory elite that is increasingly removed from and deaf to the needs of the poor majority.<sup>43</sup>

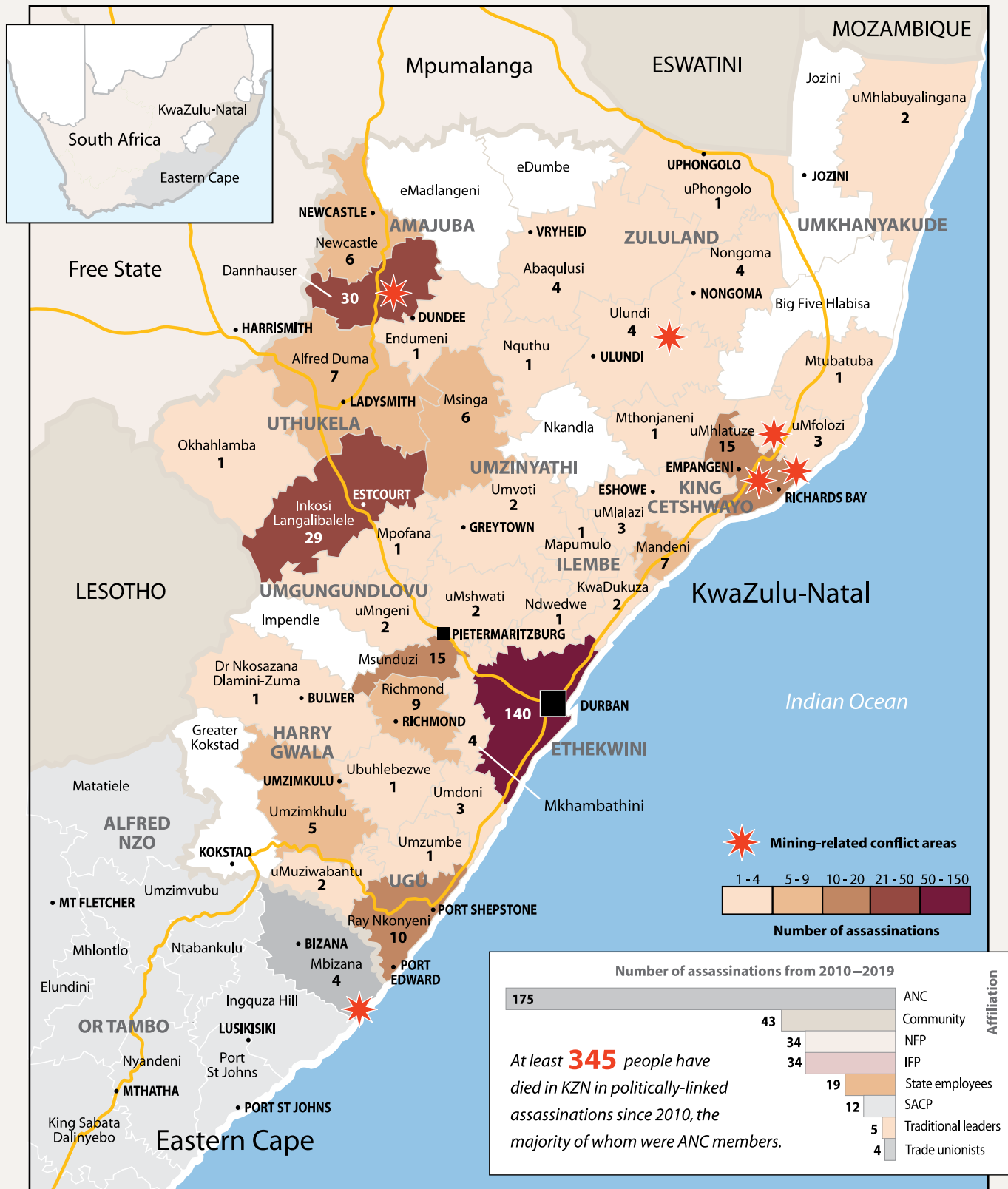
The eThekweni municipality in KZN has seen at least 140 assassinations over the past 10 years (see Figure 1). This shocking number reflects the deadly nexus between intra-party conflict, corruption, maladministration, the proliferation of mafia-like business forums, the ANC's unwillingness to take action against its own, an inadequate and sometimes partisan criminal justice system, and an administration weakened by politically compliant appointees who serve their own instead of citizens' best interests.

In 2010, nine political assassinations were recorded in the province. Since then figures have risen steadily each year, peaking immediately before, during and after municipal elections and each peak bringing with it a progressively higher death toll. During the 2016 elections this figure had reached 60. Although killings drop off slightly after election years, the consistently rising trajectory suggests 2021 could be the most bloody yet.

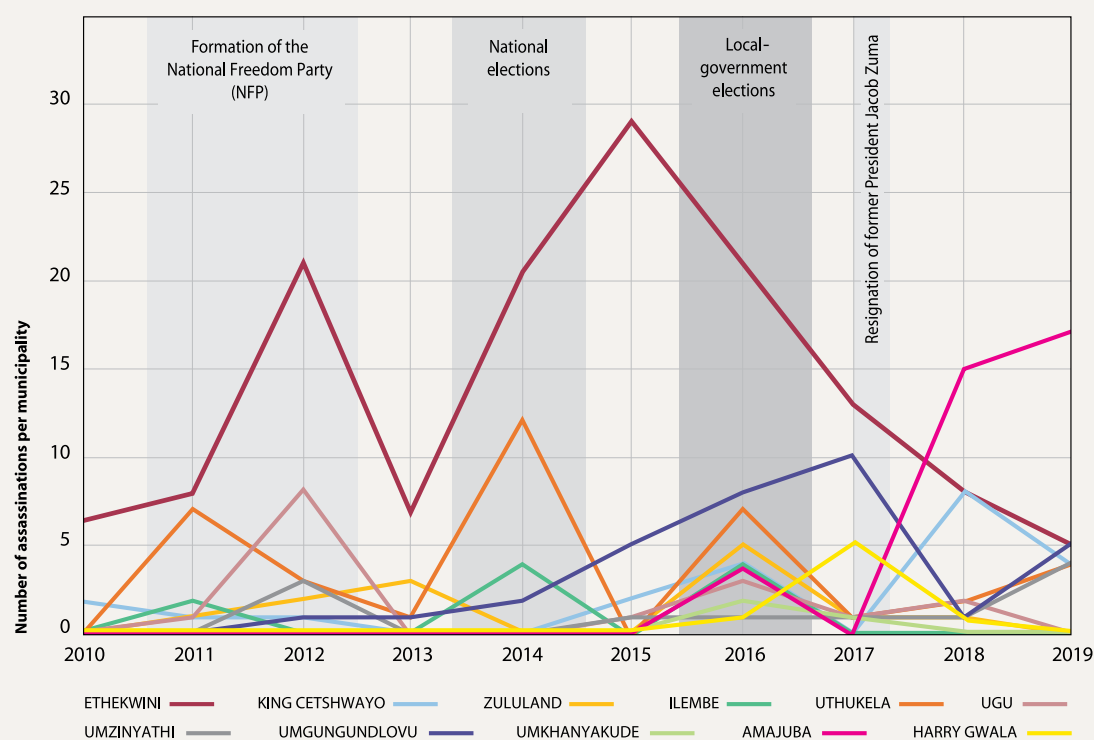
In the first three months of 2020, at least six people have already been killed, including councillors, hostel leaders and mining-affected community activists.<sup>44</sup> This suggests that government's failure to arrest KZN's deadly assassination trend, has led to murder becoming the ANC's preferred means of conflict resolution in the province. All these issues, together with easy access to illicit firearms (including state-issued guns<sup>45</sup>), are conducive to the growth of South Africa's killing economy.

Political responses to KZN's killings have given rise to the perception that the government prioritizes (or likes to be seen to prioritize) investigations into the murder of politicians, while ordinary people (who may be killed by or on the instruction of politicians) may be murdered with impunity.<sup>46</sup> However, there is little to suggest any broader commitment by government or the police to reversing the killing trajectory.<sup>47</sup> Last year the National Prosecuting Authority withdrew charges against senior politicians implicated in several high-profile hits, and provincial government has done nothing to implement recommendations made by the Moerane Commission of Inquiry into KZN's political killings.<sup>48</sup>

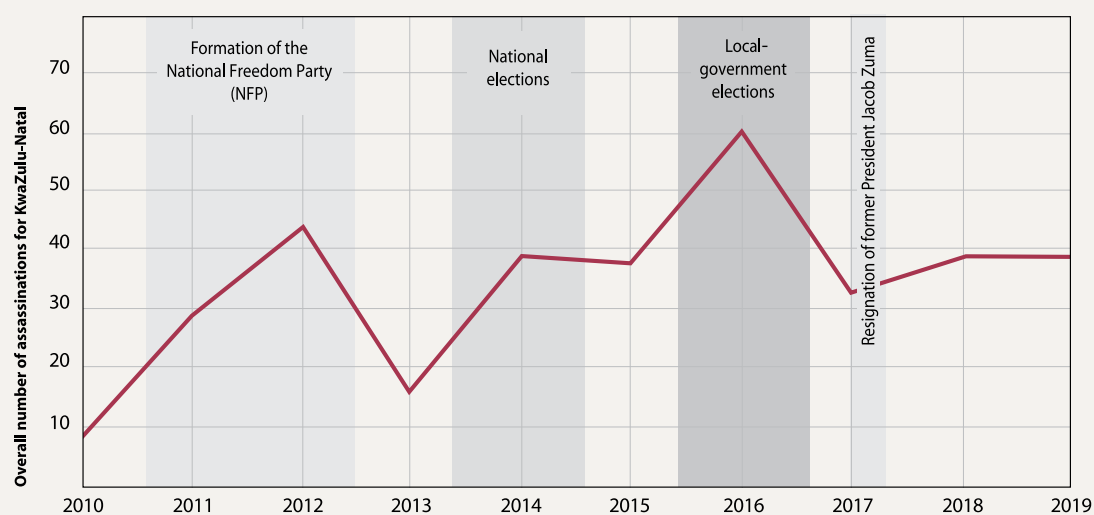




**FIGURE 3** The location and number of political leaders, office bearers, state officials, and traditional and community leaders and activists in KwaZulu-Natal's local and district municipalities from 2010–2019



**FIGURE 4** Assassination of political leaders, office bearers, state officials, and traditional and community leaders and activists per district municipality from 2010–2019



**FIGURE 5** Overall number of killings of political leaders, office bearers, state officials, and traditional and community leaders and activists per district municipality from 2010–2019

### 3. Groundbreaking new study of East and Southern African heroin markets out in April.

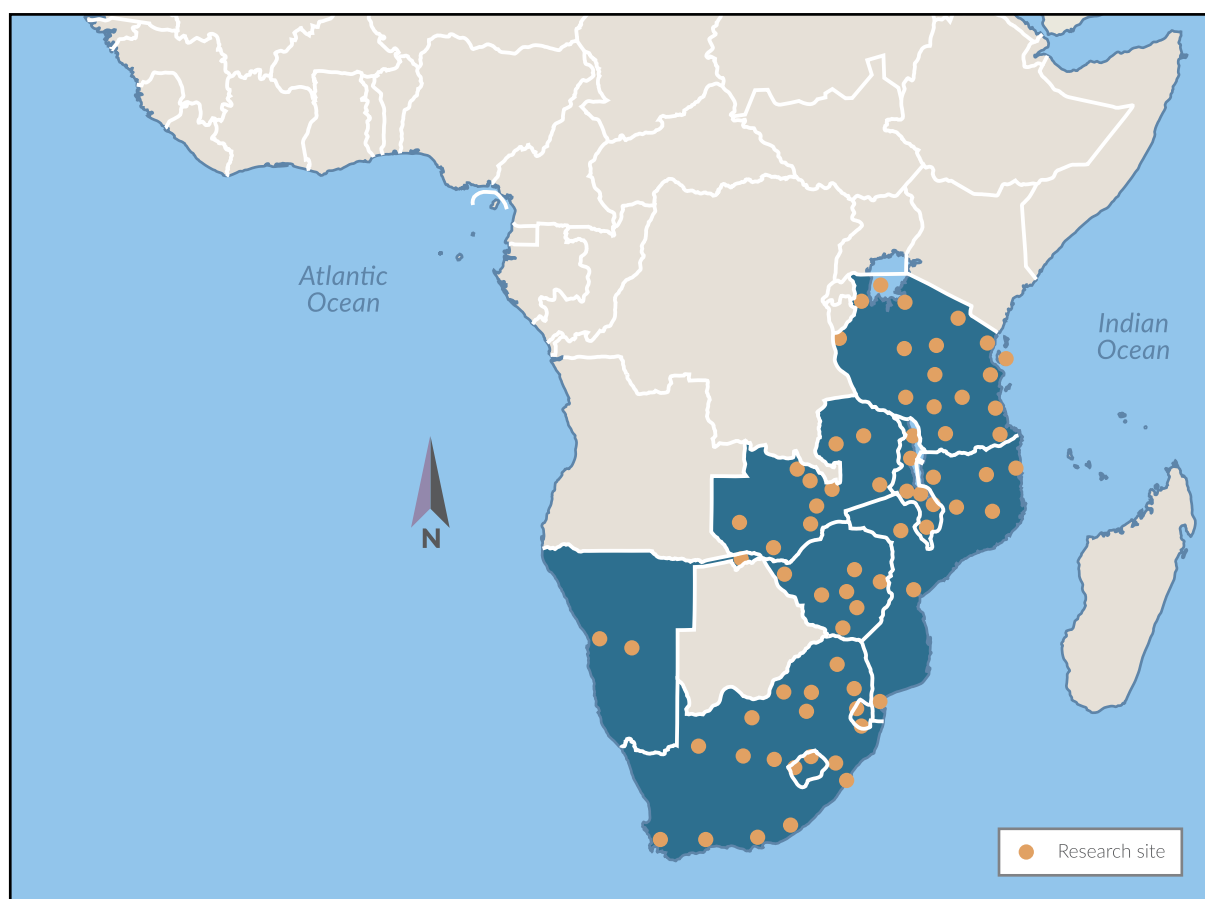
In April, the Global initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime will release a unique study of heroin pricing, distribution and market dynamics in East and Southern Africa. The first of its kind, the study is intended to address significant knowledge gaps that hinder policy responses to the alarming growth in heroin trade in the region.

Over the past eight months we have scoured heroin markets in South Africa, Lesotho, eSwatini, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania for retail price data. We gathered price and marketplace data points on 113 heroin samples and interviewed 393 informants from 63 market sites across the nine countries of research. Interview subjects included people who use heroin; street and mid-level heroin dealers and distributors; heroin importers; law enforcement

personnel; and, various levels of government officials.

Illegal drug prices provide a vital window into the variability and stability levels of a particular illegal drug market,<sup>49</sup> make it possible to identify marketplace and flow linkages,<sup>50</sup> and can be important metrics in the examination and understanding of drug-related policy and action.<sup>51</sup>

The report – *A shallow flood: the diffusion of heroin in Eastern and Southern Africa* – will contribute to a better understanding of drug markets through the lens of drug-pricing and -distribution systems, examine the mobility of drugs across and within markets and countries, and assess the responsiveness of markets and distribution systems to domestic law-enforcement efforts to disrupt or eliminate them.



**FIGURE 6** Southern and eastern African regional sites where data on heroin prices and quality was gathered



Until now, there have been few attempts to analyze the embedded structural and contextual features of drug markets across the East and Southern African region, and particularly on the domestic characteristics of drug-pricing and -distribution systems within it and the efficacy of state efforts to restrict or disable these markets. This gap in knowledge has been highlighted in previous studies,<sup>52</sup> and it is the intention of ongoing Global Initiative research to help address these gaps.

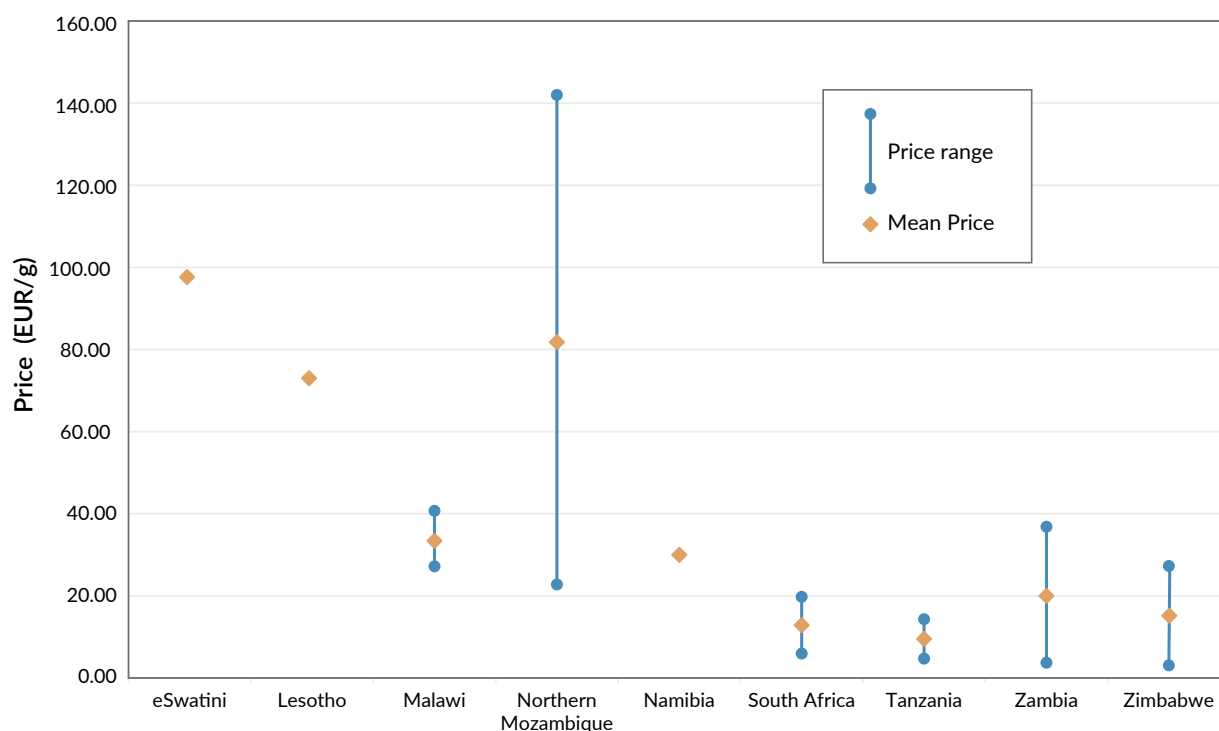
This research has revealed a significant diffusion of heroin supply and use across Eastern and Southern Africa and a proliferation of supply channels. Heroin has been ubiquitous across large swathes of Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa for many years, but use is now proliferating in neighbouring Zambia, Lesotho and eSwatini and is emerging in rural areas across Zimbabwe.

- ▶ Smaller dealers are no less organized or industrialized than their larger-scale competitors. Most are entrepreneurial in their orientation and take an individualized approach to their business by pulling together bespoke orders for their volume-dealing clients. This heroin order was put together by a mid-level supplier in the Cape Town area, who sectioned the order by volume of 'beats'. One beat retails for ZAR 80. There are 50 of these units in one plastic bank bag (known as a 'banky'). The purchase price of this order for the client was ZAR 70 000. Several orders like this are filled by the supplier every day.



- ▲ A still taken from a video of a mid-level heroin supplier in Lesotho as she demonstrates the repackaging of kat heroin powder into 0.25g 'handbags' prior to putting together an order for distribution.





**FIGURE 7** Heroin price ranges across the region

**SOURCE:** These are primary data collected as part of the First Round of regional illicit market price monitoring being led by the Global Initiative



A 0.25g packet of high-grade heroin available in Pemba, a core logistics and distribution point for heroin entering or transiting northern Mozambique. Selling for MT 2 500 a packet, the product is largely pure. Medium-quality versions sell for MT 750, and the lowest-quality for MT 400.

The relatively cheap retail heroin prices in South Africa and Tanzania suggest a high degree of product availability for distribution in domestic markets. The significant range in price for high-quality heroin in northern Mozambique suggests that the local market in that region consists primarily of high-volume heroin shipments landing in and transiting through the region, with small amounts of heroin from these shipments diverted into small local markets on an ad-hoc or payment-in-kind basis. The local availability of cheap, low-quality heroin in the same region, smuggled across the border from Tanzania to supply users in poor local mining communities, is additional evidence of the same pattern.

Current continental drug-policy approaches, founded on prohibition, are not succeeding in disrupting or reducing heroin markets in Eastern and Southern Africa. In fact, these domestic markets continue to expand. Tough laws and mandatory minimum sentences are not stopping or reducing the distribution of illicit heroin or any other illegal substances. The continued unobstructed diffusion of heroin through the cities and towns of Eastern and Southern Africa should be seen as a natural consequence of prohibition-based approaches.<sup>53</sup>



A 0.25g packet of 'ngcono' (good stuff) heroin sold in Mbabane, Matshapha, Manzini, Piggs Peak and Nhlangano, eSwatini. The cost is about €24.

Across the region, there are few fixed flows of heroin that can be identified and blocked using conventional, prohibition-style interdiction tactics. Rather than following distinct streams, the supply of heroin today is more akin to a shallow, slow-moving flood.

Because of the decades of impunity that traffickers have enjoyed, there are now multiple entry points into the region's domestic markets, and many concurrent distribution channels established across the physical landscapes.

The region's domestic heroin markets are now firmly, perhaps irrevocably, embedded. Heroin is distributed with various levels of purity, volume and regularity, and the markets are run by groups and networks of various sizes. Perhaps most worryingly, these markets are part of a stable, protected regional drug economy that stretches from Somalia to South Africa and is expanding inexorably into new, previously untapped markets in cities, towns and rural communities across the region.

#### 4. Heroin, cocaine and marijuana markets in Uganda are changing.

Uganda has not been spared from the rise of the southern route of heroin trafficking which has developed in East and Southern Africa in recent years. As the Global Initiative has reported elsewhere, this has grown from a coastal trade into an established regional drug economy.<sup>54</sup> Law-enforcement agencies in Uganda have been tracking a steady increase in the volume of heroin flowing through the country for some years. The rise in domestic consumption and its impacts on local communities have been severe.

As we reported in a previous issue of the *Risk Bulletin*, the implementation of Uganda's Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act, which came into force in 2016, has helped create a more permissive environment for drug traffickers while at the same time applying punitive approaches to people who use drugs, due to the way penalties under the act have been applied by the courts.

Fieldwork conducted in December 2019 investigated emerging trends in drug trafficking in Uganda. While our focus is on the changing dynamics of heroin markets, there have also been significant recent shifts in other drug markets, including cocaine and marijuana.

##### HEROIN

Between 2008 and 2014, the volume of heroin moving through Uganda rose sharply,<sup>55</sup> aligning with the broader trend across East Africa. Since then, the heroin trade has continued growing; Uganda's Anti-Narcotics Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) reported seizing 120 kilograms of heroin in 2019.<sup>56</sup>

Heroin-trafficking networks in Uganda are believed to be predominantly Nigerian and to a lesser extent European and Pakistani.<sup>57</sup> Nigerian and Pakistani networks reportedly launder profits through licit automobile businesses, the former specializing in spare parts, the latter in vehicles.<sup>58</sup>



However, the intelligence picture is incomplete. The limited resources available to Uganda's Anti-Narcotics CID and the low investigative capacity in law-enforcement agencies mean that the bulk of intelligence is sourced from people who use drugs who are arrested for possession and then share information regarding their dealers.

Ugandan law-enforcement officials believe the vast majority of heroin enters the country through its land borders rather than its international airport.<sup>59</sup>

The implementation of a single customs union across the East Africa Economic Area means that once a consignment has been cleared at the first port of entry, subsequent checks are more limited.<sup>60</sup> Landlocked member states such as Uganda are therefore reliant on coastal member countries, namely Kenya and Tanzania, to implement effective screening at their seaports.

Authorities at seaports such as Mombasa have faced significant challenges in the identification of narcotics from endemic corruption, insufficient training of customs officers, and limited capabilities to examine the vast volume of containers traffic flowing through the port.<sup>61</sup> This facilitates significant secondary overland flows of heroin into Uganda, predominantly through its border with Kenya.

At Uganda's national borders, checks are further diluted by the limited capacity of border staff to identify narcotics; identifying drug precursors is an even greater problem. Where interceptions are made, the low salaries of border force and law-enforcement officials, about 600 000 Ugandan shillings (US\$154) per month, make them highly susceptible to bribes. Numerous understaffed border crossings present further vulnerabilities across Uganda's borders.<sup>62</sup>

Entebbe airport remains a conduit for outward flows of heroin. Ugandan law-enforcement officials suggested that Entebbe's attractiveness to drug-trafficking networks is primarily because of the following factors:

- Uganda does not have a reputation as a source country for drugs, so checks on people travelling from the country are more limited.
- KLM, an airline which flies out of Entebbe airport, is perceived to be secure by European law-enforcement agencies and thus subjected to lesser checks.

In contrast, Ethiopian Airlines is widely recognized to carry significant volumes of drugs, and passengers travelling on their flights are often subjected to more stringent checks.

## NEW TRENDS IN HEROIN OUTFLOW

In 2019, law-enforcement officials tracked an increase in the use of elderly European (predominantly Italian) drug mules to move narcotics out of Uganda. They suggested that traffickers are exploiting known characteristics of Ugandan society, namely respect for the elderly and deference to Europeans, to lower the risk of checks. This is a significant recent shift: while historically Ugandans represented over a third of mules detained moving narcotics out of Entebbe, in 2019 they were vastly outnumbered by foreign nationals.<sup>63</sup>

A number of people carrying heroin seized at Entebbe airport in 2019 were travelling to India rather than to typical European destinations. This suggests an extremely circuitous route between Afghanistan, the country of supply, and India, the destination. A hypothesis put forward by Ugandan law-enforcement officials is that heightening tensions between India and Pakistan in 2019, particularly in relation to Kashmir, have made the border between the two countries more difficult to cross, and that this has displaced heroin flows, which instead flow from Afghanistan through Iran, into East Africa and back to India.<sup>64</sup>

While the sheer length of the India–Pakistan border calls into question such wholesale displacement, Indian media reports of arrests and seizures suggest that other East and Southern African countries are playing similar transit roles. In a case reported in the Indian press in mid-February 2020, two women were arrested on arrival in Delhi after smuggling heroin from Pakistan via Mozambique.<sup>65</sup>

Another route has been detected overland from Uganda to Juba, the capital of South Sudan, which is a four-hour drive from Uganda's northern border.<sup>66</sup> Traffickers reportedly take advantage of the lack of checks at Juba airport to move the drugs to Europe. The lack of direct flights means transit is required, with traffickers reportedly preferring to transit through Addis Ababa, or to a lesser extent back through Uganda via Entebbe airport, taking advantage of the lighter checks on transit passengers.



**FIGURE 8** Heroin trafficking routes in and out of Uganda

SOURCE: Interviews conducted with Anti-Narcotics CID officials, legal practitioners and civil society members, December 2019.

## COCAINE, MARIJUANA AND METHAMPHETAMINES

Uganda is also, to a lesser extent than for heroin, a transit zone for cocaine from South America towards Europe. In 2019, local law-enforcement officials identified an overland route moving cocaine from Juba towards Kampala (flowing in the opposite direction to the heroin route tracked above). Anti-Narcotics CID officials posit that cocaine is flown from Sao Paulo, Brazil, to Juba (transiting primarily through Addis), where it then transits overland to Entebbe airport for onwards movement.<sup>67</sup> The cocaine and heroin networks are believed to be separate.<sup>68</sup>

Uganda produces both illegal and legal marijuana. The country's Anti-Narcotics CID has reported that known illegal cultivation markedly increased in the period following the unit's inception in 2007. While part of that increase was likely due to better reporting following the establishment of the unit, CID also attributed it to the displacement of marijuana growers from Tanzania and Kenya following harsher enforcement against marijuana production in those countries.<sup>69</sup>

Cultivation of marijuana for export and medical purposes with a license issued by the National Drug Authority is permitted under the Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act 2016. Superficially, this seems at odds with the prohibitionist position espoused by the Act, but the economic incentive of tax revenue from licensed marijuana companies drove the change. Licensed companies are obligated to ensure that all product is exported to jurisdictions where marijuana is legal for medical use. In 2019 Industrial Hemp Uganda Limited, in partnership with Together Pharma Ltd, an Israeli-owned company, entered into annual supply contracts with pharmacies in Canada and Germany.<sup>70</sup>

A 2019 Ministry of Health cabinet paper reported receipt of applications by 14 companies seeking licenses to cultivate marijuana; however, as many as 100 companies are reportedly positioning themselves to enter the market. The cabinet has been debating the financial benefits and health risks of permitting widespread licit cultivation, and government guidelines, together with the licensing of additional companies, are expected imminently.<sup>71</sup> Uganda therefore appears at the forefront of African countries taking advantage of the financial opportunities offered by the licit marijuana market.

While there have been seizures of methamphetamines in Uganda, domestic law-enforcement officials report that no domestic methamphetamine laboratories have been found.<sup>72</sup> Instead, it is believed to be synthesized outside the country, including in Tanzania (a belief premised in part on a 2017 seizure of 40 kilograms of methamphetamines close to the Ugandan border with Tanzania). However, a 2017 raid in northern Uganda found large volumes of methamphetamine-precursor chemicals in the possession of a Nigerian national, suggesting an attempt to set up a methamphetamine-production lab.

## DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION

As has been seen across East and Southern Africa, increased heroin trafficking through Uganda has also fostered an increase in domestic consumption. Heroin prices have steadily decreased, aligned with a global downturn predominantly driven by an excess of supply from Afghanistan, which has made the drug affordable by a wider demographic.

One kilogram of heroin reportedly costs US\$7 000–US\$8 000, while one 'hit', measured as one scoop by the dealer's long pinkie fingernail, can cost as little as US\$1.5 (about 5 000 Ugandan shillings), depending on purity and the area in which the drugs are sold. Domestic law-enforcement officials have tracked increasing purity in seized heroin, which carries the common street names 'brown', 'sugar' and 'mugo'.<sup>73</sup>

Drug use is particularly prevalent among men aged 18–25 and sex workers. High youth unemployment rates contribute to growing consumption. Domestic drug consumption is concentrated in urban areas, with Kampala the epicentre. However, more limited enforcement in rural areas also means intelligence regarding consumption there is scarce. Use is reportedly prevalent among motorbike taxi drivers, termed *boda bodas* (almost exclusively male), and is blamed for a recent increase in road accidents. A state-funded project has been approved to carry out spot drug tests on *boda boda* drivers in 2020.

A significant and growing number of people inject heroin. Civil-society groups suggest that the government estimate of people who inject drugs – 58 000 in 2019 – is conservative, noting that the government had previously denied the existence of injecting drug users in the country.<sup>74</sup>



In a slum in Kampala, Uganda, two men prepare to inject heroin. Usually users prefer smoking the drug due to the risk of overdose and disease associated with injecting. © Michele Sibiloni

Although domestic cocaine consumption exists, it remains more expensive and therefore less widespread. Domestic consumption of methamphetamine is low and concentrated in areas with large construction or mining projects. Chinese populations, particularly prevalent in such areas, reportedly consume a larger proportion of methamphetamine.

In conclusion, the low price of heroin in Uganda points towards the existence of a regular primary supply of pure wholesale heroin transiting the country, some of which

spills over into the domestic supply chain, through in-kind payments to dealers and others working in the business. Alternatively, or additionally, it could indicate a strong secondary supply chain linking to neighbouring wholesale markets. Ongoing research by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime also suggests that Uganda could play a role in heroin routes into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and southwards down the continent. We continue to monitor the shifting dynamics in the region.



## 5. The deaths of 64 migrants in a truck container in Mozambique is a ghastly reminder of smuggling risk.

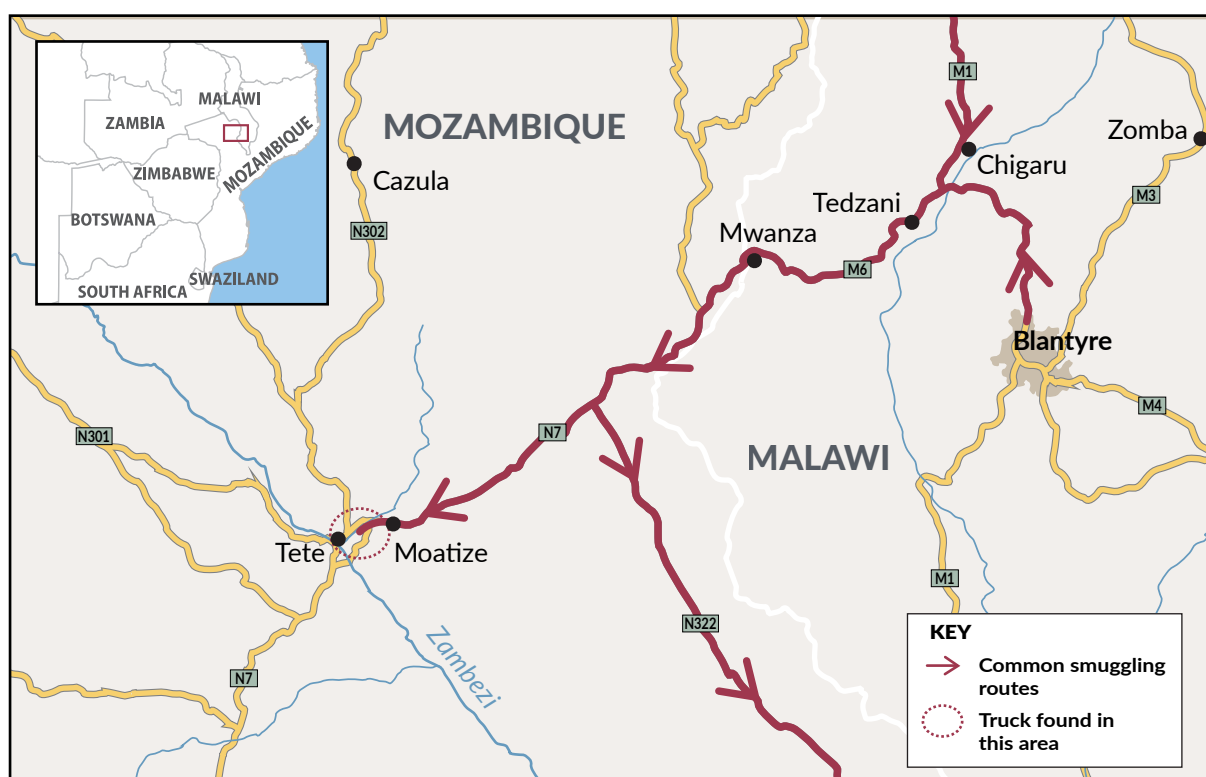
Mozambican immigration inspectors working on the country's border with Malawi made a grim discovery on 24 March when they found the bodies of 64 Ethiopian migrants in an airtight lorry container, alongside 14 survivors.<sup>75</sup> This ghastly tragedy is a reminder of the risks faced by migrants who use the services of human smugglers, both within Africa and beyond.

This incident was most likely an instance of human smuggling, whereby networks facilitate the irregular cross-border movement of consenting migrants, rather than a case of human trafficking, where networks deceive and coerce victims. The Global Initiative's *Organized Crime Index, Africa 2019*, found that both smuggling and trafficking are prevalent in almost every country in Africa.

The migrants died while travelling on a route that is favoured by smugglers bound for South Africa. The most frequently used human-smuggling route out of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa is the so-called eastern route to the Gulf States and the Middle East. Yet migrants are also smuggled in large numbers to

Europe and to southern Africa – particularly South Africa.<sup>76</sup> Ethnic tensions, political persecution and environmental disasters such as drought have forced millions of Ethiopians to flee their homes in recent years.<sup>77</sup> Those who follow the southern route primarily report that they are in search of better economic opportunities.<sup>78</sup>

The International Organization for Migration analyzed 390 043 journeys taken by migrants from the East and Horn of Africa between January and June 2019, and found that only 2% used the southern route. The vast majority moved within the region or to the Arabian peninsula.<sup>79</sup> Fewer migrants pursue this route to the south, but those who do face a certain risk of violence, discrimination, exploitation and abuse. In 2017, analysis from the Danish Refugee Council found that almost all of the several thousand migrants who travel the southern route annually use smugglers to reach their final destination. They found that over the past decade, the route has become more violent and exploitative for migrants, with kidnapping for ransom in particular becoming more normalized.<sup>80</sup>



**FIGURE 9** Of the 78 migrants who crossed into Mozambique on their way to South Africa, only 14 survived



A total of 64 Ethiopian migrants were found suffocated in a container after a truck was stopped at the Mussacana weighbridge in Mozambique. There were 14 survivors, photographed here by officials moments after they were rescued. © Fungai Caetano

Although shocking, this is not a one-off occurrence.<sup>81</sup> Cargo trucks are a particularly attractive form of transport for smugglers and put migrants at a particularly high risk.<sup>82</sup> As theft is a high risk for land-based transit, transport companies take great care to secure containers, lorries and information.<sup>83</sup> Drivers often know very little about their cargo and are provided with minimal information, partly as a security measure. This increases the likelihood that, unbeknown to them, drivers may be transporting smuggled migrants.

The number of similar recent tragedies across Europe and the US demonstrates the tragic consequences that this can bring to bear for migrants. In November 2019, 39 Vietnamese migrants were found dead in a truck in Essex, UK.<sup>84</sup> This followed the deaths of 10 Central American migrants in a lorry in the US in 2017,<sup>85</sup> while in 2016, 71 deceased Iraqi, Syrian

and Afghan migrants were discovered in a lorry in Austria.<sup>86</sup>

When migrants are discovered in tragic circumstances like those seen in Mozambique, authorities and the public consciousness place blame, in part rightly, on the abusive and callous profiteering by smuggling networks. Rarely, however, do these events call into question the efficacy of customs and border management, which may wittingly or unwittingly motivate smugglers and harm migrants.

In stark contrast to the global media responses to such tragedies when they occur in Europe, international press coverage of the incident in Mozambique has been more muted. Although in part attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has dominated headlines, this also reflects global apathy towards such incidents that occur in Africa. This needs to change.

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