



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**

AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

Annual Report

2020

Annual Report

2020



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DIRECTOR'S OVERVIEW

In 2020, the world changed fundamentally. But, as the old saying goes, 'everything changes and yet everything stays the same'. That certainly applies to organized crime. In the wake of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus, the illicit economy has changed: the contours of trafficking have altered, though perhaps only for the immediate term; criminal groups are consolidating legitimacy through the provision of services; opportunistic criminal enterprises are springing up in response to new demand, social distancing and prohibitions; illicit money has permeated sectors of the economy that have been closing down in the increasingly acute global recession. Organized crime has strengthened during the pandemic, while global governance and the rules-based order have suffered. Over the course of the year, through both our expert and field networks the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (henceforth 'GI-TOC') has sought to analyze the changing political economy of crime, presenting new data and trends, as well as policy pieces intended to spark new thinking and debate. In doing so, we, like many others, have tried to make a contribution to building a better world in the wake of the pandemic.

The GI-TOC moved rapidly when the pandemic hit, looking to understand its impact on organized crime. Eight reports, 12 weekly newsletters and the launch of a new podcast series on COVID-19-related issues were produced. We attracted significant media coverage, expanded our audience basis, and received much positive feedback and requests from partners and stakeholders for additional briefings and information. These efforts demonstrated our agility and responsiveness, highlighted our expertise and resulted in real impact for the organization.

But this year is one in which we have become most acutely aware of the pressures on civil society, and the risks that courageous individuals and grass-roots organizations are taking in championing their causes in the face of criminal and corrupt forces. In December 2018, we founded the Resilience Fund to support this type of local activism, and we have distributed funds to civil society groups in 35 countries. In doing so, we have become intimately involved in the challenges that our grantees face – the security threats, the operational and environmental risks, and the myriad forms of stonewalling and opposition they battle through on a daily basis, all the while facing threats to themselves, their families and their communities. This year, we launched our flagship Assassination Witness campaign to highlight how a growing number of people are paying with their lives, and the overwhelming impunity that protects their killers. Very few cases ever come to justice, and too little is done to prevent others being killed in the same way.

We have also been made to realize that risk is a reality facing our own organization. This year, we faced legal action initiated by politically exposed persons and questionable corporations in an attempt to silence us and members of our field networks and close partners have been threatened by criminal groups. This is an unacceptable violation of the rule of law and the principles of justice, and we intend to stand firm and raise our voices louder, alongside an increasing number of civil-society organizations, to fight against this form of intimidation.

I am proud to say that despite the challenges we have been faced with as an organization by the pandemic and the apparent shrinking space for civil-society action, our staff numbers have grown and our annual revenue has increased from CHF 7.1 million in 2019 to an expected CHF 12.7 million in 2020. By year end, we will have 70+ full-time staff members in 21 countries, and more than 160 consultants on contract in 41 countries, who together make up a core group of expert analysts covering multiple topics and geographies.



This is reflected in the fact our geographic research coverage has significantly expanded over the year, in particular through our increasingly established and effective organized-crime observatories in southern and eastern Africa, in North Africa and the Sahel, Central America and the Western Balkans region. We have partners covering issues and publishing research in every region of the globe, entailing a diverse spectrum of crime types and themes.

With the restrictions on travel and convening that were implemented to stop the spread of the coronavirus around the world, we have had to adapt and realign our project activities. We have invested in strengthening our capacity for outreach and engagement through the web, social media, using both video and audio. We have produced five high-performing podcast series, and done a number of high-profile launches and conferences through interactive online forums. The GI-TOC has continued to consolidate its reputation as a reliable source of analytical information. Our staff are frequently approached by the media to share their expertise and the findings of the GI-TOC's research, and are invited to present at high-level events.

The GI-TOC Network (the 'Network') remains an integral part of the organization. In June 2020, we reached our strategic objective of attaining 500 or more Network members, of whom a third are women. New members joined us from previously under-represented areas, such as Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa. Many members of the Network actively engage with the work of the institution and participate in quarterly virtual group discussions and consultation meetings. Many have also played an important role in our work producing the Organised Crime Index, and took the time to review scores and share their expert opinion with us.

This year is another milestone, as 2020 is the last year of the GI-TOC's second three-year strategy. A report will provide an overview of how we have performed against the strategy, 2018–2020. Throughout the year, a dedicated team, supported by the Board and a large number of Network members, have worked on drafting a new strategy that reflects how we intend to remain forward-thinking and creative, to seek the opportunities that the pandemic may present in the near future, as well as working to limit its negative effects. As an organization, we value a consultative approach as it enriches the product and helps the GI-TOC reach a wider constituency – a point that the strategy emphasizes but also demonstrates through the wide number of inputs that have informed the final strategy.

All of this would not be possible without the hard work of our staff, the time and advice of our board members and the support and engagement of our Network members. A sincere thank you to all: you have made 2020, as challenging as it has been, such an important year in the life of the GI-TOC.

Mark Shaw



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the progress and results achieved during 2020. It includes an overview of the structure and growth of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), including staff composition, the GI-TOC Board and the Network of Experts, and provides a detailed overview of the GI-TOC's activities.

Global civil-society regional observatories. The report details the work conducted by each of our five existing observatories: The Organized Crime Observatory for North Africa and the Sahel; for South Eastern Europe; for Eastern and Southern Africa; Guinea Bissau and for Central America. It then outlines plans for two additional observatories in process for the Asia-Pacific region and West Africa.

Expanding multimedia capacity. The GI-TOC accelerated existing plans to upgrade outreach and engagement capacity through the production of virtual and multimedia content, including a GI-TOC podcast channel. The GI-TOC has launched seven multi-part podcast series and created 74 episodes as of December. We expect to have released 77 episodes by the end of December. This would mean an average of seven podcasts per month since March 2020. This year we hosted 30+ webinars and in November 2020 we convened the first 24-hour Conference on Organized Crime jointly with the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime (IASOC) and three universities.

COVID-19 content. The report addresses the GI-TOC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of changes to business operations as well as the shift in substantive outputs. The GI-TOC launched its 12-week #CovidCrimeWatch initiative, published eight policy briefs on the pandemic, released a weekly newsletter on interactions between COVID-19 and the illicit economy, published 21 blog posts around COVID-19 and produced 14 episodes of weekly podcasts, titled 'The Impact: Coronavirus and Organized Crime'.

The report also details the activities undertaken as part of the **GI-TOC's five substantive workstreams**.

People. The GI-TOC's activities in this workstream are to monitor people on the move with the facilitation of smugglers and populations vulnerable to human trafficking, and to identify cases in which vulnerabilities are increasing and better policies are required. The GI-TOC continues to lead a research project on human smuggling and trafficking in North Africa and the Sahel. It hosts the RESPECT initiative, which assembles key thought leaders, practitioners and policy makers to identify solutions to public and private sector challenges surrounding human trafficking and modern slavery. From April 2020 to March 2021, the GI-TOC's Civil Society Observatory to Counter Organized Crime in South Eastern Europe is conducting a regional assessment of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Western Balkans.

Environment. We have focused our efforts on the richest wildlife geographical basins: Eastern and Southern Africa, the Amazon basin, and the Golden Triangle in Asia. We have a number of reports, current and forthcoming, including on charcoal trade in East Africa; the illegal trade of Madagascan tortoises; gold supply chains in and out of South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda; illicit trafficking patterns of the Swahili coast; trafficking in persons and deforestation in Mexico; and the coloured-gemstone trade. A project of the future observatory for the Asia-Pacific region, in conjunction with the Observatory for Eastern and Southern Africa, will address threat financing and illicit financial flows relating to environmental commodities, and explore conflict drivers and human and environmental vulnerability in the Congo Basin/Swahili coast of Africa and in the Golden Triangle region of Asia.



Political economy. The Organized Crime Index for Africa is expanding into a global index. Since January 2020, a team of researchers has created profiles for every country in the world, outlining the relevant criminal markets, criminal actors and resilience measures in each country. With the launch of the Global Organized Crime Index set for September 2021, this year focuses on preparation, data gathering, evaluation and scoring of countries. A variety of reports were published on issues ranging from the political economy of drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau to illicit financial flows in Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia.

Criminal governance. The GI-TOC launched *Faces of Assassination: Bearing Witness to Victims of Organized Crime*, part of our #AssassinationWitness global campaign, which aims to call the attention of the international community for criminal assassinations. Separately, the Coalition against Extortion in Central America is in its third year of implementation, promoting discussions with the Central American extortion network members: 10 webinars were held in 2020 with an average of 25 participants. Additionally, the South African Gang Monitor project is researching the evolution and dynamics of gangs in Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela Bay and Cape Town, and we published reports on Iraqi antiquities and the Islamic State, and criminal groups in Montenegro and Serbia.

Institutions. Shrinking access to policy discussions and decision-making has been further exacerbated by COVID-19, which has significantly changed how the GI-TOC interacts with the UN community. We have adapted to these circumstances, producing a 9-part podcast series on the Crime Congress, 'Road to Kyoto', and published multiple briefs about the impacts of COVID-19 at the UN. With the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, we are promoting civil-society engagement in the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime's Implementation Review Mechanism. And the GI-TOC has developed a new module on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and linkages to organized crime for the upcoming revised Integrated DDR Standards. The GI-TOC continues to monitor transnational organized crime issues at the UN, publishing blogs and briefs around current debates and matters on the UN agenda, and takes part in relevant organized-crime-related debates at UN commission convenings, consultations and preparatory meetings.

The report outlines the activities of the GI-TOC's **Civil Society Resilience Fund**, now in its second year of operation. In 2020, the Resilience Fund accelerated its support and partnerships, increasing its support to over 70 individuals and organizations globally. The Resilience Fund Fellowship was launched in early 2020, supporting 10 individuals as they implement community-based projects on the theme of disappearances related to organized crime. At the end of 2019, the GI-TOC began developing a mobile application called VIVA to activate the Resilience Fund's network. After eight months of development, testing and modifications, the first users were onboarded in August 2020.

The report concludes by looking ahead, with a brief summary of the next three-year strategy which will be made public in January 2021.



ABOUT GI-TOC

The **Global Initiative's** overall objective is to bolster the fight against organized crime by building a set of interlocking global, regional and country networks, and improving analysis and reporting of organized crime. It encourages and supports innovative state and civil society responses to the phenomenon of illicit markets and related corruption and illicit financial flows.

GI-TOC TEAM

14 BOARD MEMBERS

The GI-TOC's primary oversight Board is global, overseeing the Initiative's actions and operations throughout the world, providing governance and strategic advice through the organisation's headquarters in Geneva and its regional office in Vienna. A Board overseeing work run from the Cape Town and Nairobi offices with a focus on activities in East and Southern Africa brings a focus on that region's unique needs.

500+ GLOBAL AND REGIONAL EXPERTS

The Global Initiative comprises a network of over 500 independent global and regional experts working on human rights, democracy, governance, and development issues where organized crime has become increasingly pertinent.

70+ SECRETARIAT MEMBERS

The Global Initiative and all of its entities are supported by a dedicated Secretariat which is responsible for programmatic, financial and administrative management of the Global Initiative Network and its programmes.

Geneva, Switzerland GI-TOC Headquarters

Valletta, Malta The Observatory for the Sahel and North Africa

The observatory assesses and monitors organized crime, human smuggling and security trends across **seven countries in North and western Africa**.

Vienna, Austria Civil Society Observatory to Counter Organized Crime in South Eastern Europe

The observatory is a platform that connects and empowers civil-society actors in **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia**. The observatory produces regular policy briefs on regional issues.

Guatemala City, Guatemala Civil Society Observatory for Central America

Bissau, Guinea Bissau Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies

Jointly with the UN System in the country, the GI-TOC has established a civil society observatory in Guinea-Bissau to monitor the country's drug-trafficking economy, as well as other illicit markets.

Nairobi, Kenya Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa

Cape Town, South Africa Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa

The objective of the project is to bolster the fight against organized crime and illicit financial flows by developing a set of interlocking regional observatories that will improve analysis and reporting of organized crime, and mobilize state and civil-society responses. The project has two centres of operation, Nairobi for East Africa and Cape Town for southern Africa.

GI-TOC WORKSTREAMS AND FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

Our current strategy introduced five substantive workstreams to ensure that the GI-TOC presents a coherent and interlocking programme of activities. The workstreams encompass all criminal markets – drugs, people, arms, environmental commodities, and violence, as well as addressing the drivers and impacts.



People

- **ENACT**
Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organized Crime
- **RESPECT**
The Responsible & Ethical Private Sector Coalition against Trafficking Initiative
- **The North Africa and Sahel Observatory**
- **The Resilience Fund**



Environment

- **Illegal wildlife trade in eastern and southern Africa: price study**
- **Analyzing and disrupting environmental crime in the globalized economy**
- **Gold Watch**



Criminal governance

- **Faces of Assassination and #Assassination Witness campaign**
- **Coalition against Extortion in Central America**



Institutions

- **UNTOC Watch**



Political economy

- **Global Organized Crime Index**
- **IUU Fishing Index**
- **South Adrican Gang Monitor**

GI-TOC OBSERVATORIES

Our geographic research coverage has significantly expanded over the year, in particular through our increasingly established and effective organized-crime observatories in southern and eastern Africa, in North Africa and the Sahel, Central America and in the Western Balkans region. We have partners covering issues and publishing research in every region of the globe, entailing a diverse spectrum of crime types and themes.

BY 2023, THE GI-TOC INTENDS TO OPEN OBSERVATORIES FOR THE FOLLOWING REGIONS:

Asia-Pacific
West Africa

PROGRESS AGAINST THE STRATEGY 2020



The current GI-TOC strategy is coming to an end in December 2020. 'Measures of progress' were agreed upon to determine the extent to which these objectives had been achieved.

The strategic objectives for 2018-2020 are:

- 1 To generate, analyse and publish value-adding information on organized crime
- 2 To promote deliberation on effective policy responses to organized crime
- 3 To develop and implement innovative field-based programmes
- 4 To grow and diversify the GI-TOC Network of Experts
- 5 To build a well-managed, well-funded and professional organization

KEY MEASURES OF PROGRESS

1

The GI-TOC has identified research partner/s in each region of the globe, established networks of data/information monitoring in high-profile regions/countries and selected observatories of organized crime.



2



Documented examples of where lessons from GI-TOC projects have been used by others to inform responses at the local, national, regional or global level.

5

We have built good relationships and trust with our donors over the years. As a result, we are more frequently signing multi-year contracts with donors, which gives the organization a secure financial foundation.

We are engaging with more than **160 short term consultants** and experts in **41 different countries**, of whom **87%** are from developing countries.

87%
Developing countries



13%
Developed countries

1 3



At the end of March 2020, we published 'Crime and Contagion' - our first report on the impact of the pandemic on organized crime. The GI-TOC was among the first to produce such analysis. In the meantime GI-TOC's research on COVID-19 is being used by national police services and is widely referred to in the media.

2 3

In 2019 six field-based pilot response programmes were implemented:

- Central America
- Gang Monitor, South Africa
- ESA Observatory
- Western Balkans Observatory
- Philippines
- Mexico

In addition to these, in 2020, the Resilience Fund started the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Accelerator to support resilience work in four LDC's:

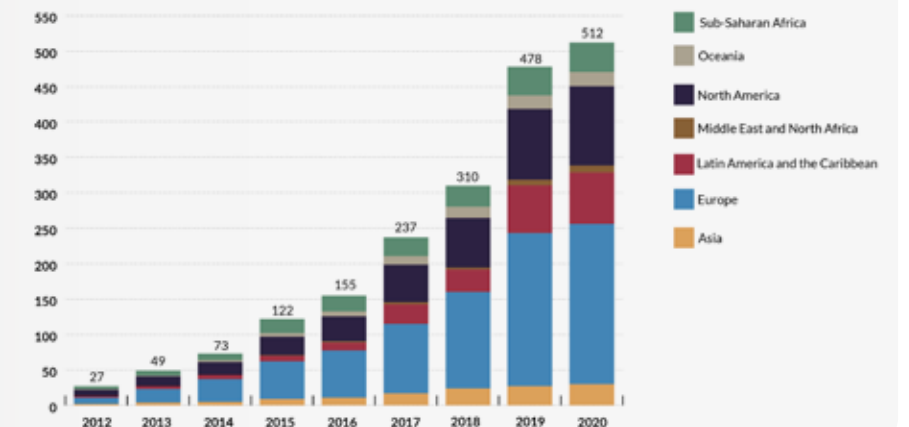
- Guinea-Bissau
- Mozambique
- Lao
- Myanmar



4

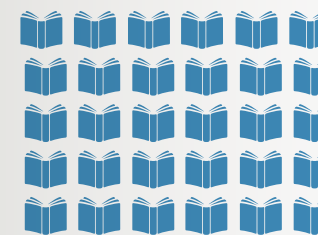
The GI-TOC Network has achieved a one-fifth growth rate in the total memberships from the under-represented regions, namely Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and Oceania.

GIN growth of members by region of origin over the years

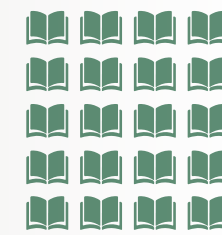


GI-TOC accelerated the production of virtual and multimedia content, including a GI-TOC podcast channel. At the end of 2020, we are on target to achieve:

30 RESEARCH REPORTS



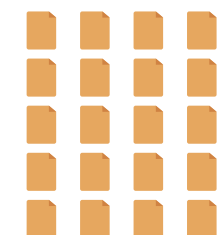
20 POLICY BRIEFS



70+ PODCAST EPISODES



40 BLOGS



The quality of research is measured in terms of feedback from peer review and the GI-TOC's target audience, and through media coverage of the contents.

The GI-TOC's research products are now covered regularly in the media and quoted in highly regarded publications, among them in 2020: **Financial Times**, **The Economist**, **The New York Times**, **Telegraph.co.uk**, **El Pais** and others.



In the first quarter of 2020, staff of the GI-TOC participated in and presented their work at 60+ meetings globally. Due to the COVID-19 crisis and related travel restrictions, which started mid-March 2020, many in-person meetings were cancelled. However, staff continue to be invited to speak on the radio, TV and podcasts, and present at virtual meetings.

PUBLICATIONS AND OUTREACH

GI-TOC

360k WEBSITE HITS PROJECTED

A new website was launched in 2018, with the strategic objective of increasing traffic by over 10% a year. By the end of 2018, the GI had already achieved the target. It is estimated that by the end of 2020, the total number of hits will have exceeded 360 000.

THE GI-TOC CONTINUES TO WORK WITH ANALYTICAL PARTNERS ACROSS THE GLOBE

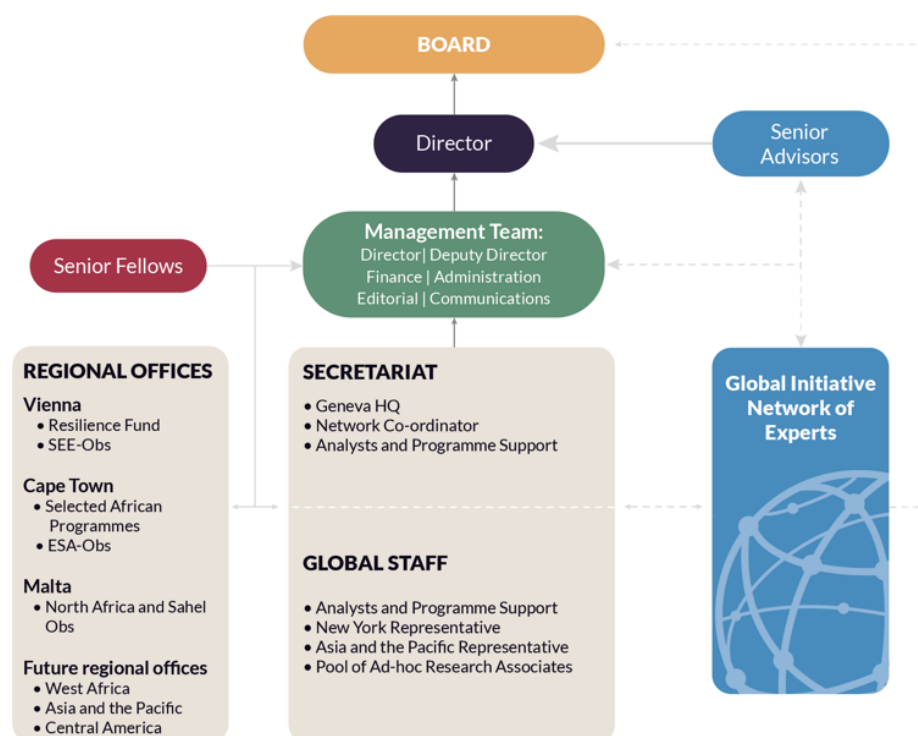
THE ORGANIZATION

Founded in 2013 and headquartered in Geneva, the GI-TOC comprises a Network of over **500 independent global and regional experts** working on human rights, democracy, governance and development issues where organized crime has become increasingly pertinent.

According to the constitution, the primary purposes of the GI-TOC are to:

- a) Create the building blocks towards a global strategy on transnational organized crime.
- b) Promote catalytic, cross-border processes that draw in new actors and that facilitate the reshaping of thinking, coordination and responses to transnational organized crime.
- c) Energize the global debate around transnational organized crime to promote the sustainable translation and embedding of new approaches into current multilateral, regional and national frameworks.
- d) Undertake research and develop new policy and programmatic options to contribute to informed strategy development at national, regional and international levels.

Launched formally in New York in September 2013, the GI-TOC is now registered as an **international civil society organization** with a secretariat and a high-level advisory board. It is headquartered in Switzerland and has three regional offices – in Austria, South Africa and Malta. The opening of three more offices in West Africa, Asia and Central America is envisaged over the next three years. The GI-TOC staff complement will exceed 70 by the end of 2020.



SEE Obs: Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in South Eastern Europe

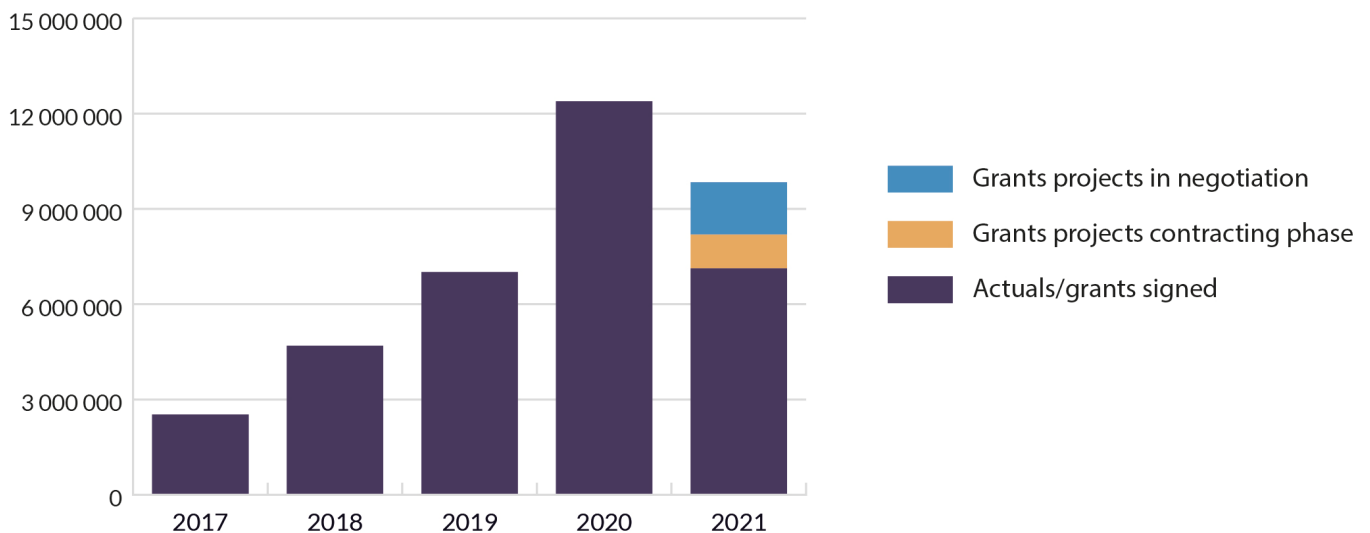
ESA Obs: Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa



Financial overview

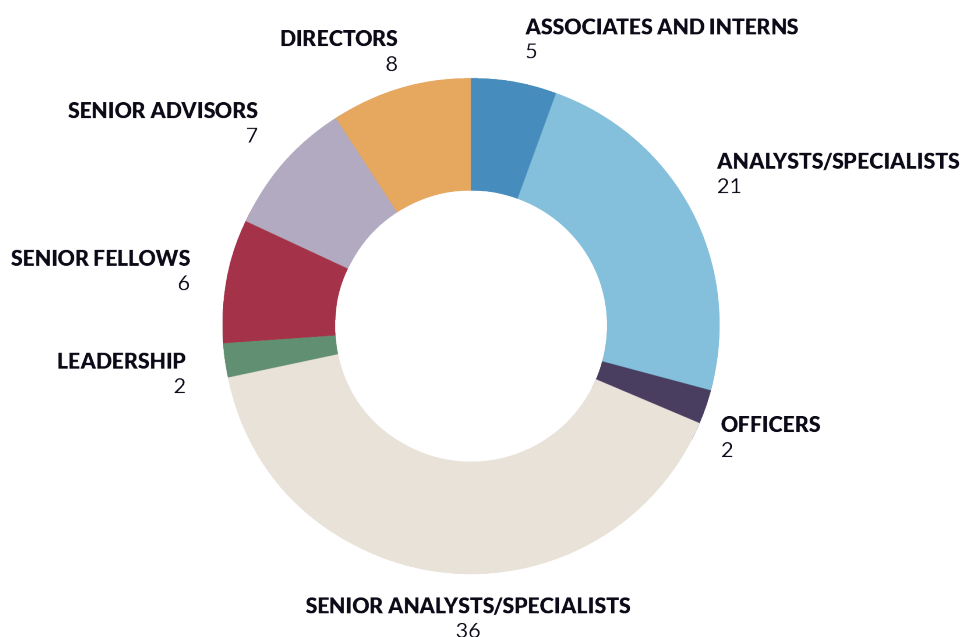
Annual revenue has tripled in the last two years. And despite COVID-19, the GI-TOC remains in good financial health, with a positive year-end balance, as well as a predictable funding stream of at least CHF 8 million each year for the next three years. However, it is clear that in the post-COVID environment there are a number of uncertainties that may constrain this.

Income Projection 2017 - 2021 in CHF



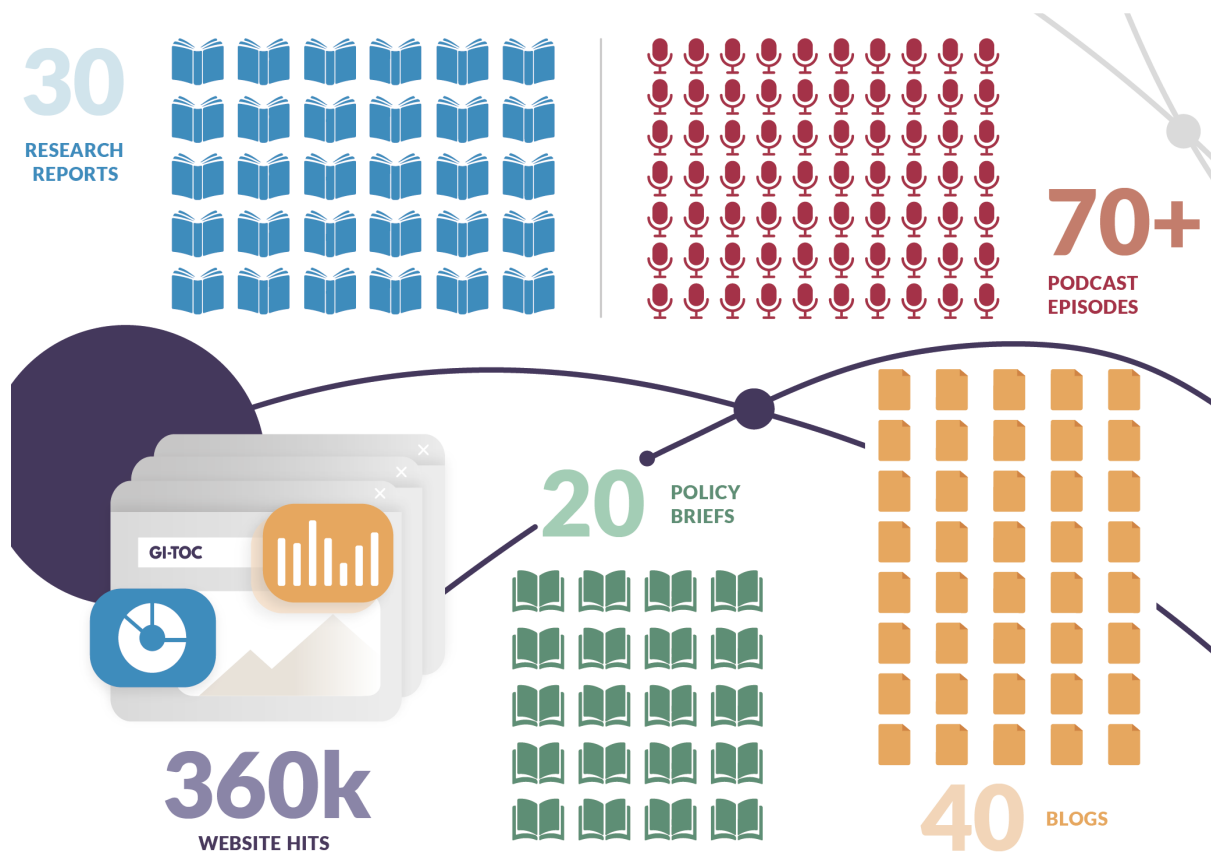
The GI-TOC team

The staff are geographically dispersed, with experts working all over the globe. The number of core staff from developing countries is steadily increasing and around 45% are from developing countries. The GI-TOC is engaging with around 160 independent experts in 41 different countries, of whom 87% are from developing countries.



Publications and outreach

With the pandemic causing the cancellation of meetings and events where our reports are typically presented and discussed, we have innovated around a virtual communications strategy that would allow us to continue to reach our audience. While an upgrading of our outreach and engagement capacity had already been in the works, as the pandemic took hold, we accelerated the production of virtual and multimedia content, including a GI-TOC podcast channel. At the end of 2020, we are on target to achieve:



GI-TOC Network of Experts

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

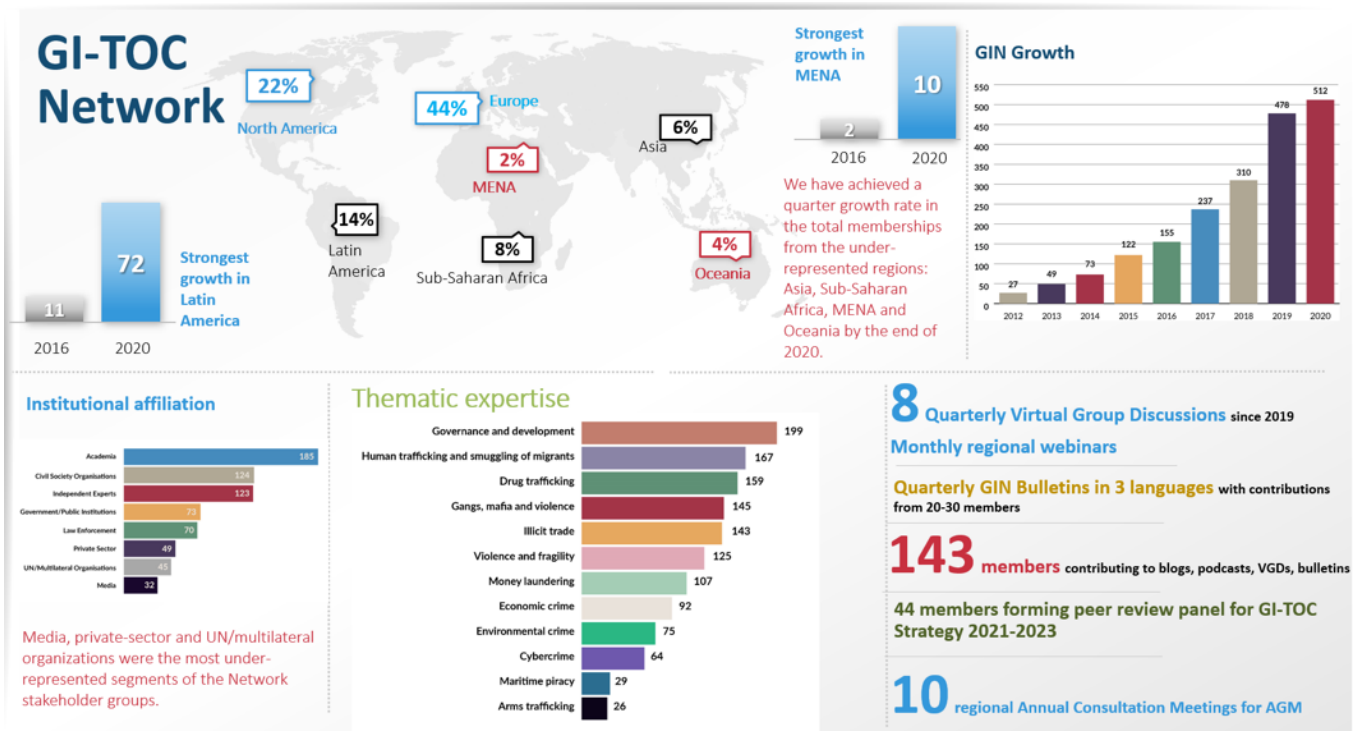
The overall strategic objective of the Network is to develop and grow a diverse and professionally engaged expert network committed to the objectives of the GI-TOC and working to achieve them.

- The Network aims to achieve gender parity in membership.
- The Network aims to achieve a balance of representation between all regions and expertise.
- Network members are involved in all aspects of the GI-TOC's work: research, policy development and advocacy, as well as project implementation.
- An effective system of cross-Network communication measured by the number of interchanges between members.



NETWORK OVERVIEW

The size of the Network has expanded greatly since the founding 27 members to the current 512 members.



GI-TOC Board

The GI-TOC Board provides high-level governance and strategic direction, championing its work and ensuring that the actions of the GI-TOC are consistent with its mandate. The members of the Board provide oversight for the financial, legal, human resources and ethical integrity of the GI-TOC.

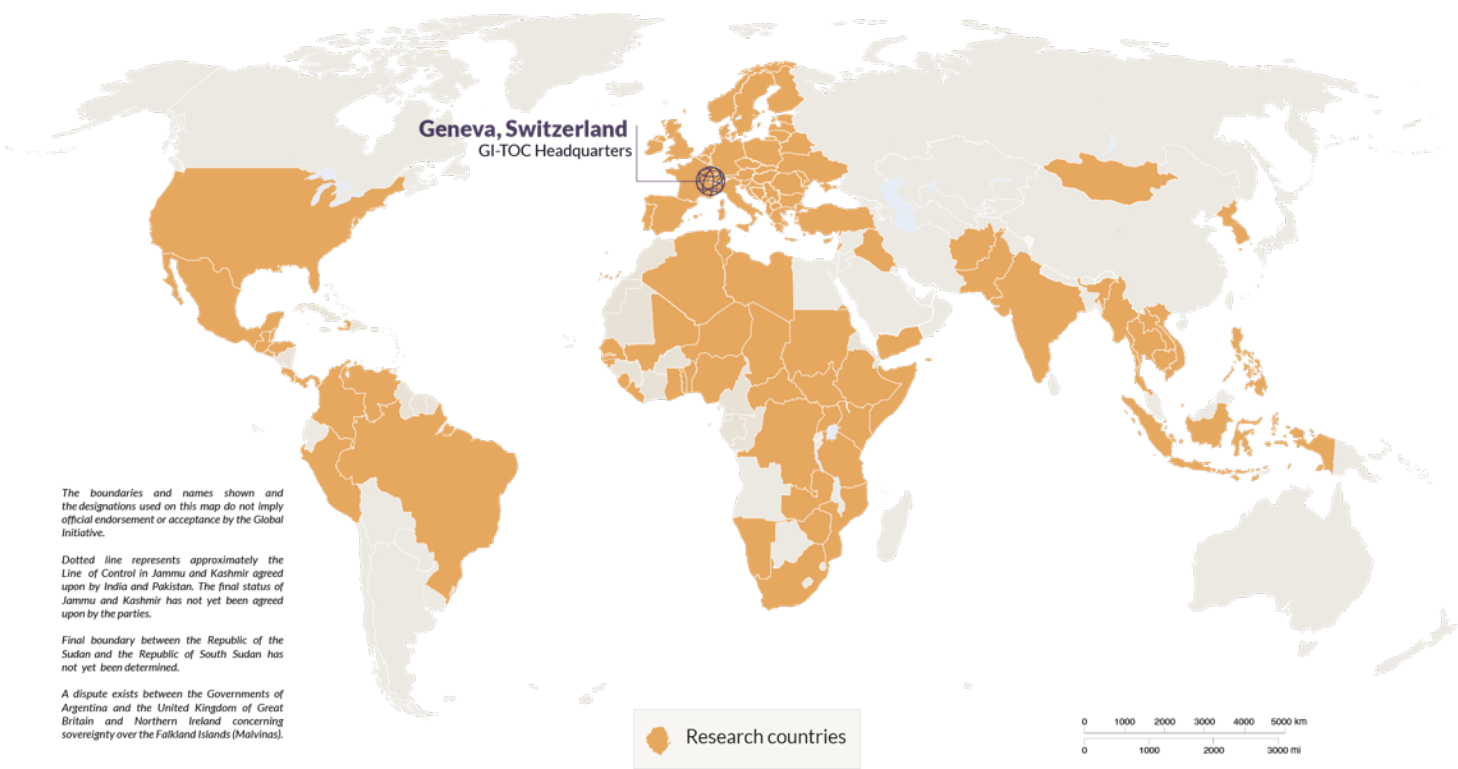
The GI-TOC's primary oversight Board is global, overseeing the Initiative's actions and operations throughout the world, providing governance and strategic advice through the organization's headquarters in Geneva and its regional office in Vienna.

A Board overseeing work run from the Cape Town and Nairobi offices with a focus on activities in East and southern Africa brings a focus on that region's unique needs. The African Board maintains close ties and communication with the global Board and works under its authority. As the organization continues to expand, consideration will be given to the appointment of other regional oversight boards.

We have sought to ensure that the boards are geographically and gender representative. The global Board has members from every region of the world, and half of the members are women. Later this year, two additional Network members will join the global Board to represent the Network.



Where we work



REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY OBSERVATORIES



The GI-TOC has developed a regional network of civil-society actors to work together to address organized crime. It has created observatories to expose more fully the extent and damage caused by organized crime, illicit trade and corruption, and to bolster state and non-state actors committed to achieving an effective response. Rather than regional offices, these observatories should be considered nodes in a network: clusters where like-minded crime analysts and activists come together to collect, share and analyze data, and take part in dialogue about the 'hidden economy' and the impact of organized crime. These regional observatories provide a unique platform for engagement with states, and for dialogue and joint action between civil society, law enforcement and other state actors.

Currently, the GI-TOC has five civil-society observatories and allied networks against organized crime at both country and regional level that focus on the priorities of that region:

- North Africa and the Sahel
- South Eastern Europe
- Eastern and Southern Africa
- Central America
- Guinea Bissau

By 2023, the GI-TOC intends to open organized-crime observatories for the following regions:

- Asia-Pacific
- West Africa



Civil Society Observatory – North Africa and the Sahel

The observatory, which was launched in 2018, assesses and monitors organized crime, human smuggling and security trends across seven countries in North and western Africa. In 2020, most of the observatory's work revolved around two projects commissioned by the European Commission, under the EU's Trust Fund for Africa, to assess the political economy around human smuggling in North Africa and the Sahel, and the impacts on migrants. A third project, on border dynamics in Libya, funded by the US Institute of Peace, UN Women and the World Food Program, was launched in the autumn, with most activity planned for 2021.

As a result of these contracts, the observatory has been able to further expand and consolidate its network of field monitors in the Maghreb Sahel, which now includes more than 200 monitors across Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Mali and Sudan. Monitors, who include local activists, journalists and researchers, among others, are the core of the observatory's unique network-based research system. In 2021, the observatory is planning to expand its work to Morocco and possibly building stronger synergies with other GI-TOC teams working on coastal West African states, as well as the observatory covering southern and eastern Africa.



The observatory has also issued a number of reports. A study on narcotics in North Africa was launched in June. The first longitudinal study of the region, the report details trends in the production of narcotics, analyzed trafficking, exploring the types of drugs that transit the region, the routes they take, the groups involved in their movement and the rapid rise in regional drug consumption. Publication of the report led to requests from various officials for briefings on key findings, as well as the development of a joint US Institute of Peace–GI-TOC seminar on the topic.

In September, Observatory staff developed a rapid analysis on the impact of Mali's coup on illicit networks and economies in the country. The analysis, published on the GI-TOC blog, was picked up and flagged as a "best of" analysis by several key observers of dynamics in West Africa.

The Observatory also delivered a number of roundtables and curated forums on organized-crime issues. This included a three-part roundtable series with the ISS between October and December, delving into migration, borders, and border security-sector reform dynamics, and a forum held in November in the Libyan city of Zuwara on resilience issues.

Throughout the year, staff provided in-depth briefings and interviews to various government actors, multilateral institutions, civil-society organizations and journalists. The observatory was also actively involved in podcasts for the GI-TOC, including 'The Impact: Coronavirus and Organized Crime' and 'Africa and the Global Illicit Economy'.

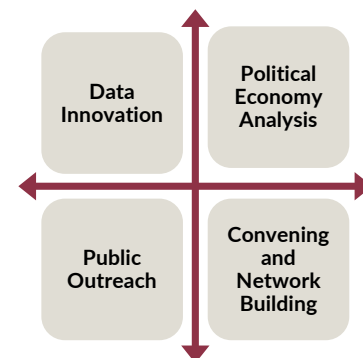
Civil Society Observatory – Eastern and Southern Africa

The observatory was launched in August 2019, and the objective of the project is to bolster the fight against organized crime and illicit financial flows by developing a set of interlocking regional observatories that will improve analysis and reporting of organized crime, and mobilize, encourage and support state and civil-society responses. In particular, the project will pilot innovative data-collection methodologies for illicit markets, and place in the public domain data and political economy analyses that focus on the profits accrued from key regional markets, how these are earned, where they are channelled to, the actors involved and the socio-economic impact that they have.

The project has four interlocking pillars of activity, with two centres of operation, Nairobi for East Africa and Cape Town for southern Africa. The four pillars are:



- 1. Data innovation:** Experimenting with new ways to capture the scope, scale and impact of the illicit economy.
- 2. Political economy analysis:** Delivering in-depth research studies and regular bulletins that highlight the political economy dimensions of illicit markets.
- 3. Convening and network building:** Creating and strengthening platforms for engagement between civil society and state institutions to further responses to organized crime.
- 4. Public outreach:** Disseminating information and analysis into the public domain.



DATA INNOVATION

The observatory is experimenting with different methodologies for collecting data, with pilots in six illicit markets across southern and eastern Africa. These markets include heroin and methamphetamines, gold, charcoal, assassinations and the illicit wildlife trade.

Several of these methodologies rely on gathering financial and pricing data across illicit commodity chains, allowing calculations of illicit profits and the distribution of profits to different actors. Other methods use incident analysis, with prices benchmarked or banded to allow quantification of market value.

POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS

The observatory's political-economy analysis includes in-depth and targeted reports on various illicit markets in the region. The political economy has been shifting as a result of the COVID-19 disruption, and across the project work this has been identified along with the impact that it is having on illicit markets and on criminal groups and actors.

The observatory produces a monthly [Risk Bulletin](#) whose purpose is to analyze the nature and extent of illicit commodity markets and organized crime across the wider region and to provide a platform for the presentation of the project's overall conclusions.

CONVENING AND NETWORK BUILDING

The observatory is a platform for engagement with states, and aims to bring civil society together with law enforcement and other state actors to enable dialogue and joint approaches to combating organized crime. Since the launch of the project, various meetings and webinars have been held in the region.

A webinar titled 'Civil Society Meeting on gangs in Kenya' was held on 22 July 2020. This was a successful engagement with civil society in Kenya, and included 37 stakeholders from academia, human rights, arts and culture, governance and the legal field. This was the first in a series of meetings aimed at sparking the debate on the gang problem. It was a starting point in the formation of a network of networks and a coalition that will spearhead discussions geared towards responding to the gang problem in Kenya.

The second webinar in this series took place on 18 November and launched the report titled 'The Politics of Crime – Kenya's gang phenomenon'. The report draws on months of fieldwork in Nairobi and Mombasa to analyze what drives and sustains this problem. The event discussed the report's implications for democracy and urban development. There has been positive media follow-up and articles focusing on the report.

The observatory also held a webinar launching the paper titled 'Following the money: the use of the *hawala* remittance system in the Yemen–Somalia arms trade' on 28 October, this was a closed event with a targeted invite list



with 105 attendees. The event was well attended by a variety of participants from various organizations, the private sector and the donor community.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The observatory continues to produce regular podcasts to reach a wider audience. Topics covered to date in the 'Africa and the Global Illicit Economy', 'Deep Dive' and 'The Impact' podcast series have included COVID-19 and organized crime in East and Southern Africa; the impact of bans on tobacco and khat on illicit trade; heroin smuggling in the region; smuggling corridors; the illegal charcoal trade; illegal wildlife trade; gangs in South Africa and Kenya, and how they took advantage of COVID-19 to recruit children; police assassinations in South Africa; and illicit gold mining. The observatory is also finalizing an investigative podcast series on assassinations, which will be released before the end of the year. There are also a number of short documentary films in production. The first, titled 'Mobile Money – Inside Kenya's Matatu Gangs', accompanied the launch of the 'The Politics of Crime – Kenya's gang phenomenon' report.

Civil Society Observatory – South Eastern Europe

The observatory was launched as an outcome of the 2018 Western Balkans Summit in London, a part of the Berlin Process. The observatory is a platform that connects and empowers civil-society actors in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The observatory aims to enable civil society to identify, analyze and map criminal trends and their impact on illicit flows, governance, development, inter-ethnic relations, security and the rule of law, and supports them in their monitoring of national dynamics and wider regional and international organized-crime trends.

The observatory produces regular policy briefs on regional issues, such as cannabis cultivation in Albania, the migrant situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the ongoing violent dispute between organized crime groups in Montenegro and Serbia. Other publications – recent and forthcoming – include a regional anti-corruption assessment and analysis of the Berlin Process anti-corruption pledges; a report (and explainer video) on illicit financial flows in Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia; a cross-regional report on the sexual exploitation of children online and in the tourism industry in the Western Balkans; and a criminal hotspots report, time looking at criminal markets and money-laundering activities in the region.

In October, the observatory launched a monthly risk bulletin. This new publication, modelled on similar risk bulletins produced by the GI-TOC's other regional observatories, will cover issues related to organized crime, illicit finance and corruption in the Western Balkans region.



The observatory also focuses on building resilience in local communities across the Western Balkans. Together with the Resilience Fund, it supports local civil society and community organizations in raising awareness on the topic. Resilience-strengthening activities of more than ten local organizations have been selected and supported during 2020, and about a hundred local actors participated in GI-TOC-led events.

Activities are supported by a local research network (which has 60+ members), who provide granular input, and a growing network of regional experts (35+ members), who provide feedback and analysis across the six Western Balkans countries. The observatory is supported by the governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway and Austria.



Civil Society Observatory – Central America

In the last quarter of 2020, the GI-TOC has established an extortion and organized-crime observatory for Central America, which builds on our ongoing work on resilience in the region. The observatory closely monitors the extortion economy in Central America and promotes the use of data on this pervasive crime.

As of September 2020, the observatory has a methodology for the observation of extortion, which includes three phases:

1. Documenting programmes and practices to prevent and control extortion in the region.
2. Providing bi-monthly reports on extortion, data and policy recommendations for countries in the region.
3. Analysis on extortion and related crimes (homicides, human smuggling and trafficking, illicit financial flows, etc.).

Through the observatory, the regional network will continue to identify programmes and practices that are being implemented to control extortion in the region. Information about the project can be accessed at www.globalinitiative.net/extortion.

Civil Society Observatory – Guinea-Bissau

Jointly with the UN System in the country, the GI-TOC has established a civil society observatory in Guinea-Bissau to monitor the country's drug-trafficking economy, as well as other illicit markets. There is a lack of analytical reporting, particularly in English, although detailed reporting on events in Guinea-Bissau in the wider lusophone world is also lacking.

The observatory has three main outputs, all of which will be developed and shared in English, Portuguese and selected local languages:

1. **Risk bulletins:** outlining monthly developments in Guinea-Bissau in illicit markets and their connections to the country's political economy. These are being produced for a restricted audience (e.g. selected missions, the UN, relevant think-tanks).
2. **Policy briefs:** along the same lines as the 2020 Guinea-Bissau policy brief ('Breaking the Vicious Cycle'), the GI-TOC will produce a quarterly brief on an identified topic related to the illicit economy and political developments. This would be widely and publicly distributed. The briefs will draw on key themes emerging from monthly reporting.
3. **Multi-media outreach:** the GI-TOC is developing a selected number of podcasts/short video segments to accompany the release of the policy briefs. Where appropriate, we will also hold civil-society discussions in Bissau around their findings (both before and after publication). Community radio and the use of social media are well developed in Guinea-Bissau, providing a powerful platform for disseminating news.

Future civil-society observatories

ASIA-PACIFIC

The Asia-Pacific observatory is being developed throughout 2020 and is foreseen to formally launch in 2021. The observatory, temporarily managed remotely owing to the impact of the pandemic, has started work to monitor and counter organized crime across Asia and the Pacific. Illicit drugs – methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine and other synthetic drugs, and their production, use and trade, have consistently been considered a threat by ASEAN member states and other Asia-Pacific countries for over 20 years. But there are numerous other significant tradable commodities increasingly available in the region – people, wildlife, arms, marine products and counterfeit goods. South East Asia in particular is entangled in a web of international illicit flows of natural resources – flora, fauna, minerals and timber.



The predominant focus of the Asia-Pacific observatory, in conjunction with the Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa, is to deliver 'Analyzing and Disrupting Environmental Crime in the Globalized Economy' – a project funded by the Norwegian government. The goal of the project is to analyze and reduce threat financing and illicit financial flows relating to environmental commodities, and to reduce conflict drivers and human and environmental vulnerability in the Congo Basin and Swahili coasts of Africa and in the Golden Triangle region of Asia.

The Asia-Pacific observatory will continue to build a regional network, launching detailed studies on the hubs and nodes identified through China's Belt and Road Initiative, and producing regular policy briefs on topics of relevance to the region – e.g. illegal logging, criminality in the plastic waste industry and the prevalence and industrialization of drug production, use and distribution.

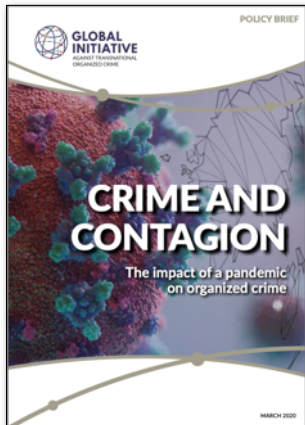
WEST AFRICA

The GI-TOC is working towards establishing a civil society observatory for West Africa. We hope to position it in Abuja, home of ECOWAS, the West African regional economic and political organization. While this remains dependent on our ability to secure long-term funds we are confident of being able to further expand our regional work in the course of 2021. The West African observatory would work in conjunction with the North Africa and Sahel network to cover the Sahelian states from the south.



COVID-19

As COVID-19 emerged in late 2019 and early 2020, it soon became clear that it would have a profound impact not only on public health, but on society more generally and the global economy. Having recognized the significance the pandemic would have on influencing and shaping organized crime and illicit markets, the GI-TOC launched the **#CovidCrimeWatch initiative**.



Launched initially as a 12-week-long series from the end of March 2020, the #CovidCrimeWatch initiative monitored and analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on the illicit economy and organized crime. Our first policy brief, 'Crime and Contagion: The impact of a pandemic on organized crime', outlined the four major ways in which we anticipated the pandemic would affect organized crime.

Since March 2020, we have published eight policy briefs on topics including human smuggling and human trafficking, the illicit drugs markets, cybercrime and the role of the United Nations in the times of COVID-19. You will find more details on each of the other seven policy briefs in the relevant workstreams later in the report.



In addition to the policy briefs, the GI-TOC released a weekly – and from July onwards, monthly – **newsletter** exploring existing and emerging interactions between COVID-19 and the illicit economy. The newsletters reported on a host of stories picked up by the global press, touching on issues as varied as criminal governance in Latin America, to wildlife trafficking in Asia and police brutality in Africa. **An open-source archive of all media articles** collected by the GI-TOC was created and is available to download from the #CovidCrimeWatch website page. In addition to the weekly newsletters, 24 blog posts were written by GI-TOC staff and members of the GI-TOC Network of Experts.

The GI-TOC has recorded a **weekly** podcast, 'The Impact: Coronavirus and Organized Crime'. The guests featured include GI-TOC staff and Network members, as well as other highly respected experts. Among the topics discussed in the podcast series were the increased risk of cybercrime and fake medicine, as well as the ways in which COVID-19 impacted human smuggling and trafficking. Furthermore, an in-depth discussion of the global cocaine market amid the pandemic featured analysis from experts across the world, including Central America, West Africa and Europe. In addition, a two -part series on corruption was recorded, in which experts discussed the ways in which organized criminals are positioning themselves to capture state institutions and contracts – enriching themselves at the expense of the public. Finally, the GI-TOC hosted a special edition of the podcast focusing on the interaction between the pandemic and organized crime in Brazil.

In total, since March 2020, 14 episodes have been released, culminating in a roundtable discussion on what was learnt throughout the #CovidCrimeWatch initiative, and the series was downloaded more than 14 000 times. 'The Impact: Coronavirus and Organized Crime' podcast series achieved the download numbers in the top 5% of podcasts globally.



Criminal Contagion

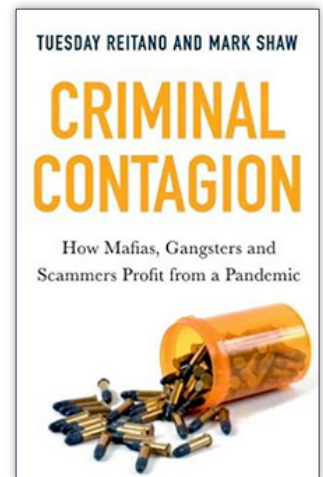
A new book titled *Criminal Contagion – How Mafias, Gangsters and Scammers Profit from a Pandemic*, written by Tuesday Reitano and Mark Shaw, will be published soon. The pandemic has cast a long shadow over the rule of law, and the book uncovers its impacts on the global illicit economy, and unpacks the long-term implications of these extraordinary developments.

COVID-19 is reshaping and challenging governments, social order and the world economy in previously unimaginable ways – including changes to the illegal flow of goods and services. Livelihoods are shrinking or disappearing altogether, and mafias, gangsters and profiteers are adapting to find new routes for illegal commodities, from counterfeit drugs to trafficked wildlife and people.

Shortages, lockdowns and citizen responses have brought the underworld and upperworld into greater convergence, as criminals strive to meet needs, maximize opportunities and fill governance vacuums. Unscrupulous fraudsters are touting fake remedies to desperate people, such as counterfeit drugs and illicit wildlife used in traditional medicine. Social distancing and lockdowns have seen online financial transactions and cyber-communication, and operations replacing or supplementing physical shipments and interactions, again affording new opportunities for fraudsters and cyber-criminals. Heavy-handed state responses have also, quite literally, created new illicit markets by prohibiting the sale of particular goods and services, while some elites have capitalized on the pandemic for personal or political gain.

Two special features exploring gang activity in Cape Town and mafia activity in Italy were also published; see <https://globalinitiative.net/parallel-contagion-mafia-covid/>. The former looked at whether COVID-19-related lockdowns had any impact on gang activity. Several media outlets reported that the coronavirus inspired an unprecedented gangland truce in South Africa resulting in gangsters downing their guns and delivering food parcels and other support to the communities. GI-TOC researchers and analysts discovered that in certain areas on the Cape Flats, gangs were transporting illicit items, such as drugs and guns, in food parcels. Several community members revealed that residents are required to sell the illicit items in exchange for something to eat. See <https://spark.adobe.com/page/L6xrJixwEobqz/>.

With support from the #GIResilience project, Roegchanda Pascoe of the Manenberg Safety Forum was able to start a feeding scheme in vulnerable communities in Cape Town. The coronavirus lockdown has led to severe food shortages on parts of the Cape Flats. At the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, a feeding scheme intending to provide meals to 2 000 residents in Manenberg was established. The initiative has grown by leaps and bounds. Now it provides meals to 4 100 people every day.



#COVIDCrimeWatch

With its broader focus, tapping into a global information trend, our COVIDCrimeWatch coverage has been important for the visibility of the GI-TOC and its work. It shows the organization can be reactive during a rolling news situation and demonstrates the network's relevance to a global issue. The GI-TOC's coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a real success in terms of audience reach. If we look at the top content in terms of pages with the most views during this period, three of the top 10 site pages, including the home page, relate to COVID-19. Pages covering COVID-19 subjects generated more than 120k page views during this period – or 13% of all page views. Our COVID-19 focused podcast has had 14 000 downloads in total.



GI-TOC MULTIMEDIA STRATEGY

As the GI-TOC has increased and diversified its output of research and programmatic activity, strengthening the ways to reach our target audience and key stakeholders has been a priority. This planned investment in upgrading and upscaling our communication and outreach became more important as the pandemic constrained other normative means to communicate, and shape policy and key debates.

The objective of the new and strengthened multimedia communications strategy is to facilitate and lead global debate relating to transnational crime in this space as we transform the GI-TOC into a network of action. We intend to leverage social media and other platforms to connect with and build networks of people interested in our work and the broader fields of research, policy and information relating to transnational organized crime. As travel is restricted for some time, and the traditional forums of meetings and conferences, including under the auspices of the UN System, may never return to their pre-pandemic format, virtual channels offer new distribution channels for our work, allow us to reach these audiences where they are and provide new ways for GI to start and influence online conversations relating to transnational organized crime.

We also hope to increase the reach and distribution of the GI-TOC's work and publications using platform-specific strategies and tactics to meet target audiences. This includes building a more global and diverse audience for our work. To help us meet this objective, we have six central communications goals:

1. To lead, participate and facilitate online discussion relating to TOC
2. To increase the number of site users referred by social networks
3. To grow the right audiences for the GI-TOC's accounts and work through use of a wide range of multimedia tools and approaches
4. To make social distribution an essential part of new initiatives and reports
5. To increase engagement rates on the GI-TOC's social accounts
6. To raise the staff's communications skills to reinforce corporate communications and broaden the distribution and audience for the GI-TOC's work.

In actioning this strategy, we have initiated a further upgrade of our website (following the rebranding in 2019), we have recruited a dedicated multimedia production team and increased the size of our communications team with the capacity to produce content in four languages. The output of this has been notable both in terms of content creation and in demonstrated impact.

So far, the GI-TOC has launched seven multi-part podcast series and created more than 74 episodes as of December. Overall, we expect to have released over 77 episodes by the end of December. This would mean an average of seven podcasts per month since March 2020. The flagship, 'Deep Dive: Exploring Organized Crime', discusses the major themes and research reports with report authors and expert commentators. 'Africa and the Global Illicit Economy' showcases the work of three of our organized-crime observatories on the continent, as well as the EU-funded ENACT programme, and regularly features voices from the communities most affected. 'Road to Kyoto: Organized crime at the 14th UN Crime Congress' was a podcast series specially created to accompany and inform the debates at the UN Crime Congress and other issues pertinent to the UN System. Our most successful podcast series thus far was 'The Impact: Coronavirus and Organized Crime', which over 14 parts, shared and discussed the most recent trends in the illicit economy in response to the pandemic. Alongside the launch of the Assassinations Witness campaign, we have created an accompanying podcast series called 'Faces of Assassination', which features roundtable discussions on issues related to the profiles selected in the campaign.



EXAMPLES OF THE GI-TOC'S MEDIA COVERAGE



Podcasts



Audio is a new editorial channel for the GI-TOC and, as such, we need to build our reputation in this area among our existing audience and establish who in our existing and target audiences are podcast listeners. The initial analytics suggest this will be a very promising means for disseminating information, generating debate and attracting new audiences. All seven of these new series are reaching the benchmark to fall within the top 20% of all podcasts produced, achieving more than 1 100 downloads within the first 30 days of their release.

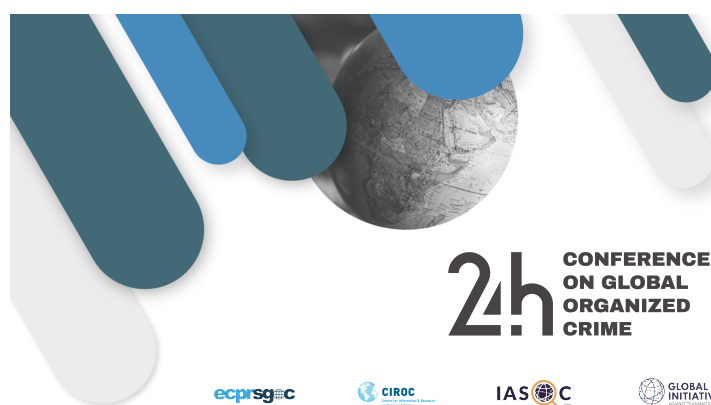
In addition to audio, we are investing in creating more video content, experimenting with a variety of styles, lengths and approaches. The flagship launch of Assassinations Witness was a 30 minute 'as-live' television-style event, which has been viewed by more than 1 000 people. Shorter informational-style videos accompanying or explaining specific reports are similarly attracting attention and increasing engagement with our content. The Resilience Fund in particular is using video content as a means of telling the individual stories and sharing experiences of the grantees across the world, and has produced more than 30 videos in its inaugural year.

Finally, we have experimented with other ways of convening live events in lieu of face-to-face conferences. The GI-TOC has hosted 30+ webinars in 2020.

Most of our webinars and video content are produced in multiple languages, using simultaneous translation or second audio tracks. Participation in these webinars has been impressive – the launch our report on Illicit Financial Flows in the Western Balkans, held jointly with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), included 120 people, and regional discussions under our Canadian-funded extortion project in Central America convened five regional dialogues over webinar platforms, with 80 or more people participating and discussing.

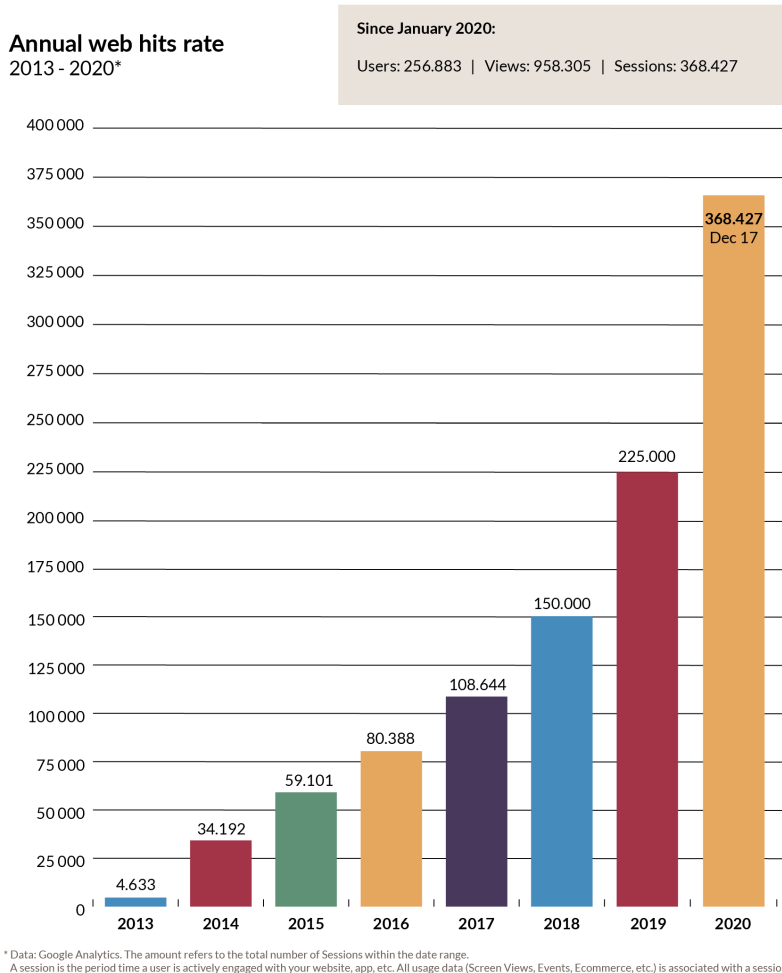
THE 24H CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME

In November, we convened the first 24 Hour Conference on Organized Crime jointly with the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime and three universities. The event was a real success. More than 3 000 people subscribed to it. Every panel had at least 50 people in the audience, and some more than 150; 263 experts, practitioners and researchers from 57 countries showcased their knowledge on different themes. All the panels were gender-balanced and we had representatives from academia, including established professors and early career academics and policymakers, serving law enforcement and civil society.



WEBSITE

As a result of the heightened outreach, the GI-TOC website has seen a 50% increase in page views in 2020, compared to the previous year, from 470 262 to 958 305. The number of users has increased by 52%, from 123 601 to 256 883. This means an increase in pages per session too, so we are deepening people's engagement once they are on site.



The standalone site for the Faces of Assassination campaign – <https://assassination.globalinitiative.net/> – has attracted 12 500 users since its launch in June, generating more than 47 000 page views. It is clear that the audience is finding rich content to engage with – on average, a user consumes three pages per session on the site.

Facebook and Twitter are the most significant social-media referrers, and the volume of referrals from both these platforms and LinkedIn has grown when compared with the previous eight-month period. In September 2020, we reached a landmark 10 000 Twitter followers, all through organic growth. As of December, we have 11.189 Twitter followers. Monthly impressions for GI-TOC tweets – an indication of the visibility of our Twitter output – has shown consistent growth this year with a particular spike relating to COVID-19 coverage and the launch of podcasts and Assassination Witness.

Tweets with added media, especially graphics, garner above average levels of interaction, which is why the GI-TOC is investing in multimedia strategies for dissemination as an element of our future strategy, to deepen our relationship with our followers and encourage engagement. Our Facebook posts are now reaching more people, thanks to more regular posting, more creative posting, some live broadcasting and some paid promotion. At the end of 2019, the average organic reach for a post was around 134 users; the average this year to date is now 722 users and total reach is at 1 214 users.



GI-TOC'S FIVE SUBSTANTIVE WORKSTREAMS

Debates on organized crime and illicit markets are complex, crossing multiple sectors, while a wide array of expertise is needed to understand and respond to the phenomenon. Our current strategy introduced five substantive workstreams to ensure that the GI-TOC presents a coherent and interlocking programme of activities. Together, they represent areas of comparative advantage for the GI-TOC, and by creating synergies across these workstream areas, we achieve perspectives and approaches that are not offered elsewhere. The workstreams encompass all criminal markets – drugs, people, arms, environmental commodities, and violence, as well as addressing the drivers and impacts.



PEOPLE

Understanding and mitigating the impact of organized crime on ordinary people, particularly the poor and most vulnerable, is at the heart of the GI-TOC's work. Our work in this stream concentrates on two of the criminal markets where people themselves have been commoditized by organized crime: namely human trafficking and human smuggling. The focus on ordinary people affected by organized crime of course goes beyond just the victims of trafficking and smuggling. It includes women and children all over the world who are caught up in the daily reality of living or working in places where criminal groups of exert influence.



ENVIRONMENT

Analyzing and countering illicit environmental commodity markets, and illicit markets that have severe impact on the environment, such as plastic waste and marine crimes, is an important focus of the GI-TOC in its establishment phase. This workstream includes a broad focus and a diversity of approaches to organized crime and the environment, analyzing and countering a wide range of illicit markets for environmental commodities.



POLITICAL ECONOMY

The GI-TOC has been an active proponent of a political economy-based analysis of organized crime and illicit markets. Our analytical work and project portfolio explicitly view the response to organized crime through the lens of the political economy, and seek to identify strategies to leverage political and economic opportunities to achieve sustainable change.



CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE

At their most extreme, organized-crime networks and groups establish forms of 'crime governance', by which they utilize a set of criminal instruments (violence, threat or corruption) and associated criminal actors to exert influence. This workstream analyses the governance strategies that criminal groups use to (among other things) reduce risk, improve efficiency of their activities and capitalize on new opportunities.



INSTITUTIONS

The GI-TOC's work in the area of institutions covers a wide range of initiatives, all of which are aimed at strengthening institutional responses to organized crime across multiple sectors that seek to disrupt organized-crime groups and mitigate the damage they cause.



PEOPLE

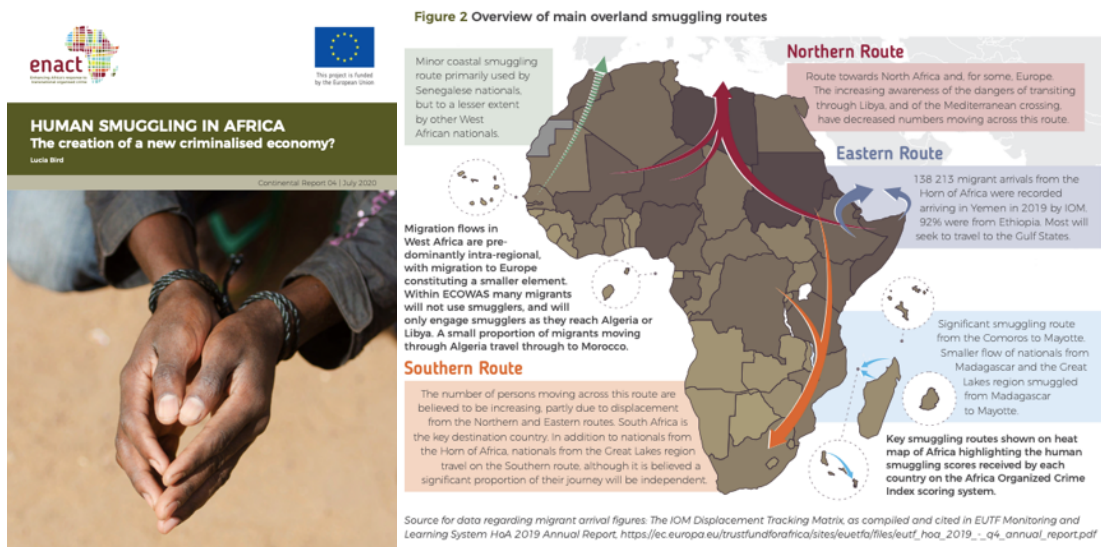
Human smuggling and human trafficking, two of the crime-specific protocols to the UNTOC Convention, have been described, as a 'victimless crime', in the case of smuggling, and the 'oldest organized crime', in the case of human trafficking. Yet both remain urgent, contemporary humanitarian emergencies and gross human-rights violations are practised on a daily basis. They are illicit industries that have become supercharged by technology, such as social media and the internet, which allow smugglers to connect with their clients, market their services, but also to extort the families of those nominally in their care.

The GI-TOC's activities in this workstream are to actively monitor, through our network of Organized Crime Observatories, people on the move with the facilitation of smugglers and populations vulnerable to human trafficking, and to identify cases in which vulnerabilities are increasing and better policies are required. Through our partnership with the EU for Libya and the Sahel, we actively analyze smuggling dynamics, using scientific research methodologies to monitor changing attitudes of local populations towards migrants and their risks of trafficking. Our work across Central America, Mexico and the US identifies how extortion is driving migration trends that expose those on the move to predatory criminal groups.

The internet has allowed for virtually accessed forms of exploitation to be even more widely consumed, but while perpetrators may consider their passive consumption online to be more benign, it does not make the crimes or violence enacted on the exploited against their will any less real. COVID has driven online activity to new heights, and our monitoring has shown this to have resulted in growing markets for sexual exploitation, including of children, and heightened forms of vulnerability. The GI-TOC, through its research and through the RESPECT initiative is working to challenge that trend using public-private sector partnership.

HOW CRIMINALIZATION OF THE HUMAN SMUGGLING MARKET INCREASED HARM TO MIGRANTS

As part of the ENACT project, an in-depth report titled [Human Smuggling in Africa: The creation of a new criminalised economy?](#) was published in July. This report explores human smuggling in Africa, focusing on how the criminalization of the human-smuggling market has driven the professionalization of the industry, and increased harm to migrants. The analysis considers data drawn from the ENACT Organized Crime Index for Africa, and incorporates in-depth comparative legislative analysis of human-smuggling laws in Africa. The findings were promulgated in two policy briefs, an ISS Today article, and shared in a [webinar](#) held on 29 July attended by over 100 individuals from organizations, including the EU Commission, the International Organization for Migration, and a wide range of national law-enforcement bodies.



MONITORING THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HUMAN SMUGGLING IN LIBYA AND THE SAHEL

GI-TOC continues to lead a research project on human smuggling and trafficking in North Africa and the Sahel, principally via a project commissioned by the EU's Trust Fund for Africa to monitor and analyze the political economy of the phenomenon in Libya, Niger, Chad and Mali. As of June 2020, Tunisia was also added to the list of countries where research is being conducted. This program has two streams of work: a) granular monthly reports on the situation in Libya and the Sahel, and b) focused research on themes developed jointly by the GI-TOC and the EUTF around smuggling and trafficking dynamics in North Africa and the Sahel.

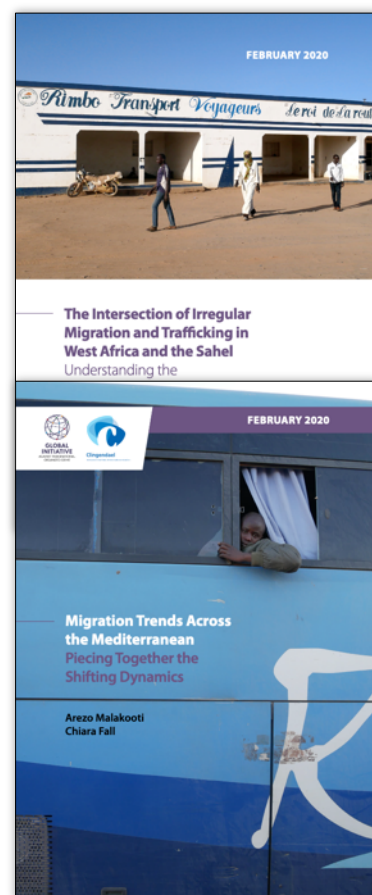
The first stream of work, the monthly reports, have been produced since July 2018, comprehensively delving into key human smuggling and trafficking issues, organized crime dynamics and government response efforts in North Africa and the Sahel. The stream is built on a standing network of more than 200 field contacts (civil society activists, journalists, community leaders, etc.) based across these regions.

The second stream of work, focused research, resulted in the publication of two reports in 2020. The first, 'The Intersection of Irregular Migration and Trafficking in West Africa and the Sahel: Understanding Patterns of Vulnerability' by Senior Fellow Arezo Malakooti, measures whether the pattern of vulnerability towards trafficking has shifted for migrants in West Africa and the Sahel, in light of increased difficulties in reaching Europe. The report leverages an innovative methodology, involving a 1 600-person survey of migrants along the routes to North Africa and proxies, to gauge changes in patterns of vulnerability.

The second, 'Migration Trends Across the Mediterranean: Piecing Together the Shifting Dynamics', also by Malakooti, details key trends in irregular migration across the Maghreb and through the Central and Western Mediterranean routes. Both are based on comprehensive fieldwork in the region.

The North Africa and Sahel Observatory has also conducted independent research in Algeria, 'Algeria's Migration Dilemma: The Political Economy of Migration and Human Smuggling in the extreme south of Algeria,' by Senior Analyst Raouf Farrah. The study, which is also due to be published, details the evolution and current status of irregular migration to and through southern Algeria, with a focus on challenges posed by shifting government strategy on the matter.

Further, staff from the GI-TOC have contributed to academic publications on human smuggling in North Africa and the Sahel. One such piece, titled 'The Burners: Smuggling Networks and Maghrebi Irregular Migrants in North Africa,' is due to be published in the forthcoming book *Global Human Smuggling: Creativity, Control, and Complexity in Unauthorized Mobility*, edited by Dr Luigi Achilli and David Kyle.



THE RESPONSIBLE & ETHICAL PRIVATE SECTOR COALITION AGAINST TRAFFICKING (RESPECT) INITIATIVE

Babson College's Initiative on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, the IOM and the GI-TOC were the founding organizations of the RESPECT initiative. GI-TOC hosts the RESPECT initiative and its activities as the research lead in the Tech Against Trafficking Initiative and the expansion of the [Modern Slavery Map](#).

The RESPECT initiative assembles key thought leaders, practitioners, and policymakers to identify solutions to public- and private-sector challenges surrounding human trafficking and modern slavery.



RESPECT RESOURCE CENTRE

RESPECT Resource Centre is a global one-stop shop for businesses and relevant stakeholders on materials related to trafficking. This database hosts about 1 100+ publications reports, blogs, interviews and event information. Our resources are grouped into risk and governance areas (such as recruitment, due diligence, etc), industries (e.g. garment, construction, tourism, etc.) and seven regions.

TECH AGAINST TRAFFICKING

Tech Against Trafficking (TAT), launched in June 2018, is a coalition of technology companies collaborating with global experts to help eradicate human trafficking by applying technology. The current member companies are Amazon, AT&T, BT, Microsoft and Salesforce.org. RESPECT was appointed as the research lead to guide the TAT, alongside Business for Social Responsibility, acting as the TAT Secretariat.



In the first quarter of 2020, TAT [concluded its 2019 Accelerator Programme](#), supporting and enhancing the IOM's Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative, a global data hub on human trafficking.

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, TAT's focus shifted and the GI-TOC conducted a [survey](#) to better understand the near- and long-term impacts on anti-trafficking efforts, as well as how TAT can best advance its efforts in 2020.

The GI-TOC is also engaged in a blog series with TAT company members, aiming to look at how technology can be best used to mitigate and prevent human trafficking, and how to address misuse of technology.



In July 2020, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and TAT jointly launched [Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings: A comprehensive analysis of technology tools](#), report that the GI-TOC contributed as TAT's research lead. The report finds that although technology can be an effective tool in the drive to prevent human trafficking, it has simultaneously enabled traffickers to achieve greater efficiencies.

INTERACTIVE MAP FOR BUSINESS OF ANTI-HUMAN-TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

Launched in the UK in 2018, the interactive map is a joint project between the RESPECT founding organizations, the Global Business Coalition Against Trafficking, and the UN Global Compact through its Action Platform on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains. The map aims to provide a unified repository of information as a resource to facilitate stakeholders in their engagement with the private sector in the fight against human trafficking.

Following the launch, the map has been updated and currently contains 112 organizations and initiatives that are working on five human-trafficking-related issues (child labour, forced labour, etc.), covering 11 industries and eight regions. With this mapping project of anti-human-trafficking initiatives and organizations, we aim to improve coordination on the eradication of modern slavery and provide a unique baseline from which existing and newly formed initiatives can move forward.

In 2020, the GI-TOC and the Global Business Coalition Against Trafficking received funding from the Laudes Foundation to conduct outreach activities to search for additional initiatives and organizations to add to the map; enhance the map with more user-friendly function,; and promote the map to stakeholders, with a specific focus on business.

This project is also supported by the Alliance 8.7, Business for Social Responsibility and the International Labour Organization's Global Business Network on Forced Labour and Human Trafficking.



HOW COVID-19 IMPACTED HUMAN-SMUGGLING DYNAMICS ACROSS THE WORLD



As part of our focus on the impacts of COVID-19, a policy brief titled [Smuggling In The Time Of Covid-19: The impact of the pandemic on human-smuggling dynamics and migrant protection risks](#) was published in April. This brief analyzes how COVID-19 has impacted human-smuggling dynamics across the world, and examines how the pandemic has affected routes, methodologies and the harms faced by migrants using smuggling services.

These findings were presented in an ENACT webinar in May attended by a wide range of participants. They were also presented, alongside our analysis on the impacts of COVID-19 on cybercrime in a TV interview with *Deutsche Welle* in April and by the [Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project](#) in May. The author was also quoted in *El Pais*, one of the key Spanish newspapers, in May.

OSCE LEGAL AND POLICY REPORT: TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED AND -ENABLED TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The GI-TOC is conducting a research project with the OSCE looking at the international legal framework around the misuse of technology for trafficking in human beings; promising cases of policies addressing the misuse of technology facilitating human trafficking; and private-sector and civil-society cases addressing the misuse of technology facilitating human trafficking, as well as the positive use of technology in the response to human trafficking.

In June 2020, we published [Aggravating circumstances: How coronavirus impacts human trafficking](#). This brief contributes to global anti-trafficking efforts aimed at mitigating the effects of the pandemic on human-trafficking situations and actors, not only by providing timely, comprehensive overview and information, but also by suggesting holistic and multi-stakeholder responses and interventions.



CHALLENGES POSED BY URBAN DRUG MARKETS



In July, the GI-TOC published 'Protecting Communities: Responding to the impact of urban drug markets'. The report – commissioned by the GIZ – looks at the challenge posed by urban drug markets, particularly the impact on crime, safety and development. It combines a granular local analysis – based on research as well as interviews with current and former gang members, police, drug users, social workers, court employees and representatives of civil society – with a broader transnational perspective. The study focuses in particular on drug markets in the cities of Cali, Colombia; Chicago, US; Cape Town, South Africa; Karachi, Pakistan; Kingston, Jamaica, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The paper identifies the problems, types and impact of urban drug markets, and examines what can be done about them. It looks at what can and is being done at the community level to strengthen local resilience to drugs within a broader context of improving urban management to make cities safe, resilient and sustainable (in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities).

The topic of protecting communities takes on added relevance because of challenges created by COVID-19 as well as the debate around police reform and how this could impact urban security. The report was accompanied by a video and a podcast series, and was the subject of a webinar discussion.



PREVENTING VULNERABILITY OF AND STRENGTHENING POLICY RESPONSES FOR COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

From April 2020 to March 2021, the Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in South Eastern Europe is conducting a regional assessment of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Western Balkans. The study focuses on the Western Balkans Six (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). The purpose of this report is to understand the ecosystem in which exploitation takes place and to provide a comprehensive overview of the region's vulnerabilities.

This report will analyze if, and to what extent, children in the Western Balkans are subject to commercial sexual exploitation. Preliminary interviews show that, so far, there is little concrete evidence of sexual exploitation of children in these countries. Two aspects of commercial sexual exploitation of children will be of particular interest: online child sexual exploitation, and sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism sector. The issue of Roma children is a particular source of vulnerability in the region. The report will also highlight potential vulnerabilities for child sexual exploitation in the region.





ENVIRONMENT

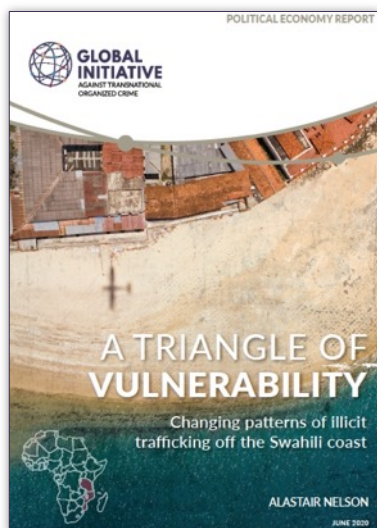
The massive pillaging of natural resources often sits at the nexus of criminal, business and political elites. As natural ecosystems are being destroyed, criminal ecosystems are being created to shape governance, institutions and legal systems, and the global financial and trade architecture to maximize profits and conceal misdeeds. It is well known that the damage to the environment – and thus the ability of the planet to sustain populations – is fundamentally at risk. It is for this reason that a focus on environment is central to our work at the GI-TOC, and that we relentlessly research, analyze and support the investigations of others that will reveal this corruption nexus.

We have focused our efforts geographically on the richest regions of flora and fauna: eastern and southern Africa, the Amazon Basin and the Golden Triangle in Asia. We have stepped up our analysis and advocacy in unprecedented ways for our organization, mainly because there seems little alternative in the face of institutionalized criminal corruption. We are naming names; we are challenging entrenched vested interests; and we are calling for international action to protect the environmental defenders whose lives are threatened, to support efforts to regulate and empower artisanal miners, loggers and those whose livelihoods rely on the natural environment, rather than allowing them to fall prey to predatory criminal enterprises. We focus on investigating and prosecuting unscrupulous trafficking groups using online and offline markets to bring their contraband to market, and finally and most importantly call on the use sanctions and penalties of the highest order to target those holding office and positions of power who enable and protect criminal behaviour.

ILLICIT TRAFFICKING ALONG AFRICA'S EASTERN SEABOARD

The report '[A triangle of vulnerability: Changing patterns of illicit trafficking off the Swahili coast](#)' identified three sites that we perceived to be particularly vulnerable to organized crime as a result of weak governance and poor rule of law in each site, and because we have been hearing information about increased flows of illicit goods through these sites. These sites are Cabo Delgado (in northern Mozambique), Zanzibar and the Comoros isles. Our research describes the diverse nature of illicit flows in these sites, and investigates the political economy of the illicit flows and organized-crime activities in each.





By researching drug-trafficking markets, wildlife crime and other forms of smuggling, we found that Zanzibar, Comoros and northern Mozambique are linked by trafficking routes and criminal networks that operate across borders. The historical factors that have given rise to the prevailing political economies make the societies here vulnerable to corruption and exploitation by criminal groups.

Going forward, the COVID-19 pandemic casts an uncertain future, and may exacerbate the problems of this already volatile region. The pandemic will reshape global economies and the role of governments in enforcing social-distancing restrictions, often through the use of police and security forces to ensure compliance. Vulnerabilities to corruption, illicit trafficking and state abuse may become fault lines that widen under the stress placed on states and societies. Understanding and monitoring the current vulnerabilities between Zanzibar, Comoros and northern Mozambique may, therefore, form a basis for anticipating the future patterns of trafficking in this region. The report is produced by the Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa.

LINKS BETWEEN ORGANIZED CRIME, TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND DEFORESTATION

In April 2020, the GI-TOC, with funding from the US Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, published [People and forests at risk: Organized crime, trafficking in persons and deforestation in Chihuahua, Mexico](#). Research was conducted on the Mexican forestry sector in 2018 and 2019 to identify links between organized crime, trafficking in persons and deforestation.

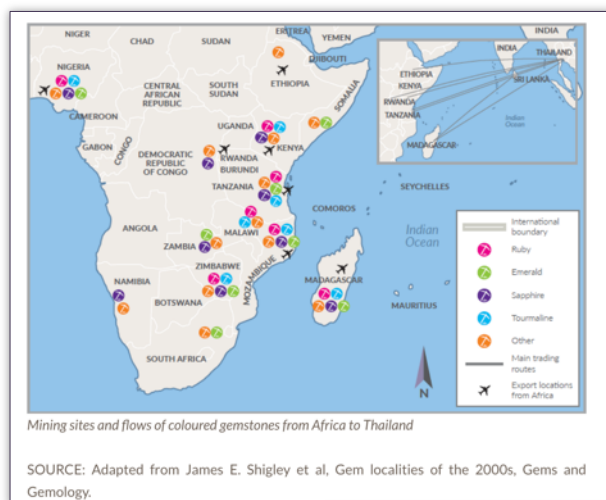
This research found that in the state of Chihuahua, the growing involvement of organized crime in illegal logging and related activities had greatly increased levels of violence, displacement, vulnerability to being trafficked and deforestation. Illegally logged wood from Chihuahua is often laundered and used in the manufacture of consumer goods exported to the US. This means that without effective due diligence, companies and consumers who purchase wood-based products from Mexico may be financing organized crime, and contributing to trafficking in persons and deforestation.



ANALYZING AND DISRUPTING ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME IN THE GLOBALIZED ECONOMY

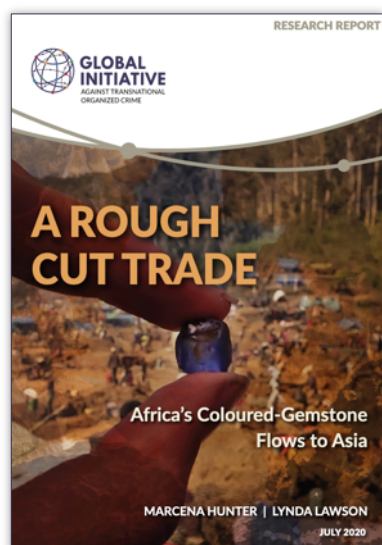
A project of the Asia-Pacific Observatory, in conjunction with the Observatory for East and South Africa, the goal is to analyze and reduce threat financing and illicit financial flows relating to environmental commodities, and to reduce conflict drivers and human and environmental vulnerability in the Congo Basin/Swahili coasts of Africa and in the Golden Triangle region of Asia.

An important element of the project has been deepening our understanding of how the infrastructural developments that are part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are likely to be exploited by criminal networks. Although many of the rail networks, ports, Special Economic Zones and other projects envisioned under BRI are yet to be completed, it is already possible to identify some implications for illicit flows, including environmental crime, and predict others that might emerge in the future. Specifically, evidence indicates that increased connectivity is benefiting licit and illicit businesses alike. New infrastructures more easily connect rural areas of countries, such as, for instance, Lao PDR or Mozambique, where environmental commodities originate, to trade hubs and supply chains.



Indeed, remote areas currently not exposed to environmental and other forms of crime (such as parts of Myanmar) are likely to see that change once the construction of new roads is completed – with significant repercussions for the local economy, communities and biodiversity.

In Africa, BRI projects appear to overlap with (and in some cases extend) existing trafficking routes in the east and south. There is no doubt that ever opportunistic criminal networks will exploit this chance to grow their smuggling activities. A perfect storm is in the making across both continents. This work will be disseminated through a research report and data visualization dashboard in the first quarter of 2021.



The informal nature of the coloured-gemstone trade, combined with the inherent difficulty in valuing rough stones at the site of extraction, provides ample opportunity for criminal and corrupt actors to exploit and profit from it.

The extensive nature of illicit supply chains and the influence of criminal actors are significant obstacles to development efforts and outcomes in Africa, where criminal control over this sector, especially by foreign actors, has deprived the continent of much of the potential economic benefits of the gemstone industry by offshoring value-adding processing.

There is little research on supply chains, actors or financial flows in this sector. In particular, the role of African traders in international coloured-gemstone supply chains has received little attention, and their participation often goes unnoted and unacknowledged.

This investigation has begun to fill this information gap. The report, 'A Rough Cut Trade' draws attention to the significant and multifaceted role African traders play in linking African source markets to Asian producers. The report also seeks to shed light on the scale of the trade and its long-term development impacts for actors both in Africa and in Thailand.

There have been significant efforts put into the development of the Cascade (formerly the Dynamic Data Discovery Engine) – an innovative machine-learning tool that powerfully scrapes through the internet and allows us to detect and then plan disruption activity around the online transactions of illegal wildlife products.

In a flagship partnership with the Global Investigative Journalism Network, the GI-TOC has started to build the capacity of journalists and media houses specifically in the field of environmental crime, to investigate and report on the organized criminal networks (and their illicitly gained funds) active in this field. GIJN will host a dedicated reporting track on organized crime at the 2021 Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Sydney, Australia, and at a suite of regional investigative journalism conferences.

CHARCOAL

A forthcoming report on the charcoal economy investigates the dynamics of the charcoal trade in East Africa through investigative work in three countries. Charcoal is identified as a topic for study as, despite high dependence on the commodity and widespread use by local populations, much of the market is illicit. The three countries in focus are Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan. These countries were chosen by considering the level of charcoal production and consumption, the question of legality in the trade and the nature of the charcoal market in each country. The report will cover intrastate and interstate trade dynamics, including value chains, the actors involved, legal status of charcoal per jurisdiction, associated criminality with the trade (such as violence, smuggling and corruption), pricing and the relationship that locals have with charcoal.

The report assimilates empirical research conducted in each country. Various urban and rural centres are being visited and traders and people with knowledge of the industry interviewed. Questionnaires are used in the interviews to ensure uniformity of the data. Prices of charcoal are collected regularly in each area. The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed research as travel restrictions prevailed, but research has recommenced. Researchers in Kenya and Uganda are set to conclude their fieldwork in September. South Sudan proved a challenging site, owing to travel restrictions and civil unrest. Some data collection has been completed and plans are being made to employ an extra consultant short-term. In addition, plans are being made to use satellite imagery to identify potential production sites in the country.

The report is produced by the Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa and will be available by December.

MADAGASCAR: EXPOSING VULNERABILITIES

While the trafficking of Madagascan tortoises may at first seem an obscure and inconsequential problem, this study shows that an extensive regional network of criminal and corrupt actors consistently undermine gains in rule of law, governance and democracy. This forthcoming report explores the trafficking methods and routes used, looking at possible overlaps with other illicit flows, and providing an analysis of the political economy of tortoise trafficking.

Several Malagasy animals are critically endangered; this report examines in detail, however, ploughshare and radiated tortoises. Decades of successful conservation efforts have been destroyed by the huge increase in poaching and trafficking of these reptiles over the last 20 years to supply the exotic pet trade. This trade is closely linked with social media, and we look at the numerous online dimensions of the trade, considering how cyber-enabled tools can be used in directing efforts to mitigate the deleterious interplay between illegal wildlife trade and the internet.



As the global economy comes under pressure, livelihood prospects contract and traditional donor partners are forced to become more inward-looking – and more inward-spending. Meanwhile, vulnerable countries like Madagascar will be disproportionately affected by not only the long-term impact of COVID-19, but also by climate change. Factors like drought have impelled communities to consider involvement in activities such as the poaching of tortoises for survival.

While principally focused on a major biodiversity problem, this study also looks at the trafficking routes and where overlaps with other illicit flows occur regionally. It analyzes the political economy of tortoise trafficking and what this tells us about vulnerabilities for the trafficking of other illicit products in general.

ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING

The paper will map gold supply chains in and out of South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. This will include identifying prominent actors, tracing pricing along the supply chain (as well as over time) and estimating the scale of production. In addition, due to the limited amount of information on gold mining in South Sudan, the study will provide more in-depth reporting on ASGM activities in South Sudan and political economies surrounding the sector.

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA: PRICE STUDY

The purpose of the research is to gain knowledge of current and past prices of selected products from a sample of wild species that are acquired and traded illegally in eastern and southern Africa.

Commodity prices are a good proxy indicator of demand, if a fairly good understanding of supply factors is available. This study will include a combination of high-profile commodities for which there is a large amount of data, as well as lesser-known species – although significant from a biodiversity conservation perspective – for which relatively little has been reported. The report will focus on elephant ivory, rhino horn, cheetahs, cycads and abalone. The report is part of the Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa, and will be available in 2021.





POLITICAL ECONOMY

The political economy approach to organized crime has grown in relevance in response to the evolution of illicit markets themselves, as they increasingly blur the lines between politics and business, and overlap with the informal economy and artisanal livelihoods. Corruption and the reorientation of power and resources around elites have created that make the need to understand vested interests and how they are reshaping the levers of governance and society is essential. The GI-TOC has been ground-breaking in advancing the political economy approach to organized crime, and to developing new data tools and supporting investigations to build a more robust response to organized crime and criminal markets. Our work spans very local and in-depth studies in the political economy of specific hubs, to national, cross-border, regional and transnational analysis.

GLOBAL ORGANISED CRIME INDEX

The Organised Crime Index Africa was successfully launched in New York following the 74th UN General Assembly in September 2019. The Index is a multidimensional tool that looks at the scope and scale of criminal markets, the structure and degree of influence of criminal actors involved and the level of country resilience to counter organized crime. Examining the dynamics between criminality and resilience to organized crime in each country, the Index tool is currently being expanded to include a global scope in the next iteration, set to be published in September 2021 (covering the year 2020).



The Index was first established under the EU-funded ENACT programme (Enhancing Africa's Response to Organized Crime), looking at organized crime in Africa. In the global expansion of the tool, the second iteration of the Index is largely funded by the United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

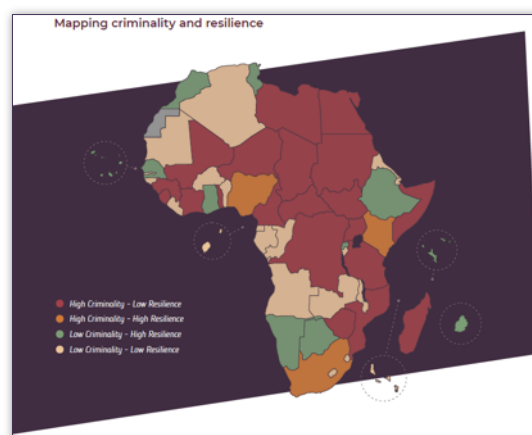
Since January, a team of researchers, guided by a group of dedicated staff, has carried out initial research and created profiles for every country in the world, outlining the relevant criminal markets, criminal actors and resilience measures in each country. Following the finalization of background research, all profiles have entered an initial scoring stage, whereby GI-TOC experts and Network members have been asked to assess the information and provide scores on a 1–10 scale based on standardized guidance that considers both the effectiveness of response measures, and the monetary and non-monetary impact of criminal elements, including how the current global pandemic has affected criminal flows.



Preparations are currently under way for the next stage of verification, during which a new set of experts will be asked to review the initial scores. Verification rounds are planned to take place along two parallel streams: country verification and thematic verification (where experts will rank countries in each region based on a single criminal market). Verification rounds will continue throughout 2020 to ensure scores and information are accurate, comprehensive, up-to-date and comparable.

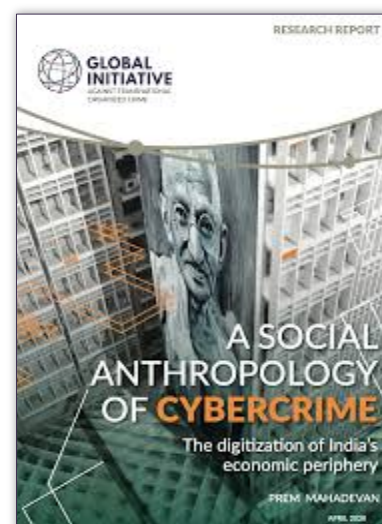
With the launch of the Global Organised Crime Index in September 2021, this year focuses on preparation, data gathering, evaluation and scoring of countries. The second iteration of the Index, the first global tool of its kind, will be key to changing the way in which communities and governments look at organized crime and responses to it. The Index aims to provide a better evidence base to monitor, analyze, prioritize and address the threat presented by organized crime in a systematic, sustainable, and more effective, way.

<https://ocindex.net/>



THE DIGITIZATION OF INDIA'S ECONOMIC PERIPHERY

In April 2020, the GI-TOC published a report 'A Social Anthropology of Cybercrime: the Digitization of India's Economic Periphery'. The report examines socio-economic factors that led to the rise of a number of illicit call centres in India, which scammed citizens in English-speaking Western countries. To provide a sense of balance and perspective, it also describes how scammers in certain rural Indian communities have targeted their wealthier fellow-citizens living in urban areas. The author was interviewed by the BBC's Digital Planet radio show about the report's findings and how they might apply to a general trend of escalating cybercrime that had been noted worldwide since the start of the COVID-19 crisis.



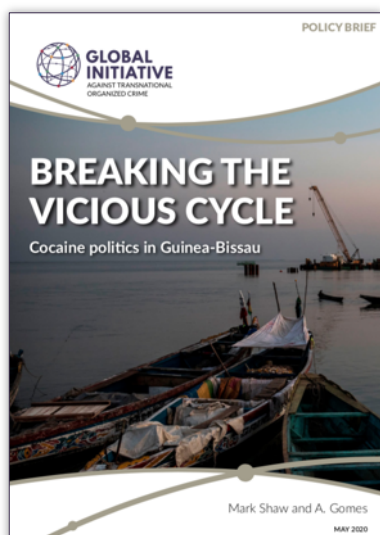
HOW CYBER HAS CHANGED MARKET DYNAMICS

Drawing on ongoing research conducted by the GI-TOC, together with new investigations, 'Transformative Technologies: How digital is Changing the Landscape of Organized Crime' offers a high-level overview of how the growth of cyber technologies has impacted the landscape of five organized-crime markets: trafficking in persons, human smuggling, drug trafficking, wildlife trafficking and trafficking in cultural property. The report outlines how cyber has changed market dynamics, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated some changes. It explores the legal and enforcement challenges cyber raises in each context and offers a set of recommendations. This report will also explore the changing role of private online service providers in regulating the internet, and how they may be compelled to play a more active part in enforcement against the growth of illicit economies online.



Offering this analysis of disparate crime types in one report enables comparisons and contrasts to be made across markets, facilitating the identification of cross-crime approaches. A follow-up podcast as part of the GI-TOC's 'Deep Dive' series will explore the human-trafficking section of the report, analyzing how tech-enabled trafficking has been shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.





HOW TO ERADICATE DRUG TRAFFICKING FROM GUINEA-BISSAU'S POLITICS

In May 2020, the GI-TOC published a policy brief on Guinea-Bissau highlighting the challenge on how to eradicate drug trafficking from the country's politics. With the latest round of political conflicts continuing to destabilize the minuscule West African country since late 2019 and early 2020, new evidence (and rumours) have emerged that cocaine is once again transiting through Guinea-Bissau. The COVID-19 lockdown in the country is most likely now providing a convenient cover for drug trafficking.

The document was translated into Portuguese and widely cited by several media and news services – *Notícias ao Minuto*, *Jornal o Público*, *Lusa*, *Voa*, *Bissau Online* and *BBC News*.

ILLICIT TOBACCO TRADE IN KOSOVO

While much has been written about cigarette smuggling in several countries of the Western Balkans, little is known about the role of Kosovo in this trade. This brief points to gaps in information, holes in border management, disconnects in intra-regional cooperation, as well as disparities in tax and excise regimes, which need to be addressed to reduce the illicit tobacco trade in Kosovo. More 'filters' are needed to reduce the grey and black markets for cigarettes that are prevalent in this country.



IUU FISHING / THE 'SOMALI SEVEN'

A forthcoming investigation examines Thai 'slave' fishing ships – Djibouti-flagged vessels fishing illegally in Somali waters and carrying Thai and Cambodian crew members subjected to forced labour and inhumane working conditions. The report will examine how widespread these illegal fishing practices are in the region, the methods by which the companies obtain Djiboutian and Somali flag registries, the identities of the intermediaries, etc. The political economy report is part of the Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa, and will be available in 2021.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF A SMUGGLING TOWN: ARUA

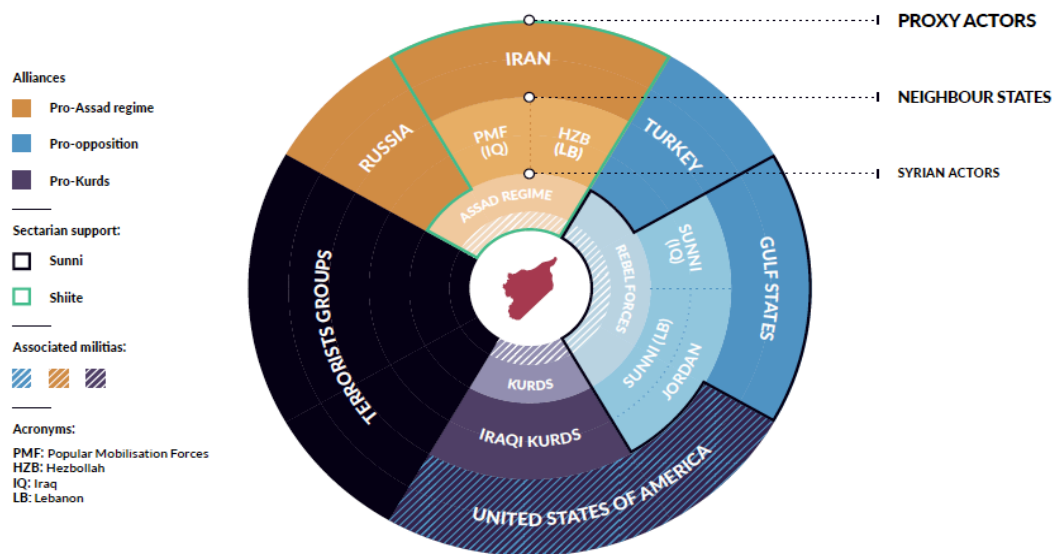
As part of the work of the Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa, Arua, a town in northern Uganda near the borders of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan, was identified as a hub for a number of illicit markets in the region. This research considers several criminal markets simultaneously in order to understand the structural and socio-political factors that have enabled illicit trade to flourish in Arua, and which have shaped its development. In particular, it focuses on the smuggling of commodities (goods, cigarette, vehicles); trafficking in firearms; trafficking in persons; and the illicit trade in natural resources (the illicit wildlife trade, gold smuggling and the charcoal trade).

This report concludes by considering several overarching factors that have enabled the illicit trade to flourish in Arua, and which point to the ongoing importance of illicit (or informal) markets to the region.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE LEVANT

The GI-TOC is finalizing a comprehensive report on the political economy of organized crime in the Levant, and the regional impact made by the near decade-long Syrian conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report aims to deepen understanding about different types of illicit economies across Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan, and how they interact with regional dynamics and stability, not only in terms of violence and armed conflict, but also contributing to fragility through corruption, the undermining of institutions and weakening of the rule of law. The report offers a unique lens through which the volatile region may be analyzed by outlining a two-step approach in understanding different actors' involvement in organized crime in the region, and how this engagement shapes regional and international geopolitics. Through this analysis, the report maps out the obstacles posed to development and stability objectives, and programming in the region.



POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS OF THE ILLICIT DRUGS MARKETS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS

Ongoing research into the political economy of the illicit drugs markets in the African states of the Indian Ocean islands has been conducted through a combination of remote interviews and by working with local researchers in each of the jurisdictions, prioritizing a research methodology that places people who use drugs at the centre of the work. As the research progresses towards closing, the findings will be discussed with a number of international and national law-enforcement organizations, local civil society – including journalists with whom ongoing relationships have been built through the research – networks of people who use drugs (who have similarly been engaged with throughout the research) and government stakeholders.

A SHALLOW FLOOD OF HEROIN

'A Shallow Flood: The Diffusion of Heroin in Eastern and Southern Africa' examines the evolution of heroin markets in Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, eSwatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi.

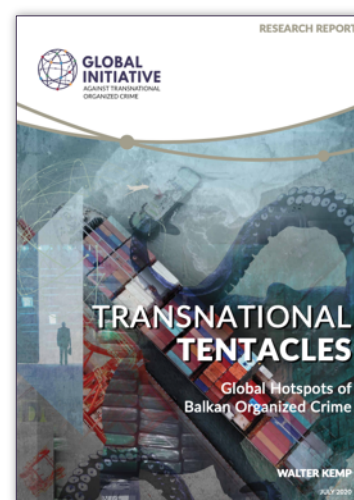
Its analysis concludes that a shallow flood of heroin has gradually seeped across this geographic region, and this has had a significant impact on the many secondary towns found along the continent's transcontinental road networks. These places, in turn, have spawned their own small local heroin markets, and become waypoints in rendering sustainable the now chronic, metered progression of heroin's resolute geographic diffusion across the region.

Further, it was found that the impact of this creeping spread of heroin on regional state development has been significant and, paradoxically, symbiotic. The emerging illicit African drug market environments represent credible threats to the development and security of the region's nascent independent state institutions and structures. At the same time, these markets also present new and considerable sources of economic livelihood and opportunity for the continent's ever-expanding population of poor, disenfranchised and vulnerable people. A surrogate 'drug working class' has emerged as a socio-economic sequela to more traditional, yet increasingly limited, licit income opportunities. Market prices, and mapped market areas, for heroin are presented in the report alongside detailed analysis of heroin market characteristics and structures.



GLOBAL HOTSPOTS OF WESTERN BALKANS CRIMINAL GROUPS

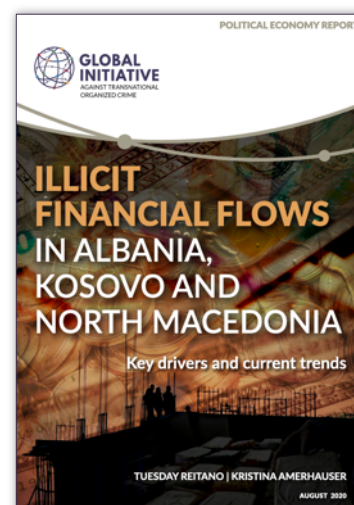
This year's Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in South Eastern Europe's regional report focuses on the impact of Western Balkans criminal groups operating outside of the region. While the Western Balkans region continues to be a hotspot of illicit activity, it is a small market for organized crime. The big money is made elsewhere. The report investigates why and how groups from the region have become engaged in organized crime abroad, particularly in South Africa, Turkey, Australia, Latin America and Western Europe. The report was translated into three local languages (Albanian, Bosnian-Serbian-Montenegrin, and Macedonian), and was cited in over 50 local, national and international newspapers.



UNDERSTANDING ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS IN ALBANIA, KOSOVO AND NORTH MACEDONIA

Understanding and estimating IFFs in Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia are challenging undertakings, as there is no universally accepted definition or a single indicator that can comprehensively capture the phenomenon. Being illicit, these flows are implicitly challenging to track. However, every reliable indicator suggests that the scale is significant and growing. In 2015, Global Financial Integrity estimated that IFFs could equal some 5.9% of the region's GDP, which, proportionally, far exceeds the estimates of global illicit flows, pegged in the region of 3–5% of global GDP.

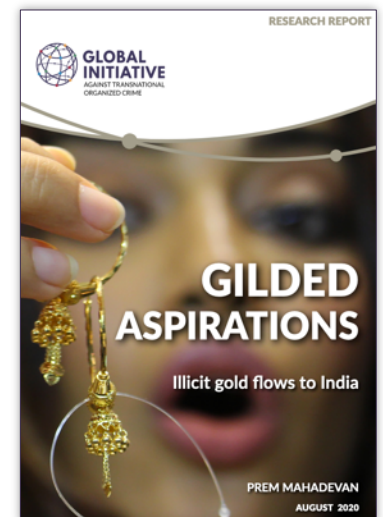
The purpose of this report is not to provide an overall estimate of the scale of IFFs in Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia. Instead, it offers a political-economy analysis of key drivers and trends that enable IFFs in the region, and, in doing so, provides a richer understanding of the phenomenon and a framework upon which stronger responses can be designed. See <https://youtu.be/QLIG67Tijz4>.



ILLICIT GOLD FLOWS TO INDIA

India's socio-economic position has evolved significantly over the past four decades, particularly as far as attitudes to wealth accumulation are concerned. Gold is today no longer negatively associated with crooked businessmen, but rather positively with the consumerist aspirations of middle-class India. It is used to project enhanced family status at events such as the 'great Indian wedding', and is perceived as a high-return investment and a hedge against inflation.

Demand for gold has consistently risen 14% annually since 2001, with prices altogether increasing eight-fold over the period. The Indian love affair with gold continues even as the economy strains under the weight of gold imports that degrade the fiscal balance. Gold is metaphorically to many Indians what opium was to the Chinese in the 19th century: an addictive escape from institutional decay and social stagnation. But hoarding gold pits the individual and their family against the government and its need to keep liquidity flowing in order to grow the economy.



FOLLOWING THE MONEY

The ubiquity of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Yemen, as well as centuries-old cultural and commercial ties with Somalia, has made Yemen the primary source for illicit arms among Somali importers. Consignments of small arms and ammunition from Yemen cross the Gulf of Aden in a matter of hours to the northern coast of Puntland, a semi-autonomous region in northern Somalia. The port city of Bosaso, Puntland's largest city and commercial capital, is the financial centre of the illicit trade. Arms from Yemen fuel the ongoing civil conflict in Somalia, and many are believed to be transported on throughout the broader East African region.

A semi-informal system of international money transfer – commonly referred to as 'hawala' – underpins the financing of the arms trade. This study focuses on the use of four Somali *hawala* money-transfer operators by six prominent arms dealers (or financial proxies) based in Yemen and Somalia. The GI-TOC analyzed data from hundreds of remittance transactions involving these individuals, dating between 2014 and 2020.



ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN IRAN

Illicit economies have become an entrenched part of Iran's political, economic and cultural life. For some, they offer a way of earning a living in desperately harsh economic circumstances; for others, they are the means to aggregate wealth and political influence. Illicit economies can be found at every level of Iranian society, from allegedly funding Iran's extra-territorial ambitions in the Middle East to helping the opium-smuggling truck driver get his next fix.

This report evaluates the emergence and expansion of illicit economies vis-à-vis current internal tensions and external pressures. The first part of the report explores how corruption and a circular system of governance has produced a ruling political-economic elite that is dependent on the proceeds from various illicit enterprises in order to remain in power. The second part of the report focuses on the drugs trade in Iran, drawing on interviews with key informants involved in the flow of drugs to show how the intersection of poverty, insecurity and a corrupt state has pushed vulnerable and marginalized communities to become involved in the illicit industry. As with other illicit economies, allegations of state involvement in the drugs trade are rife and have further undermined public faith in governance.





CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE

Criminal governance occurs in places where the state has failed to provide security and services to vulnerable populations. It is seen, worldwide, in remote borderland regions that states have failed to reach; it happens in urban centres where the pace of urbanization has accelerated beyond the capacity of institutions to control it. Criminal governance is a progressive erosion and sublimation of the functions of governance – from the provision of security, to regulation of economic transactions and the levying of taxes, to setting the parameters of social space and customs. It manifests itself in practices like extortion, protection racketeering, brutal symbolic violence and targeted killing. Criminal governance penetrates the state, initially co-opting and then strategically placing cronies into key institutions and political office; it erodes the independent media, corrupts elections, and represses the space for civic and public protest.

These manifestations of criminalized governance practices are seen now in the most advanced democracies and the economic engines of the global economy, making the requirement to understand them, reveal and expose individual cases and shed light on these systems an urgent priority. It has become a priority to find ways to protect the vulnerable and the threatened, and to mobilize the forces of good – whether at the grass-roots level, or in the international community, in order to fight this metastasizing cancer. This is at the heart of the GI-TOC's work, and it cross-cuts all of our regional and thematic engagements.

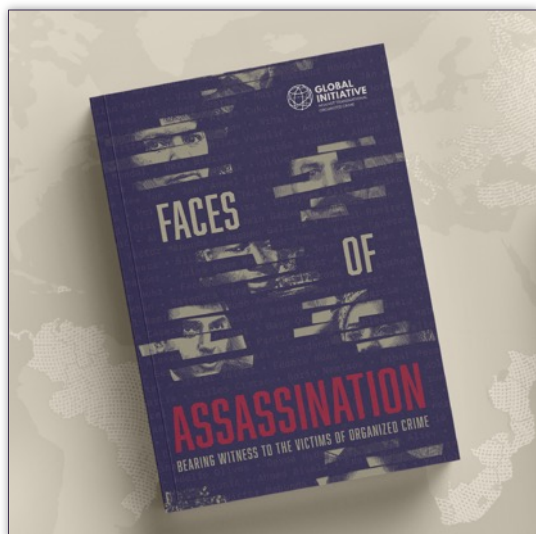
FACES OF ASSASSINATION AND #ASSASSINATIONWITNESS CAMPAIGN

During the 21st century, thousands of criminal assassinations have been ordered worldwide. Berta Cáceres, Daphne Caruana Galizia, Rajendra Singh, Boris Nemtsov, Ahmed Hussein-Suale Divela, Marielle Franco are but a few – all from different backgrounds and locations, all with the same aim in their mission to liberate their communities and societies from the corrosive influence of organized crime. While all are privately remembered, most are publicly forgotten.

After years of reporting on the phenomenon of assassinations, the GI-TOC launched *Faces of Assassination: Bearing Witness to Victims of Organized Crime*, a book that is a springboard for our global campaign #AssassinationWitness, which aims to call the attention of the international community to criminal assassinations, a phenomenon that strikes developing and developed countries alike. The book was released at a virtual event in June, which attracted over 250 live viewers on YouTube, and featured a high-level discussion with UN experts and family members of victims. One month after the launch, the recording of the video had over 1 100 views.



Faces of Assassination and the #AssassinationWitness have subsequently widely mentioned on social media platforms. One week after the launch, the book had been mentioned 88 times in Twitter and retweeted 297 times. Our campaign has been cited by various organizations, including wildlife groups, and prominent individuals, such as Agnès



Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur in Extrajudicial Killing, the Republic of the Congo's presidential candidate and the head of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Australian politician Hugh McDermott shared the launch on his official page and requested a copy of the book to donate for the Parliamentary library. GI-TOC researchers Fatjona Mejdini and Mariana Mora were interviewed on the campaign. Blogs on the book launch were published by [SOAS](#) and [Ecohustler](#), and profiles published in news outlets such as the [Mail & Guardian](#), and by [independent journalists](#). By 30 June, the campaign site had received more than 28 000 page views in over 143 countries, with particular peaks in Kyrgyzstan, US, Brazil and India. Our website also received an honourable mention at the Awwwards for the combination of content, design and user experience. We distributed some 200 copies of the book to family members, authors, embassies and people who requested copies.

In May 2020, we started collecting data for the Global Monitor, which will be launched in 2021. We have begun commemorating the death anniversaries of victims profiled in the book through our social-media channels. Meanwhile, we continue to commission new cases, such as that of the Mexican journalist María Elena Ferral, which we published in June. In July, we started sending a monthly newsletter with updates on the campaign. In August, we started a podcast series on targeted killings of specific groups. As part of the campaign, we will commission blogs on specific cases and publish a policy brief on the different aspects of assassination investigations.

Listen to the Faces of Assassination podcast episode dedicated to journalists. In this episode, we talk to journalists and press freedom campaigners about how organized crime networks are a threat to journalism: 'Doing journalism shouldn't be a death sentence.'



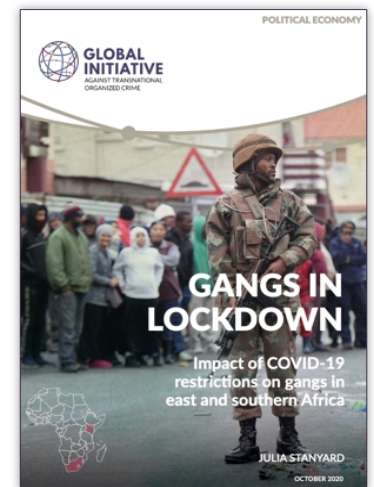
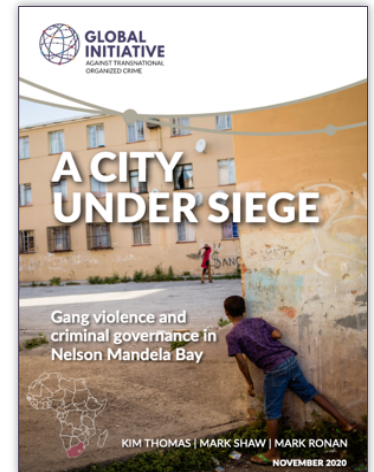
SOUTH AFRICAN GANG MONITOR

The South African Gang Monitor project researches and plots the evolution and dynamics of gangs in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Nelson Mandela Bay. In each city, comprehensive fieldwork and state engagements have been conducted.

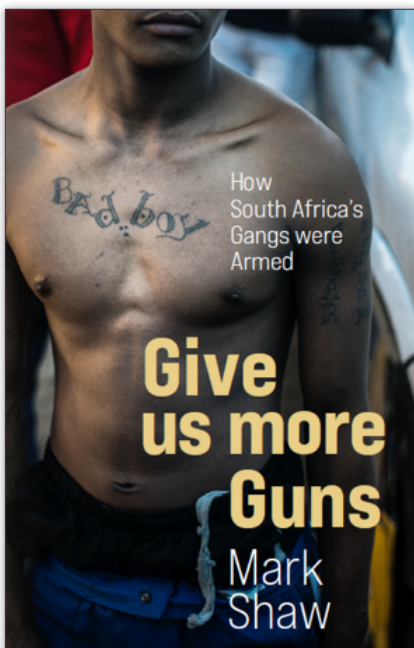
Between 2018 and 2020, GI-TOC analysts and consultants conducted research on gang violence in Nelson Mandela Bay, which resulted in the publication of 'A city under siege: Gang violence and criminal governance in Nelson Mandela Bay'. The report, a culmination of over 60 extensive interviews with community members, gang members and government, as well as secondary research, reveals that a specific combination of factors linked to gangsterism and emerging patterns of misgovernance in the city's administration are crucial in understanding the sheer extent of gang violence in the city and how it has increased so dramatically. As a result of the report's findings and recommendations, on 4 November 2020, a closed briefing was held with a high-level group of stakeholders to discuss the development of an integrated approach to gang violence in Nelson Mandela Bay.

The project also carefully studied Cape Town gangs during the COVID-19 lockdown. Much of these findings can be found in the 'Gangs in lockdown – Impact of COVID-19 restrictions on gangs in east and southern Africa', a report that was published in October 2020.

GI-TOC analysts and consultants have also been profiling gangs and gang territory in Cape Town. Of the 93 gangs found to be operating in the city, emphasis was placed on eight that have the most widespread presence. A report highlighting the size and geographic spread of gangs in Cape Town based on this research will be released in early 2021.



GIVE US MORE GUNS



A new book by Mark Shaw, due to be published in the first quarter of 2021, explores how large quantities of illegally sold guns got into the hands of South Africa's crime bosses. The book describes the bloodbath that ensued and uncovers accounts of rampant corruption within the police and in the gun-licensing system, probing the government failure that has been instrumental in arming the country's gangsters.

When a senior police officer and firearms expert sold thousands of police weapons to gang lords to pay for his children's education, he unleashed a killing spree of unprecedented proportions. The former head of the Gauteng firearm licence division ended up behind bars, but not before thousands of people, including women and children, had died.

Cape Town – which became the destination for most of these guns – is now statistically one of the most violent places on earth. The firearms were used by organized-crime groups to unleash an orgy of violence so intense that in mid-2019 the South African military were called in to patrol the city's gang-infested areas.

Based on hundreds of original interviews with police and the criminal underworld, *Give Us More Guns* tells the story of this callous crime for the first time.



COALITION AGAINST EXTORTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Our Canadian-funded project in Central America is in its third year. The dissemination of 'A criminal Culture: Extortion in Central America', a report presented in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama, enabled the creation of a network of experts against extortion, which, to date, has 75 members.

The project promotes fruitful discussions with network members through 10 webinars that were held in 2020

(with an average 25 people participating). The GI-TOC has identified and documented 13 programmes and practices against extortion in the region, and developed analysis that has been used by international media organisations, such as [The Economist](#).

In 2020, we developed a guide and a manual for resilience against extortion. Both documents serve as training tools that will be used in an e-course in which members of the network and other participants will be able to gain greater knowledge of extortion, and ways of promoting and replicating community resilience at the municipal level.

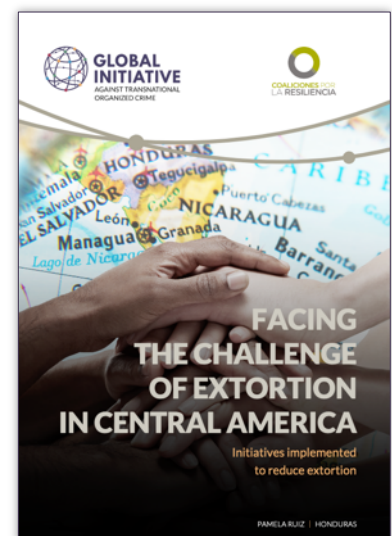
This report assesses nine initiatives that have been implemented in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica aimed to reduce extortion. The strength of these initiatives – which include prevention programmes, law-enforcement initiatives and anti-extortion courts – lies in their ability to diagnose specific aspects of extortion and implement innovative, practical and targeted strategies, but their efficacy is limited by poor coordination between state agencies and inadequate data collection and analysis.

The report also identifies regional lessons and challenges and makes two policy recommendations, specifically that data collection and analysis be improved, and a multi-layered approach be developed to tackle the complex and multifaceted issue of extortion.

ISLAMIC STATE, IRAQI ANTIQUITIES AND ORGANIZED CRIME

This report examines evidence of looting by IS in and around Iraq's Nineveh governorate. Considering claims that IS not only stole exhibited Iraqi antiquities, but also carried out illicit excavations to plunder new, undiscovered treasures, the report re-evaluates the organization's self-proclaimed ideological destruction of antiquities – in reality, looting for profit – as an example of organized crime.

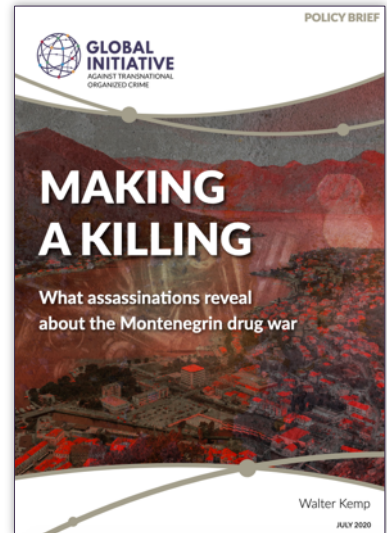
The report also considers evidence of the onward flow of stolen Iraqi antiquities, and seeks to establish the most likely routes along which stolen artefacts were moved from a terrorist-occupied swathe of territory into neighbouring countries. It considers how IS terrorists transferred artefacts to other organized criminal networks, en route to long-term storage facilities, collectors and global marketplaces.



THE CRIMINAL ECOSYSTEM IN MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA

Since 2014, several dozen Montenegrins and Serbians have been killed in a bloody feud between two criminal groups from the small Adriatic town of Kotor, on the Montenegrin coast. In the same period, criminal groups from the Western Balkans have quietly and efficiently become major players in the global distribution of drugs, particularly the supply of cocaine from Latin America to Europe.

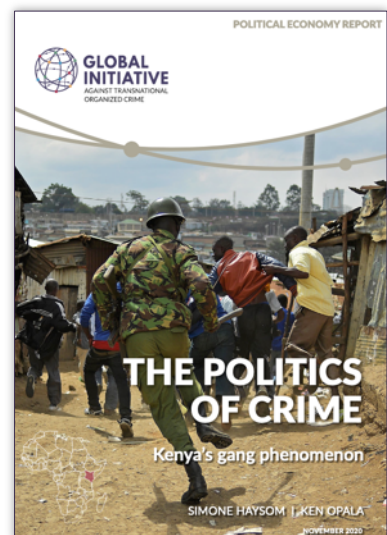
These trends raise a number of critical questions. If Western Balkan criminals can cooperate or at least co-exist abroad, why are they killing each other at home? What does the violence tell us about the evolution of the feud, and the criminal ecosystem in Montenegro and Serbia? Is there a pattern to the hits, and how could the conflict end? These are among the key questions explored in this policy brief.



KENYA'S GANG PHENOMENON

Urban growth, political patronage of gangs, and the criminalization of urban municipal services are inextricably linked in many instances. This has created lucrative profit-making opportunities for gangs and other criminal groups in areas characterized by high unemployment, especially among the youth. Certain criminal gangs have become wealthy by providing informal services or taxing residents for transport, waste removal, electricity and water provision. As a result, they have become deeply embedded in the everyday lives of citizens in Nairobi and Mombasa.

The Politics of Crime traces the evolution of this criminal economy from the colonial-era through the transition to democracy, the effects of structural adjustment policies, and the formal and informal privatization of urban services as cities grew rapidly.





INSTITUTIONS

One of the aims of the GI-TOC is to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime. The UN and the wider multilateral system are key platforms for translating these debates and approaches into reality. The GI-TOC continues to prioritize UN engagement and influencing as part of our broader programmatic work, to ensure that our research, analysis and innovative approaches are being leveraged to influence the strategies being deployed by the international community.

We undertake this engagement in challenging circumstances. Civil society around the world, including those individuals and organizations working on organized-crime issues, are facing increasingly repressive and hostile environments at the local level. At the global level, some countries are becoming increasingly confident in, and insistent on, blocking civil society access to UN processes. This has been experienced directly by the GI-TOC in numerous scenarios.

As a global membership organization, and a supporter of civil society networks through the Resilience Fund and our regional organized crime observatories, it is our role to ensure that civil society voices on organized crime are heard at the UN, and that their insights inform and influence global policy discussions.

Shrinking access to policy discussions and decision-making has been further exacerbated by COVID-19, which has significantly changed how we interact in the UN community, with locations closed, high-level meetings postponed and daily work and convenings moved online. We have adapted to these circumstances to ensure that our output and engagement remain relevant to our key audiences in the UN ecosystem, and that civil society voices continue to be heard.

To give one example of the efforts we have made to mitigate the decline in access caused by COVID-19, we implemented a successful lobbying campaign aimed at member states to ensure NGOs can attend the upcoming 10th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which will take place in Vienna in October, in a 'hybrid' physical and virtual format. A secretariat proposal for the meeting had proposed that only member states should be able to attend in person. Following our engagement, member states agreed to change the procedure to allow NGO attendance.



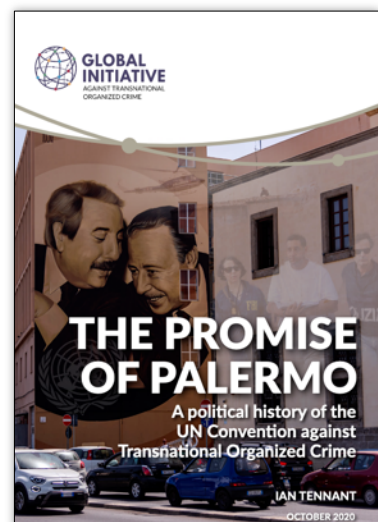
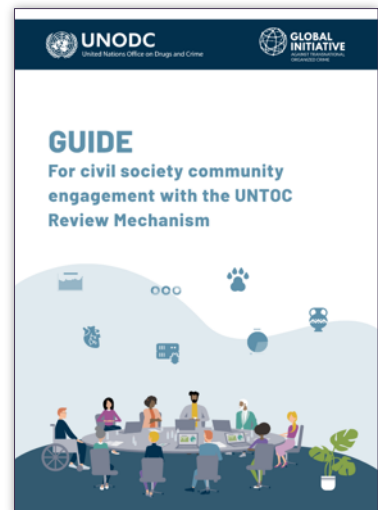
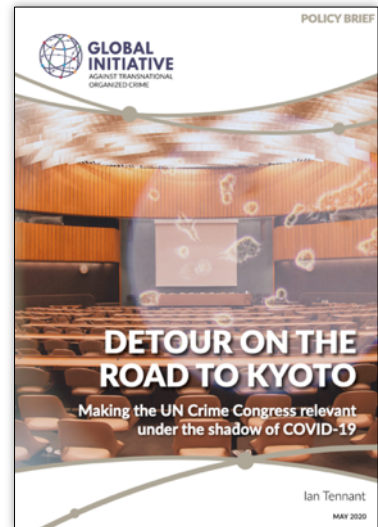
UN ENGAGEMENT

To implement our policy analysis and engagement approach this year, we have undertaken several activities:

- In Vienna, home to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), we produced a follow-up paper to our September 2019 'Road to Kyoto', which looked ahead to the 14th UN Crime Congress, which should have taken place in Kyoto in April 2020. The May 2020 paper 'Detour on the Road to Kyoto' not only makes recommendations for which issues the Congress should address, but also includes more fundamental suggestions for ensuring the work of the UNODC remains relevant in the shadow of COVID-19. We also produced a nine-part 'Road to Kyoto' podcast series on the Congress, which was launched during the period when the Congress should have taken place, and features interviews with key experts, including a number of civil-society voices.
- To coincide with the 10th session of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), and the subsequent 20th anniversary of the signing of the Convention, we are undertaking specific activities to ensure relevant GI-TOC and wider civil society input to these processes. We continue to partner with the UNODC on promoting civil society engagement in the Convention's Implementation Review Mechanism, including through co-facilitating online training sessions for NGOs and individuals. As part of this cooperation framework, we have published a joint UNODC-GI guide for civil society on the review mechanism. Outside of the official process, we continue to offer policy and political analysis on the UNTOC.

A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE UNTOC

Our flagship report launched at the UNTOC COP was 'The Promise of Palermo: A political history of the UNTOC', which has been published in Italian to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Convention in December 2000. A key insight from the report is that those who created the Convention understood very well the threat that organized crime poses to security, sovereignty, human rights and development, and worked together to create a new response to those threats within the context of the political space available to them. Unfortunately, these threats remain and grow stronger, despite the advances made by the creation of the Convention. The geo-political context has also changed dramatically, further challenging the ability of the Convention to achieve its aims. The report investigates how the UNTOC became reality and calls on current and future generations to be inspired and informed by these efforts and to make further progress towards comprehensively countering the dominance and power of organized criminals.

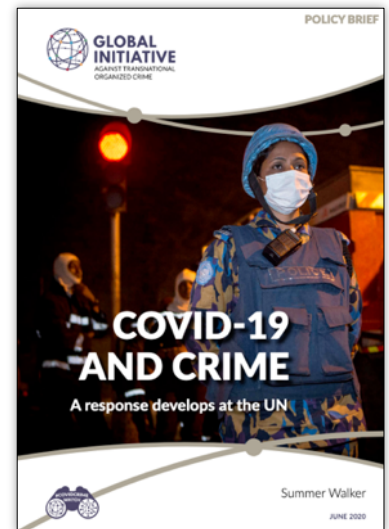


- Our UNTOC Watch programme continues to monitor UN engagement on wider TOC issues, with blogs published on timely UN Security Council debates and matters on the UN agenda. We continue to follow the Council closely and produce policy briefs and blogs on countries such as the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau. And our interactive tool continues to chart organized crime and illicit flows at the Security Council. We will monitor the upcoming intergovernmental discussions on a potential cybercrime treaty and are engaging in ongoing deliberations for the upcoming UN General Assembly Special Session against corruption, to be held in New York in 2021. Our statement at recent session in this process focussed on the links between TOC and corruption, and has led to substantive engagement on this issue with the incoming Italian presidency of the G20, and specifically its anti-corruption working group (ACWG).

After the COVID-19 pandemic had developed into a full-blown global shutdown, we published 'COVID-19 and Crime: A Response Develops at the UN'. This brief looks at the UN response to the crime and corruption aspects of the pandemic, and lays out several key cross-cutting areas that will be critical for the institution to address as it leads a global effort to fight the pandemic and promote a recovery in line with Agenda 2030.

We also shared insights from partners at the UN on how they are adapting to the crisis, publishing a blog on the UN Police about how it was shifting its operations.

We endeavour to engage in as many relevant UN and other multilateral forums as possible, and despite the restrictions on meetings in the current climate, this year we have also made official presentations and taken part in organized-crime-related debates at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the OSCE Security Committee, and in the preparatory meetings for the 2021 UN General Assembly Special Session against Corruption. The GI-TOC participated in the Regional Consultative Meetings on the UN Environment Assembly resolution on Mineral Resource Governance.



To ensure our approach is coordinated with the wider NGO community, we continue to hold leadership positions in relevant NGO coordination mechanisms. We sit on the executive committee of the New York NGO Committee on Drugs, and the Board of the Vienna based NGO Alliance on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

INTEGRATED DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION STANDARDS

The UN Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), mandated to improve the UN's performance in the area of DDR, has been tasked with the development and maintenance of a common set of DDR guidance, known as the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS).

To reflect the changing global landscape of armed conflict, the IDDRS are currently being revised. As part of this revision, new modules have been added to the IDDRS and others are currently being updated. In this context, recognizing that illicit criminal networks play a role at all stages of conflict, and that the IDDRS do not currently contain guidance on organized crime, the GI-TOC was asked to develop a new module on DDR and linkages to organized crime. Following a series of successful discussions and review of the draft module with IAWG in October 2020, GI-TOC submitted the first-ever IDDRS module on DDR and Organized Crime for alignment with other modules, expected to be finalized in early 2021.

The module offers concrete, gender-sensitive guidance for contexts where armed groups are engaged in organized crime. It will be used for policy and strategy formulation, trainings, integrated planning, programme development and monitoring and evaluation for DDR practitioners in both mission and non-mission settings, as well as for DDR efforts within and outside the framework of comprehensive peace agreements. This module, as part of the revised IDDRS,



will represent a significant milestone in DDR policy and practice, and will reflect the new UN approach to DDR to UN and non-UN stakeholders.

UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 19 ON MINERAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

The Regional Consultative Meetings on the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 19 on Mineral Resource Governance took place between July and September 2020. UNEA resolutions are not legally binding but nonetheless are important in framing the international community's consensus on resource governance, and the resolution called for, among other things, the UN Environmental Programme to collect information on implementation strategies and assessments of different governance initiatives and approaches on sustainable management of metal and mineral resources with a view to reporting findings at the fifth UNEA session in Nairobi in February 2021. GI-TOC senior analyst Marcena Hunter, whose recent work has focused on artisanal mining, and gold-related crime in particular, as well as illicit financial flows, was a member of the diverse group of state and non-state stakeholders to be invited to participate in regional consultations on the resolution.



RESILIENCE FUND

The Resilience Fund is now in its second year of operation, following its launch in May 2019. In 2020, the Fund has accelerated its support and partnership, increasing its total footprint of support to over 70 individuals and organizations globally. As of December 2020, the following are key landmarks:

- 70 beneficiaries, in 30 countries, five continents
- 5 media houses supported
- 16 individual activists supported, including 10 Resilience Fund Fellows
- 45+ community-based NGOs supported
- Over US\$1.5 million awarded in grants
- 14 000+ community members supported through resilience dialogues, training and other support delivered through fund grants to bolster community resilience to organized crime.

In our daily work, we see people's lives destroyed by organized crime. But we also see shining examples of courage and hope that are born in those very communities that are most affected by such agents of crime. Whether it is to provide services, promote safety, raise awareness or to change attitudes, it is our commitment that this fund will incubate and protect that resilient spirit.

Mark Shaw | Director
Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime



Resilience Fund Fellowship

Of note, the Resilience Fund Fellowship was launched in early 2020, which is a new initiative to build a platform for cross-sectoral, global and interdisciplinary collaboration to counter the effects of organized crime. The fellowship programme supports 10 individuals as they implement community-based projects on the theme of disappearances related to organized crime. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the programme of work for the fellowship, which was due to include experience-sharing meetings and international engagements. However, over 15 webinars and digital capacity building meetings have taken place instead, along with an acceleration of digital engagement efforts for the fellows, including with the wider Resilience Fund community.



Miguel Syjuco, Resilience Fund Advisory Council member and lead on fellowships, said: 'Disappearances are a violation of human rights and brazenly embody criminal abuse of power. These attacks on citizens are prevalent



globally, including in my home country, the Philippines. Each year, the Resilience Fund Fellowship will strive to empower individuals around the world to work toward shared understandings and responses to organized criminality in their communities. Collaboration and innovation in the face of limitations are key to building capacity and resilience; our fellows will explore what's possible as civil society develops solutions together.'

Each year, the Resilience Fellowship will have a chosen theme focusing on a global issue around which fellows will collaborate to find new perspectives and responses, drawn from their diverse but shared experiences in the fight against organized crime.

The Fellowship Programme is based on a three-pronged approach:

- Sponsorship: Providing financial support, so that Resilience Fellows will have the resources and time to conduct their work on a collaborative project during the fellowship year. Grants will be awarded for one year.
- Networking: Offering mentorship opportunities with experts from the GI-TOC; the aim is also to bring Resilience Fellows together on a residency retreat to begin the collaborative project to be undertaken during their fellowship year.
- Dissemination: Creating a platform for Resilience Fellows to share their work and ideas publicly – using platforms such as festivals, conferences, civil-society forums, and national and international publications. These will widen public discourse, deepen engagement with society, and elicit support and participation from the general public and, ultimately, policymakers.

The Resilience Fund has also concluded a strategic partnership agreement with the Global Investigative Journalism Network, to provide support and networking opportunities for the journalists and media houses under the fund. This has included digital security training, for which need is heightened during the COVID-19 lockdown situations that our beneficiaries face. In light of the pandemic, the Resilience Fund has supported grantees as they adapted their programmes, including by supporting food distribution and other vital support programmes in vulnerable communities. The Resilience Fund has continued with its programme of networking and experience sharing opportunities, including through international meetings, such as the Drugs and Development Hub (of which the fund is a core partner, along with the London School of Economics and the German government Global Partnership for Drug Policies and Development) and UN meetings. Beneficiaries have also become key contributors to the GI-TOC #COVIDCrimeWatch and other podcast and publications released this year, cementing their role as local experts commenting on global TOC policy issues.

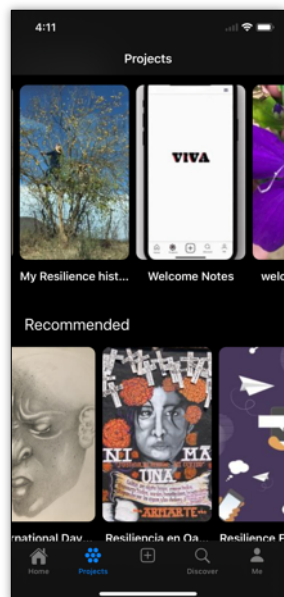
Deepening understanding of community resilience to organized crime, including the role of gender and financial inclusion

As part of the GI-TOC's work in the framework of the Resilience Fund, it engaged with a team of researchers at the Graduate Institute of Geneva to consider the following question: 'What do we know about building community resilience, and how can this improve our capacity to build resilience in places affected by criminal governance?' Building on this research, the GI-TOC also conducted a survey among the resilience fellows and grantees to understand their perspectives on the role of women in community resilience to organized crime. Adopting a participatory research approach, and placing the women whom the GI-TOC work with in community resilience responses at the centre of the research process, the GI-TOC consolidated findings in a report considering the role of women in community resilience responses to organized crime. In collaboration with leading experts, the GI-TOC also carried out original research on the role that financial inclusion plays in supporting resilience initiatives, including analysis on how global and national regulations and legislation to counter money laundering and the financing of terrorism have made it harder for grassroots NGOs to access vital financial services.



VIVA

At the end of 2019, the GI-TOC began developing a mobile application called VIVA to activate the Resilience Fund's network. It is intended to facilitate project-based learning and the creation of video stories from activists on the ground.



VIVA is similar to popular social-media platforms, and, with it, users create and share content with their networks. What sets VIVA apart is its emphasis on security and support of multi-member storytelling through interactive video content. It enables users to create mini-stories and expand them by adding others' contributions through visual comments. Self-organization is possible through a dedicated project tab for both individual and team content creation, while activities can be sequenced and executed through a range of interactive tools, such as video commenting, episode making, audience controls, team roles and project planning. In addition to collaboration and storytelling, VIVA is an innovative tool for grant-reporting.

After eight months of development, testing and modifications, the first users were onboarded in August 2020. Fellows from the Resilience Fund Fellowship programme and other Resilience Fund grantees have published videos with updates on the projects incubated by the fund. Simultaneously, they are collaborating with one another through planned activity guides to provide insights into organized-crime issues faced by their communities.

The Resilience Fund Least Developed Country (LDC) accelerator and COVID mitigation

In 2020, the Government of Norway has supported the Resilience Fund with an additional 'accelerator' grant to support the goals of the fund in least developed countries (LDCs), where the level of capacity and coordination of civil society around the illicit economy is lacking.

Activities under this programme are under way in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, but the scope of activity of the accelerator has been changed as a result of the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, so that the fund can better support appropriate individuals and organizations under these circumstances. Because of the pandemic, the local (criminal) governance landscape of the communities in which our grantees are working has viscerally changed. Criminal groups in some cases have started delivering assistance to local communities; in others, they are using the diversion of attention to settle scores with local activists, threatening their lives.



In practical terms, the programmatic implications are that we are scaling back some original elements of the LDC accelerator focused on convening, physical dialogues and engaging with new partners at this time. While the original LDC work in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique has been able to proceed on a revised basis, the programming has been paused in Lao, and only mapping work will be undertaken in Myanmar with local contacts. Instead, the LDC accelerator will repurpose those resources to shift towards boosting the capacity of our existing Resilience Fund grantees and a selected group of new beneficiaries in the target countries to serve as catalytic hubs in their communities, and to amplify clearly the role that civil society can play.



GOING FORWARD

The current three-year strategy is coming to an end in December 2020 and we have put together a report on our achievements against the strategic indicators of our current strategy. We have successfully achieved all of the indicators set for the past three years.

The GI-TOC has experienced extraordinary growth in the last three years, and planning for that scale of growth can be particularly difficult. While we are trying to find a numerical value on our achievement, it is not always possible and finding effective indicators to measure the quality of governance and the impact of an organization remains a challenge. We have of course taken all these points into consideration when drafting the next three-year strategy.

GI-TOC three-year strategy: 2021–2023

Throughout the year, the GI-TOC has worked on developing a new three-year strategy for the period 2021 to 2023. The strategy discussion comes at both an exciting yet challenging time as GI-TOC continues to grow and is adapting to cope with the COVID-19 crisis, as well as to produce research that informs the impact of the pandemic on organized crime. The strategy was developed as a result of consultations among staff, senior advisers, the Network of Experts and the Board.

The strategy looks ahead to 2023, when the GI-TOC will celebrate its 10th anniversary. It sets the objective of 'going global', namely to ensure that by 2023,

- the organization is a global network in action;
- it achieves global coverage through its offices and observatories;
- it has a global perspective in its publications and other outputs;
- it reaches a global audience;
- its Network of Experts has a truly global membership; and
- it has an impact on global efforts to prevent and combat organized crime.

The strategy lays out the challenge posed by organized crime in these testing times. It explains the GI-TOC's unique approach, as well as its advantage in terms of reach, inclusiveness, credibility and agility.

Five strategic objectives are identified:

- Increase the evidence base and understanding of organized crime.
- Facilitate and catalyze innovative policy-relevant responses.
- Strengthen local resilience and responses to organized crime.
- Enhance and leverage partnerships for more effective responses.
- Consolidate a decade of growth, and position the organization for the future.

The strategy document will be made public in January 2021 and will guide the GI-TOC's development and approach over the next three years.

