

OBSERVATORY OF ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

ISSUE **21** SEP–OCT
2021

Summary highlights



From Afghanistan to Cabo Delgado – political volatility along the ‘southern route’ of drug trafficking.

Afghanistan is a major supplier of drugs flowing to and through East and southern Africa. The country has long been the world’s leading source of heroin but is also increasingly producing methamphetamine, some of which in the past two years has begun to be trafficked to southern Africa. Some have speculated whether the Taliban, now in control of the country, will deliver on its pledge to curb opium production in Afghanistan, or whether production will increase as Afghanistan’s economy contracts. In Cabo Delgado, regional forces have been deployed to support the Mozambican military in combating the Al Sunnah wa Jama extremist group and have recaptured territory, including the town of Mocimboa da Praia, but whether these developments will influence drug trafficking routes through the region is still an open question.



How young men in Kenya’s coastal region fall victim to sex trafficking.

Young men in informal work on the Kenyan coast – known as ‘beach boys’ – are at risk of being trafficked for sex. After forming relationships with women who have travelled to Kenya for tourism – often much older European women – these young men travel abroad, enticed by a good lifestyle or education provided by these ‘sponsors’. Once out of the country, these young men find themselves in a precarious position, exploited and coerced into sex work. It is difficult to know how many men have found themselves in these situations, as monitoring is scant. Perceptions that sex trafficking mainly victimizes women, and stigma around being a male victim, has seen many victims keep their traumatic experiences a secret.



The targeting of three women in South Africa shows how violence is shaping politics in the run-up to local elections.

Between July and August, three women in South Africa were the targets of assassination attempts. Babita Deokaran and Nokuthula Bolitye were both killed, while Ntobe Shezi survived. All had political roles:



Deokaran was a crucial witness in a corruption investigation at the Gauteng Department of Health; Shezi was standing for election as a ward councillor in KwaZulu-Natal; and Bolitye was a ward councillor in Cape Town. Their deaths and injuries are not outliers: data gathered by the GI-TOC on assassinations in South Africa has shown a consistent incidence of political hits since 2000. KwaZulu-Natal is a hotspot for political hits, which have often spiked around election time. With municipal elections looming, politically linked assassinations may become more frequent.



How informal miners in Mozambique bear the brunt of criminalization while elites seize more control of mining concessions.

Mozambique is estimated to produce as much as 80% of the world's rubies, many extracted by artisanal and small-scale mining operations, much of which is illegal. During GI-TOC fieldwork in early 2021 in Montepuez and M'Sawize, miners and gem traders described how corrupt police – nominally charged with securing the mine concessions – and other powerful local groups act as gatekeepers to the mines and can abuse and extort miners. While the informal miners have endured this abuse, figures in the Mozambican political elite have strengthened their control of the region's mining concessions.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The eyes of the world have been on Afghanistan, as the Taliban have taken control of the country once again. Perhaps the leading supplier of illicit drugs to East and southern Africa, Afghanistan is a source most commonly of heroin – which is trafficked by the 'southern route' overland to the Indian Ocean and then overseas to the East African seaboard – but also increasingly methamphetamines. As described in a previous issue of this Bulletin, reports of a new supply of Afghan-produced meth have emerged in our drugs market monitoring work in southern Africa in the past 18 months.

Northern Mozambique is a landing point for these Afghan-produced drugs. Here, too, the past two months have seen major new political and military developments, as regional forces have been deployed to counter the insurgent movement fighting in Cabo Delgado province. In the past decades of military intervention in Afghanistan, the relationship between conflict and the drug trade has often been misunderstood or overestimated. There is a risk that the same thing could happen in Mozambique now that Cabo Delgado has become a theatre for international military intervention.

Two stories in this issue look at how economic precarity shapes how people participate in, or become victims of, crime. In northern Mozambique, artisanal miners search for rubies, as the region is home to some of the world's richest ruby fields. However, much of this mining is illegal because it is unlicensed or takes place on concessions owned by large-scale mining companies.

The informal miners are in a precarious position: mining is one of the few ways of making a living in the deeply impoverished region, yet the fact this activity is illegal leaves them open to abuse and extortion by corrupt police, working in a dangerous and unregulated space.

The Kenyan coast is known as a hotspot for sex tourism. Young men – particularly those known as 'beach boys', working along the coast – are at risk of being trafficked. Several victims shared their stories of being coerced into sex work by mainly European older women, with whom they had formed relationships while in Kenya, and then been persuaded to move to these women's home countries. This trend is in large part driven by the inequity between the beach boy's poverty and the tourists' relative wealth. These young men form these relationships in the hope of economic benefit and, ultimately, a better life, only to find themselves cut off and exploited overseas. As in Mozambique, it is the economic pressure that drives these men to make these decisions that, ultimately, put them in harm's way.

South Africa is due to have municipal elections on 1 November. Unfortunately, the exercise of democracy appears to bring with it a spike in politically linked assassinations. Several political figures have been targeted in July and August alone. Our monitoring of assassination trends in South Africa has found, in certain volatile provinces, that violence increases around election times.

From Afghanistan to Cabo Delgado – political volatility along the ‘southern route’ of drug trafficking.

Seismic political shifts are taking place along the ‘southern route’ for drug trafficking, from Afghanistan via East and southern Africa. The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban means that the country’s entire opium poppy crop – estimated to be as much as 80% of the world’s opium production¹ – and its nascent methamphetamine industry is now under Taliban control. Halfway across the world, Rwandan and Southern African Development Community (SADC) troops have been fighting the insurgency in Cabo Delgado,² a key corridor in drugs trafficking to and through southern Africa. Territory has been recaptured from the insurgents, including the key port town of Mocímboa da Praia, which came under

extremist control in August 2020.³ These developments may have a significant effect on the scale and nature of drug trafficking to East and southern Africa, although the role of extremist groups in shaping illicit economies is still often poorly understood.

How Afghanistan supplies drugs to East and southern Africa

For decades, heroin produced from poppies grown in Afghanistan has been dispatched from ports along the Makran coast of Iran and Pakistan on large ocean-faring dhows (wooden fishing vessels) and, increasingly, container vessels. These heroin cargoes are destined for

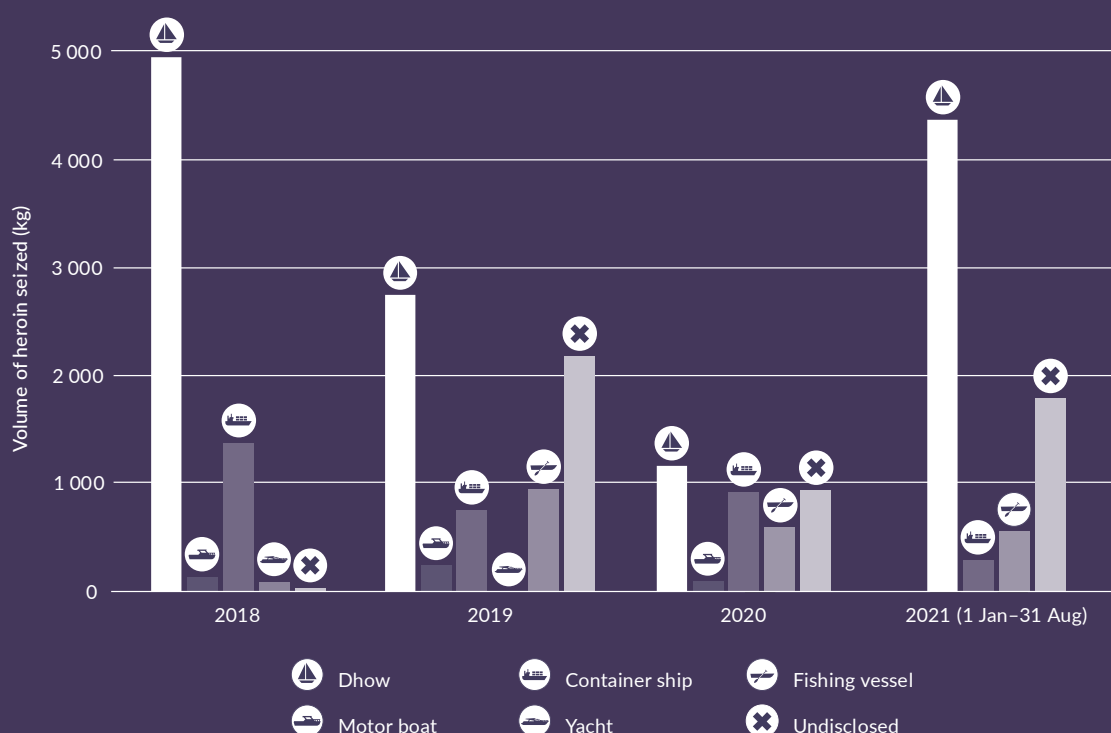


FIGURE 1 Maritime heroin seizures in the western Indian Ocean, 2018 to March 2021, by vessel type.

SOURCE: Adapted from Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre data, supplemented with external data sources, including press reports.

trafficking networks operating in port cities along the East African coast.

Originally, these ports were waystations along the East African seaboard for onward trafficking to wealthier heroin consumer markets in Europe and the United States, but this has evolved in recent years.⁴ While transit of heroin through East and southern Africa to other regions is still a major issue, significant heroin consumer markets have emerged in cities and small towns across East and southern Africa, fed by a network of overland trafficking routes.⁵

Production of meth has also boomed in Afghanistan in the past four years, thanks in part to the discovery that ephedra – a common plant growing across northern and central Afghanistan – can be used to create one of the precursor chemicals for crystal meth simply and cheaply.⁶ David Mansfield, a leading expert of Afghanistan's drug industry, estimates that the Taliban derives more revenue through taxing meth production and trafficking in Nimroz province – a key drug transit region in Afghanistan – than heroin.⁷

Recent seizures of both heroin and meth suggest that some of this new influx of Afghan meth is being trafficked into Africa, 'piggybacking' on the long-established heroin trade.⁸ The GI-TOC's research in Africa has found that Afghan meth, arriving in the region in conjunction with the



An Afghan farmer collects opium from poppies in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. After regaining power, the Taliban have vowed to outlaw opium and heroin production, yet international observers view this as unlikely to happen in practice.

Photo: Yoray Liberman

regular flows of heroin, has been available in the urban drug markets of South Africa since mid-2019.⁹

Meth has often not been seen as a major drug being used or trafficked in Africa. Yet our research has found that crystal meth has gained a foothold in eSwatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya. South Africa is a major meth consumer market. Data on reported drug use by people who use drugs found that meth is the first or second most common drug of use in most South African provinces.¹⁰ Tests of wastewater in two sites in the East Rand and Cape Town for residual methamphetamine in

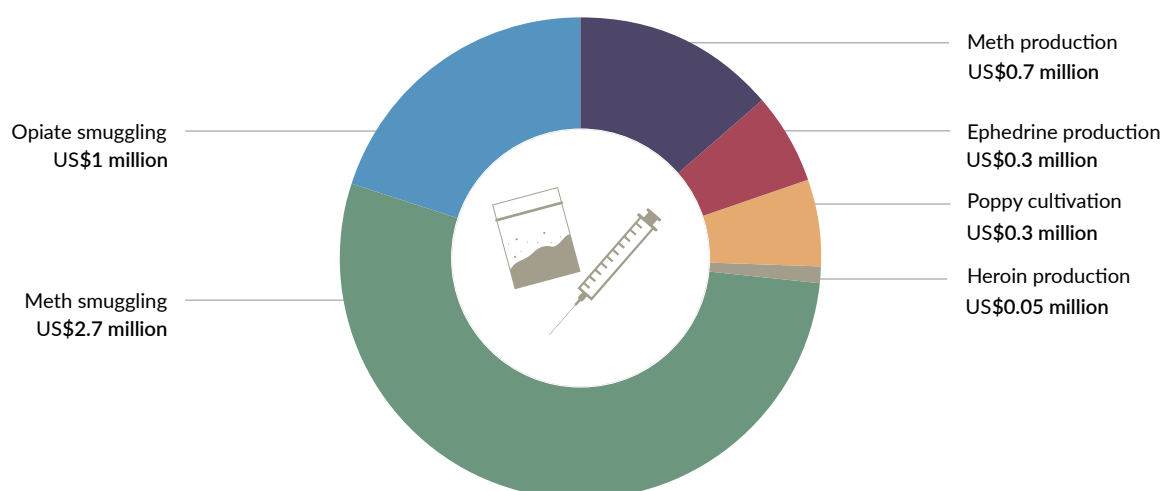


FIGURE 2 Estimated breakdown of Taliban earnings in Nimroz province, Afghanistan, by drug market.

SOURCE: Alcis, David Mansfield and Graeme Smith, War gains: how the economic benefits of the conflict are distributed in Afghanistan and the implications for peace. A case study on Nimroz province, Overseas Development Institute, <https://l4p.odi.org/resources/war-gains-in-afghanistan-and-the-implications-for-peace>

2020 found that estimated meth use levels were among the highest reported in the world.¹¹ This suggests that the number of people who use meth in South Africa, and possibly across the region, may be far higher than national drugs monitoring and health programmes currently believe. There is a strong and growing demand for crystal meth in Africa, and Afghan meth is contributing to meeting this need.

New rulers, new anti-drug rules?

The Taliban pledged to halt drug production and smuggling in Afghanistan within days of its return to power. Yet this may be near impossible given the country's dire economic situation. The new Taliban administration is unable to access the vast majority of Afghanistan's foreign reserves, held overseas in countries unlikely to send funds to a sanctioned entity.¹² Foreign aid, on which the country relies, has been suspended by many major donors.¹³ Most significantly, the illicit drug trade is estimated to be the single biggest economic sector in Afghanistan,¹⁴ providing a vital lifeline for the vast rural population. The predicted economic collapse following the Taliban takeover is expected to drive more people to plant opium poppies, rather than fewer.¹⁵

Previous attempts to curb opium production have ended badly, both for the Taliban and the US and allied forces. A Taliban edict prohibiting poppy cultivation in 2000 was effective in reducing the amount of land under poppy cultivation by more than 90% for that year, but also plunged opium farming communities into poverty and was an 'act of economic suicide', weakening support for the Taliban before they were overthrown by the US and its allies in 2001, after which poppy production soared once more.¹⁶

For its part, the US spent an estimated US\$9 billion on counter-narcotics operations during the occupation, yet the results were widely acknowledged as ineffective and even counter-productive.¹⁷ Coercive strategies to destroy poppy fields drove up support for the Taliban in rural areas.¹⁸ Schemes to provide farmers with compensation payments for destroying poppy crops created perverse incentives: farmers found they could harvest the opium and then destroy the remaining plants, effectively earning double for the same crop.¹⁹ A US airstrike campaign on suspected 'drug labs' succeeded only in destroying simple mud-brick compounds and equipment that could easily be replaced, costing the US military far more to carry out the operations than the Taliban would ever have lost in tax

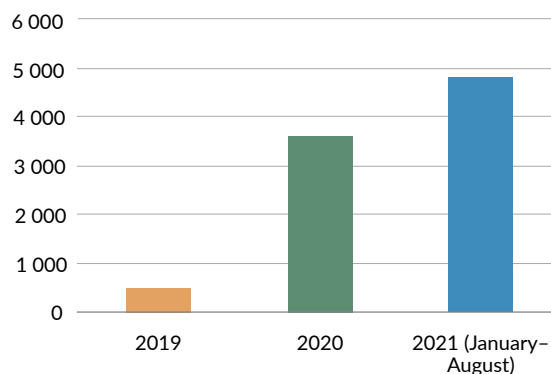


FIGURE 3 Reported seizures of methamphetamine made in the western Indian Ocean, 2019–August 2021.

SOURCE: Compiled press reports and monthly updates from the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre

revenue.²⁰ Pervasive corruption in the Afghan government also undermined many counter-narcotics efforts.

There is no reason why Taliban promises to end drug trafficking in 2021, if enacted, would be more successful or sustainable than previous attempts. The group is also more fragmented than when they previously held power,²¹ meaning that attempts by Taliban leadership to get local commanders to give up the revenues of taxing the heroin trade, and potentially disenfranchising their local supporters, may fail.

Ultimately, the new Taliban promises to 'end drug smuggling' are seen by observers as overtures to the international community, and part of a strategy to entice foreign aid back to the country and alleviate the economic crisis, rather than a commitment to counter-narcotics policy. But if the Taliban do bring about a reduction in drugs production in Afghanistan, this could have major knock-on effects in drug markets around the world. Vanda Felbab-Brown of the Brookings Institution believes that a shortage in the global supply of heroin from Afghanistan could spur production of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.²² This could, in turn, cause a surge in overdose deaths.²³

In East and southern Africa, restricted heroin supplies could cause shortages and drug price rises for people who use drugs in a region where few support services are available for those undergoing withdrawal. Drugs may be increasingly bulked out with potentially harmful substances as traffickers and dealers attempt to make supplies stretch further.

Supply reduction could also reshape regional drug trafficking markets. In early 2021, the GI-TOC found that an increasing number of small-time, lower-level traffickers had shifted operations from Zanzibar to establish a foothold in northern Mozambique.²⁴ In the event of significant price hikes for wholesale heroin and meth, these smaller-scale traffickers may be squeezed out of the market, leaving the northern Mozambican trafficking route in the hands of only the wealthier, more established traffickers. These individuals are most often members of the local business elite and benefit from corrupt protection from prosecution.

An illicit sideline, not a major revenue stream

Far from reducing drugs production, other observers of the Afghanistan crisis have made dire predictions that the Taliban will in fact increase drug production to flood Western nations with heroin. However, experts on Afghan political economy have argued that such claims are unrealistic and misunderstand how the Taliban engage with the drug trade.²⁵

Far from being – as some have described – a ‘drug cartel’,²⁶ the Taliban, like members of the former Afghan government, benefit from drug trade by taxing production sites and trafficking routes, rather than actively participating in the market and controlling rates of production. The analysis of Taliban taxation of the informal and illicit economy in Nimroz province found that they derive far more income from taxing the cross-border transit of legal goods such as food, fuel and cigarettes than illegal goods such as drugs.²⁷ Estimates of how much money the Taliban derive from taxing drugs are often vastly overstated.²⁸

However, if heroin and meth production do significantly rise following the Taliban takeover (which may occur because of the collapse of the legal economy, rather than active Taliban policy to promote the trade), East and southern Africa may see drug prices decrease as a surfeit of supply reaches African shores. To return to the example of northern Mozambique, the trend of ‘diversification’ of the trade observed in early 2021 could continue, as more small-scale traffickers would continue to be able to finance small drug shipments and gain a foothold in an expanding market.

A trafficking–conflict nexus in Cabo Delgado?

Since late 2017, the Islamist group variously known as Al Sunnah wa Jama (ASWJ) or, locally, as the ‘machababos’ has been staging attacks in Cabo Delgado. The

insurgency has reshaped the major trafficking routes that previously traversed the northern part of this province, including long-standing illicit flows of heroin, rubies, gold, timber, wildlife and migrant smuggling.

Our research in northern Mozambique in January and February 2021 found that, rather than these trafficking routes becoming a major source of income for the ASWJ, the risks of the violence and the logistical challenges of moving contraband through a heavily militarized area caused trafficking networks to shift south to new and safer routes.²⁹ Other researchers who have conducted recent fieldwork around the conflict in Cabo Delgado have also corroborated these findings.³⁰

For drugs, this has meant that drop-offs of heroin and meth from dhows previously made onto beaches in northern Cabo Delgado – around Mocímboa da Praia, Quissanga and Pemba – began to be made at points further south. This still included Pemba (which remained out of insurgent control), but also the relatively safer coast of Nampula district (Nacala and Angoche). Some traffickers known to the GI-TOC who were previously based in Mocímboa da Praia moved operations to Nacala.

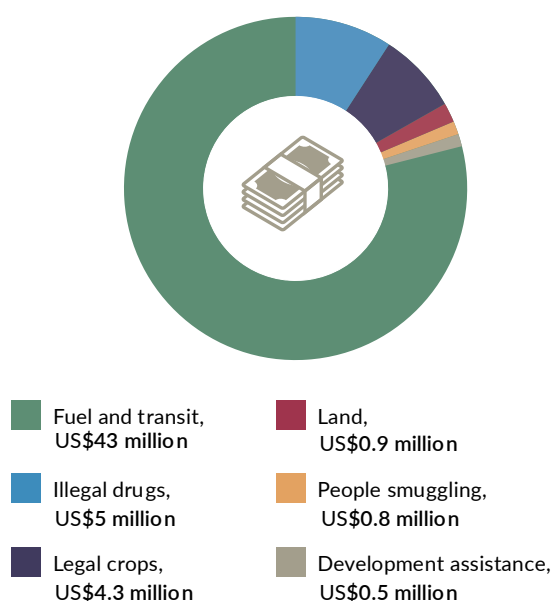


FIGURE 4 Estimated breakdown of Taliban earnings in Nimroz province, Afghanistan, by market.

SOURCE: Alcis, David Mansfield and Graeme Smith, War gains: how the economic benefits of the conflict are distributed in Afghanistan and the implications for peace. A case study on Nimroz province, Overseas Development Institute, <https://l4p.odi.org/resources/war-gains-in-afghanistan-and-the-implications-for-peace>

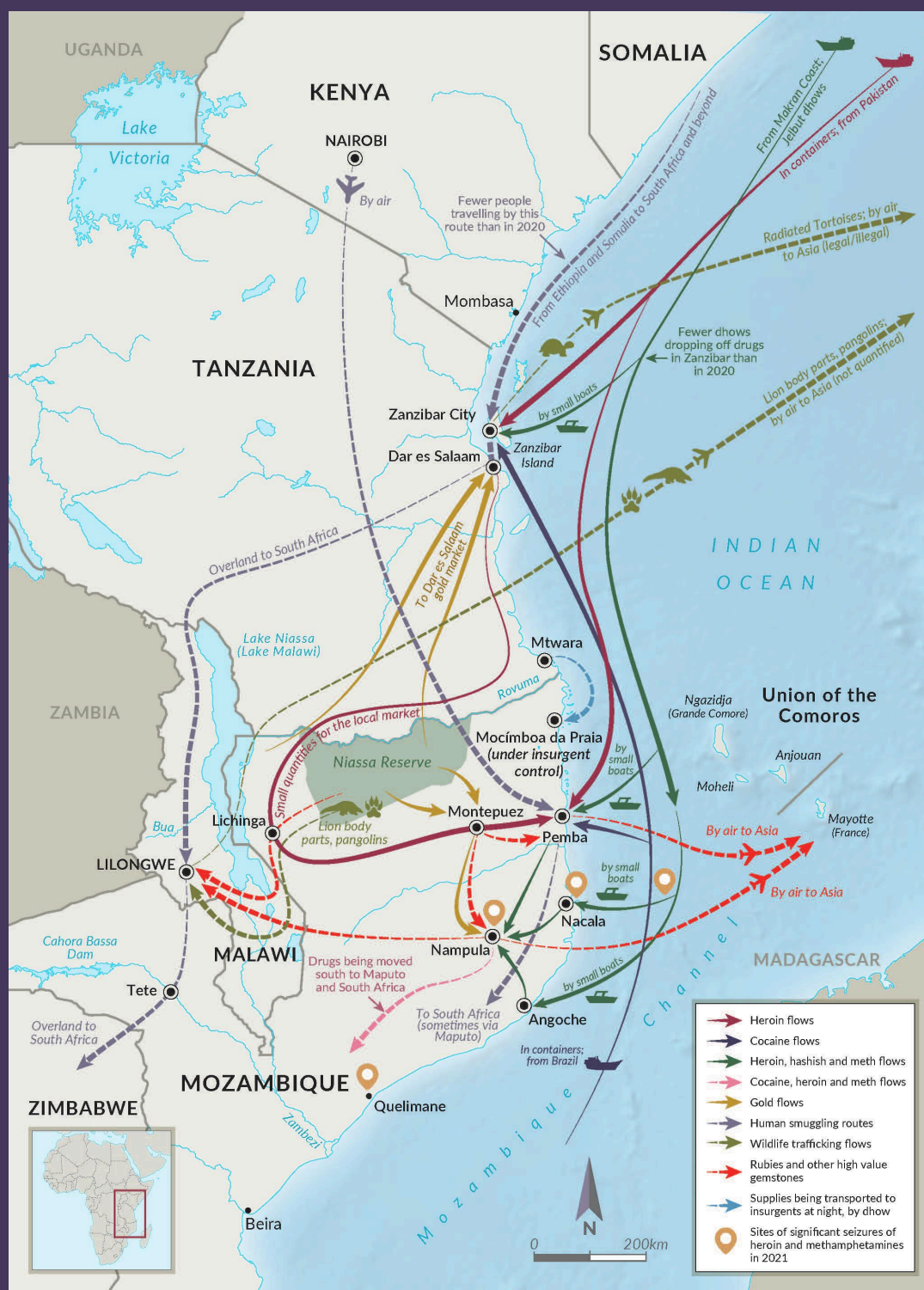


FIGURE 5 Illicit flows through northern Mozambique as of February 2021.

SOURCE: Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa, Risk Bulletin – Issue 17, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March–April 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GITOC-East-and-Southern-Africa-Risk-Bulletin-17.pdf>



A Rwandan soldier near Palma, Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. Since July 2021, a contingent of a thousand Rwandan soldiers and policemen has been deployed to Mozambique to fight the insurgency in the north.

Photo: Simon Wohlfahrt/AFP via Getty Images

Much like Afghanistan, the balance of the conflict has shifted rapidly in recent weeks. Since August, Rwandan and SADC forces have been deployed to support the Mozambican military in combating the insurgency and have recaptured territory and overrun insurgent bases, including the town of Mocímboa da Praia. As well as Rwanda and SADC forces, other nations such as the US and Portugal are providing support and specialized training to the Mozambican military.

While former trafficking hotspots – such as Mocímboa da Praia and the surrounding coastline – have now come back under government control, our finding is that the shift in the conflict has, as yet, had no impact on drug trafficking routes. Traffickers who moved south to avoid the ASWJ territory and the conflict zone have, so far, remained, and heroin and meth shipments by dhow and container are continuing to reach the more southerly ports.

João Feijó, a researcher with the Observatório do Meio Rural (observatory of the rural environment), who recently published a major study on the insurgency

drawn from interviews with women who had been taken hostage by the group, agreed with this assessment.³¹

However, this does not preclude drug trafficking returning to northern Cabo Delgado in future. Many of the same individuals identified as involved in drug trafficking in the area by previous GI-TOC research remain economically active in northern Mozambique. Drug trafficking in Mocímboa da Praia, before the advent of the insurgency, was closely intertwined with the local economic and political elite. If these same elites return to a more peaceable Mocímboa da Praia in future, the area could once again become a major trafficking conduit.

From Afghanistan to Mozambique: misconceptions about the drug economy

In Afghanistan, the connections between insurgents and the drug trade have often been poorly understood or overestimated. This led to wasteful and damaging policy decisions. There is a risk that the same thing could happen in Mozambique now that Cabo Delgado has become a theatre for international military interventions.

For example, speaking earlier this year, John Godfrey, a US counterterrorism envoy, referred to ‘a nexus between terrorism finance and narcotics trafficking in Mozambique that’s particularly problematic’ in relation to the US designation of the ASWJ as a foreign terrorist organization.³² Yet our research – and any other publicly available research – has found no evidence of a significant relationship between the ASWJ and drug trafficking.

Speaking at an online conference on the militarization of Cabo Delgado, Adriano Nuvunga, director of the Mozambican think tank the Centro para Democracia e Desenvolvimento (centre for democracy and development), warned that deployments of foreign forces – such as those now active in Cabo Delgado – may ‘gain a life of their own’ over time and engage beyond their initial mandate.³³ This was seen in Afghanistan where US and allied forces extended beyond their initial mandate (of preventing the country being a haven for terrorists) into other issues including counter-narcotics.

The drivers of trafficking through Cabo Delgado include, in broad terms, endemic corruption, poor governance and security, widespread poverty and a lack of legitimate economic opportunities for large sections of the population. These are the same factors that have stoked disenfranchisement and anger at the Mozambican

government, and which created the conditions for the insurgency and continue to drive it.³⁴ A militarized response to drug trafficking does not change these

underlying drivers, and may only exacerbate them. In this context, the repeated failures to curb the drug market in Afghanistan could be a valuable lesson.



FIGURE 6 Conflict events in Cabo Delgado, August 2021, showing the clashes between insurgents and regional forces especially concentrated around Mocimboa da Praia.

SOURCE: ACLED, Cabo Ligado, <https://www.cabologado.com/dashboard>

Notes

- 1 UNODC World Drug Report 2021 Booklet 3 Drug Market Trends: Cannabis and Opioids, https://www.unodc.org/res/wdr2021/field/WDR21_Booklet_3.pdf.
- 2 Cabo Ligado, July Situation Summary, August 2021, <https://www.cabolidado.com/monthly-reports/cabo-ligado-monthly-july-2021>.
- 3 Cabo Ligado, Weekly report 2-8 August 2021, <https://www.cabolidado.com/reports/cabo-ligado-weekly-2-8-august-2021>.
- 4 Mark Shaw, Simone Haysom and Peter Gastrow, The heroin coast: A political economy along the eastern African seaboard, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2 July 2018, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-heroin-coast-a-political-economy-along-the-eastern-african-seaboard/>.
- 5 Jason Eligh, A shallow flood: The diffusion of heroin in eastern and southern Africa, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, May 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/heroin-east-southern-africa/>.
- 6 David Mansfield, Emerging evidence of Afghanistan's role as a producer and supplier of ephedrine and methamphetamine, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, November 2020, https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/ad-hoc-publication/emerging-evidence-of-afghanistans-role-as-a-producer-and-supplier-of-ephedrine-and-methamphetamine_en.
- 7 Alcís, David Mansfield and Graeme Smith, War gains: how the economic benefits of the conflict are distributed in Afghanistan and the implications for peace. A case study on Nimroz province, Overseas Development Institute, <https://l4p.odi.org/resources/war-gains-in-afghanistan-and-the-implications-for-peace>.
- 8 Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa, Risk Bulletin – Issue 12, September–October 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/esaobs-risk-bulletin-12/>.
- 9 Jason Eligh, A synthetic age: The evolution of methamphetamine markets in eastern and southern Africa, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/meth-africa/>.
- 10 Data derived from SACENDU regional reports for July to December 2018 and 2019, featured in Jason Eligh, A synthetic age: The evolution of methamphetamine markets in eastern and southern Africa, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/meth-africa/>.
- 11 Jason Eligh, A synthetic age: The evolution of methamphetamine markets in eastern and southern Africa, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/meth-africa/>.
- 12 See the explanation of this issue by the former Afghan central bank governor Ajmal Ahmad in a Twitter thread, 18 August 2021, available at: <https://twitter.com/aahmady/status/1427883009164955649?s=20>.
- 13 Euronews, EU suspends development aid to Afghanistan, must enter dialogue with Taliban, Borrell says, 18 August 2021, <https://www.euronews.com/2021/08/17/josep-borrell-eu-must-talk-to-taliban-to-ensure-evacuations-from-afghanistan>.
- 14 David Mansfield, The Sun Cannot be Hidden by Two fingers: Illicit Drugs and the Discussions on a Political Settlement in Afghanistan, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, May 2019, <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/1904E-The-Sun-Cannot-be-Hidden-by-Two-Fingers1-1.pdf>.
- 15 David Mansfield, What I learned about how the Taliban will fund itself after decades studying Afghanistan's opium industry, *The Telegraph*, 22 August 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2021/08/22/learned-taliban-will-fund-decades-studying-afghanistans-opium/>.
- 16 Alfred W McCoy, How the heroin trade explains the US-UK failure in Afghanistan, *The Guardian*, 9 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jan/09/how-the-heroin-trade-explains-the-us-uk-failure-in-afghanistan>.
- 17 Craig Whitlock, Overwhelmed by opium, *Washington Post*, 9 December 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-opium-poppy-production/?itid=lk_inline_manual_31.
- 18 Paul Fishstein, Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, August 2014, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/1417E%20NRM%20Opium%20Policy%20note%20for%20synthesis%20paper%20Paul%20and%20David%20Final.pdf>.
- 19 David Pierson, The Taliban says it wants to ban drugs in Afghanistan. Here's why it can't, *Los Angeles Times*, 29 August 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-08-29/afghanistan-taliban-drugs>.
- 20 David Mansfield, Denying Revenue or Wasting Money? Assessing the Impact of the Air Campaign. Against 'Drugs Labs' in Afghanistan. LSE International Drug Policy Unit, April 2019, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/united-states/Assets/Documents/mansfield-april-update.pdf>.
- 21 David Mansfield, The Sun Cannot be Hidden by Two fingers: Illicit Drugs and the Discussions on a Political Settlement in Afghanistan, Afghanistan research and evaluation unit, May 2019, <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/1904E-The-Sun-Cannot-be-Hidden-by-Two-Fingers1-1.pdf>.
- 22 Vanda Felbab-Brown, Afghanistan: Money can be the milk of Taliban moderation, Chatham House, 24 August 2021, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2021-08/afghanistan-money-can-be-milk-taliban-moderation>.
- 23 Niko Vorobyov, The Taliban plans to ban drugs in Afghanistan. That could change the world for the worse, *The Independent*, 19 August 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/taliban-afghanistan-drugs-heroin-ban-b1905589.html>.
- 24 Civil Society Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa, Risk Bulletin – Issue 12, April 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/esaobs-risk-bulletin-12/>.
- 25 David Mansfield, What I learned about how the Taliban will fund itself after decades studying Afghanistan's opium industry, *The Telegraph*, 22 August 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2021/08/22/learned-taliban-will-fund-decades-studying-afghanistans-opium/>.
- 26 For example, Lynne O'Donnell, The Taliban Are Breaking Bad, *Foreign Policy*, 19 July 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/19/taliban-expanding-drug-trade-meth-heroin/>.
- 27 Alcís, David Mansfield and Graeme Smith, War gains: how the economic benefits of the conflict are distributed in Afghanistan and the implications for peace A case study on Nimroz province, Overseas Development Institute, <https://l4p.odi.org/resources/war-gains-in-afghanistan-and-the-implications-for-peace>.
- 28 Lynne O'Donnell reports that the 'Taliban ... are said to earn around \$3 billion annually trafficking opium and heroin produced principally in southern Afghanistan'. (See Lynne O'Donnell, The Taliban Are Breaking Bad, *Foreign Policy*, 19 July 2021,

- <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/19/taliban-expanding-drug-trade-meth-heroin/>). This seems to be a misinterpretation of a 2018 'lessons learned' report on counter-narcotics in Afghanistan from the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which in fact reports 'opium poppy is the country's largest cash crop, with an estimated annual export value of \$1.5 to \$3 billion in recent years'. The gross value of Afghan opium exports and the earnings for the Taliban, primarily through taxing the trade, are very different and the latter is far lower. See Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Counternarcotics: lessons from the U.S. experience in Afghanistan, June 2018, available at: <http://files.server.idpc.net/library/SIGAR-18-52-LL.pdf>.
- 29 Observatory of Illicit Economies in Eastern and Southern Africa, Risk Bulletin – Issue 17, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March–April 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GITOC-East-and-Southern-Africa-Risk-Bulletin-17.pdf>.
- 30 See discussion in International Crisis Group webinar, Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado – Preventing a New Jihadist Front, 17 June 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/insurrection-mozambique-cabo-delgado-preventing-new-jihadist-front>.
- 31 WhatsApp communication with GI-TOC analyst, August 2021.
- 32 US Department of State, Digital Press Briefing on U.S. Efforts to Combat Terrorism in Africa, 11 March 2021, <https://www.state.gov/digital-press-briefing-on-u-s-efforts-to-combat-terrorism-in-africa/>.
- 33 Centro para Democracia e Desenvolvimento in partnership with Good Governance Africa and the *Mail & Guardian*, Reflection on Military Operations in Cabo Delgado, webinar, 31 August 2021, available at: <https://event.webinarjam.com/replay/632/qy564s6m2s183sxyqswk7y>.
- 34 See discussion by Kelvin Jackachira, Mozambique's Cabo Delgado: Hard lessons from Afghanistan, *Zimbabwe Mail*, 20 August 2021, <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/opinion/mozambiques-cabo-delgado-hard-lessons-from-afghanistan/>.

How young men in Kenya's coastal region fall victim to sex trafficking.

'It never occurred to me that I was a trafficking victim. I thought I had found real love and could now send enough cash for my family in Diani, where my siblings stay, only to find myself giving out my body sexually to women in a foreign land,' said Mohammed* (whose name has been changed to protect his identity).

Mohammed was a 'beach boy', one of many young men in informal work on the Kenyan coast, selling wares ranging from locally made jewellery to *madafu*, a popular coconut milk. The 'beach boys' also find themselves drawn into sex tourism, which is prevalent in Kenya's Coast province.

Aged 23, Mohammed found himself entangled in a sexual and economic relationship with a 63-year-old Italian woman, who lavished him with gifts including valuables and cash.

'When she proposed I move with her to Italy, I did not object. I aspired for economic success, having failed to pursue my secondary education due to lack of fees, and

viewed her philanthropic gesture as a lifeline. Speaking Italian, French and German – languages I acquired from my daily interactions with other beach boys – was an added advantage,' he added.

The woman helped him through the process of acquiring a passport and a visa to relocate. He ended up however being forced into sex work, with the woman acting as his pimp. 'I craved to go home. I was eventually deported due to the lack of proper papers. It was the best thing that happened to me,' he said.¹

Mohammed's story is not unique. Kenya is witnessing a wave of beach boys travelling from the coastal regions to live with so-called 'sponsors', often much older, mainly European women who have travelled to Kenya for tourism. Many of the beach boys, mostly aged between 16 and 25, are enticed by the prospect of a lavish lifestyle or good education. Once out of the country, these young men can find themselves in a precarious position, exploited and coerced into sex work.



The idyllic beaches of Kenya's coast are a haven for tourists, but also a hotspot for sex tourism. The trafficking of 'beach boys' for sex is one problem reported from the region, which has also reported shockingly high rates of child sexual exploitation by tourists.

Photo: Jonah Njoroge M.

The Kenyan coast – from the major port city of Mombasa to popular resort towns such as Malindi and Diani – has long been known as a hotspot for sex tourism.² Notoriously, this has included the exploitation of children, particularly young girls.³ In 2006, a joint study by UNICEF and the government of Kenya estimated that a third of all girls aged between 12 and 18 years old in four coastal districts were involved in trading casual sex for cash.⁴ In 2018, Trace Kenya, a local NGO that works to end child trafficking, estimated that as many as 100 000 children – including both girls and boys – were being exploited for sex work in Mombasa.⁵

The trafficking of beach boys overseas is therefore one aspect of the larger phenomenon of sexual exploitation of local youth by tourists, driven by the inequity between local communities' poverty and the tourists' relative wealth. Many of the beach boys come from extremely poor families or are orphans. Robin Omeka from Anika Initiative – an initiative that uses art to campaign on social issues – said that the lack of access to opportunities both in the formal and informal sectors makes them susceptible to being trafficked.

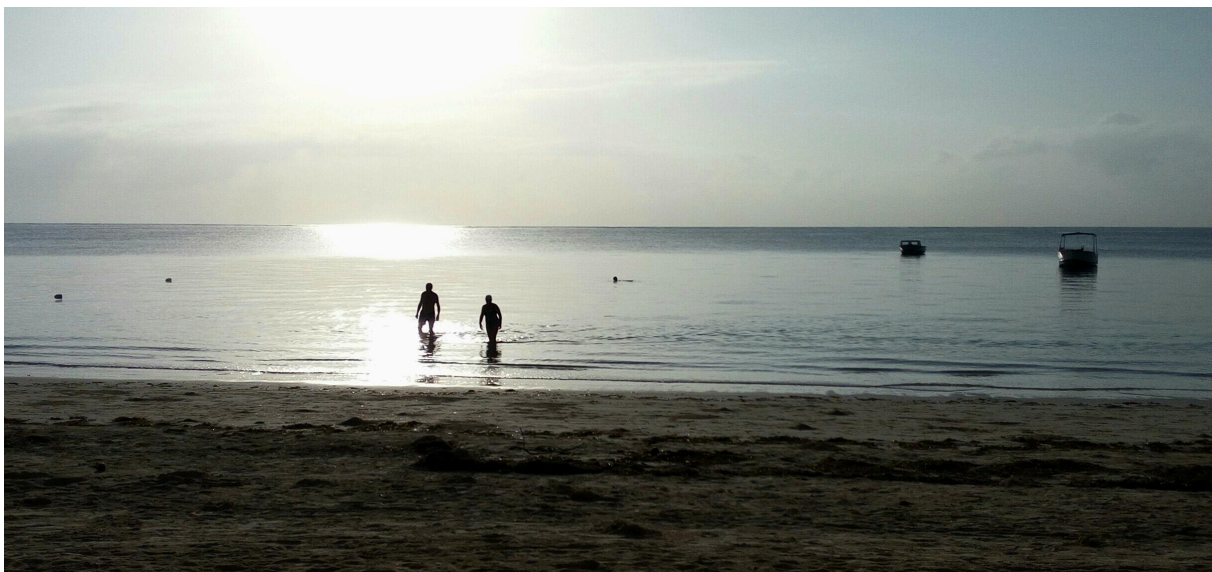
'The more vulnerable you are, the easier you play into [the traffickers'] script,' he said. 'Most people go [to Europe] and never come back or the ones who do come back in coffins. Communication between them and their families starts dwindling to the point where it's non-existent.'⁶

To Omeka, the trend is particularly worrying because it has become culturally accepted.⁷ Families are sending their sons to the beach in order to become attached to someone from abroad and bring money into the family.

Ann Okello, a trauma counsellor based in Kwale, agreed that families push victims to their abusers, especially if they are providing financial support. 'Every time he wants to leave, he is reminded that this is where they get the day-to-day utilities; including food, electricity, and water,' she added.⁸

Peter's* (name has been changed) parents encouraged him to 'save' his siblings from poverty, begging him to hang around the beach to see if his fortunes would turn around. 'I got an elderly lady from Switzerland who helped me process my passport and visa and paid for German classes. I eventually flew to her country; it was my first time on a flight. With time the lady started coming to seek sexual favours, even dragging [along] her two friends occasionally. I feared contracting HIV and often took [anti-retroviral medication] as a preventive measure. Eventually I was helped by my friends in Kenya after sharing my ordeal on a WhatsApp platform. I was eventually deported. I was happy to be home,' he said.⁹

Kidato Abdallah, who heads Voice Youth Matters, a human rights organization working on issues including drugs trafficking and violent extremism, worries about the trend of beach boys becoming 'agents' who recruit other beach boys and send them overseas. The agents



One of these two young men told his story of travelling to Europe with an older woman with whom he had formed a relationship, only to find himself trafficked and coerced into sex work.

Photo: Jonah Njoroge M.

arrange the paperwork, book flights and hotels for them and give them shuttles to and from their airports, after which they receive commissions, he explained.¹⁰

In an interview, a beach boy who doubles up as an agent (in his own words, who 'links up his colleagues to rich white women') argued that they choose to travel abroad voluntarily, especially those who are the only breadwinners for their family. He said that linking up such men is not hard, as there is a ready supply of female tourists who want to engage with these men sexually. 'In most cases, they come to me for help. I am only trying to save them from a lifetime of poverty through connecting them to rich individuals,' he claimed.¹¹

However, the backlash once victims return is strong. 'The blame on us is so vivid, especially in cases where the victims end up dying in foreign countries. They never forgive you,' he added.

Hussein Khalid, executive director of Haki Africa, a national human rights organization based in Mombasa, said that although in most cases the traffickers operate alone, his organization has also found that two organized 'cartels' have also been spearheading such trafficking.¹²

Once the victims reach the destination countries – which include Tanzania, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy, South Africa and Turkey¹³ – their passports and documents are often confiscated in the guise of safekeeping.

Ali* (name has been changed) was trafficked to Switzerland and explained how his travel documents were taken away from him as soon as he landed. 'She [the woman who trafficked him] said the passports were safe with her, rather than risk losing such an important document or getting robbed. Whenever I asked for it, she asked why I needed it. I did not have any money nor access to a phone and access to the internet. The first few months were very okay, but after four months, she became violent and abusive ... She would insist that I have sex with her and her friends ... I just felt trapped and would cry every day. I couldn't eat or sleep, and I became very sick. When I almost died, she went and dumped me in a hospital. I was then deported. I was relieved to be home,' said Ali.¹⁴

The scope of the issue

It is difficult to know how many beach boys have been trafficked. The Kenyan government reported identifying

383 victims of human trafficking nationwide in 2020, of which 155 were men and boys.¹⁵ In 2019, 227 male victims were identified.¹⁶

Yet Teen Watch Organization, an NGO based in Ukunda, has rescued 230 beach boys who were trafficking victims in the last two years. '100 boys were from Diani, 50 from Msambweni and 80 from Shimoni and Vanga beach,' reported Ann Njeri, a social worker based in the Coast region.¹⁷

The fact that one regional NGO has identified and supported almost as many victims as the entire national figures suggests such figures are a significant underestimate. This is even more stark when it is considered that Teen Watch's estimate is for beach boys trafficked from the Coast province for sex, whereas the national figures include other forms of modern slavery.

The beach boy 'agent' interviewed by the GI-TOC claims he alone 'helped' more than 60 boys last year to find hook-ups, most ending with a 'stable' source of income in Germany and Switzerland.¹⁸ Many cases also go unreported. Paul Adoch from Trace Kenya said that most of the beach boys do not view themselves as victims, but consider their situation more like arranged marriages that went wrong. This, he argues, makes it difficult for organizations such as his to record cases and support victims.¹⁹

The traumatic impact of trafficking

Ann Okello, the trauma counsellor, pointed out that the number of beach boys seeking professional help after coming home from being trafficked has shot up in the last two years. She has attended to eight cases in the last two years but fears the numbers could be higher, since many do not come to seek professional help because of the expense involved.

'Many fight trauma and live with the fear of coming out to explain the pain they have been through especially in terms of solitary confinement, emotional torture and being forced to abandon the family in search of a better life for them,' she added.²⁰

Racheal Akinyi, a programme assistant at Peace Tree Network, a Kenyan human rights NGO, emphasized the need for a safe space for beach boys who have survived such ordeals, saying most end up traumatized and suicidal. 'Some are extorted for pornographic purposes

and blackmailed with exposure by their elderly spouses, resorting to silence,' she said.

She feels it is crucial to engage individuals these men may interact with while they are being trafficked – such as airport officials and hotel managers – as they could help identify and intervene in trafficking cases. However, 'most [of these people] do not identify the situation and know where to go to in terms of reporting,' she added.²¹

Harun Omariba, a paralegal officer, said that enforcing counter-trafficking legislation – which does stipulate heavy penalties (a 25-year jail term or a KSh30 million ([US\$270 000] fine) for traffickers – remains a huge challenge due to corruption and because 'victims cannot report to the authorities for fear of being exposed to the public or being reported to their abusers once they have managed to come back home. Most nurse wounds of sexual abuse,' said Omariba.²²

Male trafficking victims face a unique challenge

Maurice Andati, the chairperson of Global Safe Migration, argued that widespread assumptions that men cannot be victims of trafficking has made it easier for traffickers to target beach boys.²³ In his view, the plight of severely exploited male migrants has been overlooked: 'Society makes it laughable that a boy can be trafficked. We have systems in place and research around women and children trafficking, unlike for the men who are accused of being at fault for their current

situation, or taking advantage of the people around them, hence their exploitation.'

The notion that trafficking is a women's issue has seen victims keep their traumatic experiences to themselves. Kidato Abdallah of Voice Youth Matters admits that communities can be unwelcoming to the beach boys who come home after being trafficked, often branding them with derogatory terms like 'mke wa mke' (a woman's wife, in Kiswahili).²⁴

Andati also points out that most of the perpetrators often change the narrative of the trafficked beach boys, accusing them of being sex offenders. 'With such threats most of them opt to keep silent and continue serving their "term",' he added.²⁵

The lack of shelters specifically for men in Kenya means that many of these male trafficking victims have nowhere to go when they return, and many end up being housed in prisons or remand homes.

For the beach boys, the stigma around being a male victim of trafficking compounds the problem: it means that the victimization of men is less recognized and fewer resources are allocated to supporting male victims. There is a dire need to provide services such as trauma counselling for the victims of such trafficking, and a need to create platforms where cases can be recorded and monitored.

Notes

- 1 Interview in Matuga, Kwale, 28 July 2021.
- 2 Jeremy Clarke, Older white women join Kenya's sex tourists, Reuters, 27 November 2007, <https://www.reuters.com/article/kenya-sextourism-idUKCAS73293920071127>.
- 3 Charlotte Attwood, Kenya's hidden sex tourism in Malindi, BBC, 15 May 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27427630>.
- 4 Sarah Jones, The Extent and Effect of Sex Tourism and Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Kenyan Coast, UNICEF and Government of Kenya, December 2006, https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/Isidocs/418%20extent_n_efect_1007.pdf.
- 5 Tonny Onyulo, The child sex trade is booming in this Kenyan port city, The World, 8 December 2018, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-12-08/child-sex-trade-booming-kenyan-port-city>.
- 6 Interview in Nairobi, 2 August 2021.
- 7 Nita Bhalla, Child sex for a dollar on Kenya's palm-fringed beaches, Reuters, 14 June 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-tourism-prostitution-idUSKBN1JA2NE>.
- 8 Interview in Kwale County Headquarters, 27 July 2021.
- 9 Interview at Diani beach, 28 July 2021.
- 10 Interview in Kwale, 27 July 2021.
- 11 Interview in Diani, 27 July 2021.
- 12 Interview in Nairobi, 15 September 2021.
- 13 Gathered over multiple interviews between July and September 2021.
- 14 Interview in Diani, Kwale, 26 July 2021.
- 15 US Department of State, 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Kenya, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/kenya/>.
- 16 US Department of State, 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf>.
- 17 Interview in Kwale County Headquarters, 28 July 2021.
- 18 Interview in Diani, 27 July 2021.
- 19 Phone interview, 10 August 2021.
- 20 Interview in Kwale County Headquarters, 27 July 2021.
- 21 Interview in Kwale, South Coast, 28 July 2021.
- 22 Interview in Kwale, 27 July 2021.
- 23 Interview in Nairobi, 2 August 2021.
- 24 Interview in Kwale, 27 July 2021.
- 25 Phone interview, 10 August 2021.

The targeting of three women in South Africa shows how violence is shaping politics in the run-up to local elections.

Babita Deokaran, acting chief financial officer at the Gauteng Department of Health, was a crucial witness in a corruption investigation, headed by South Africa's Special Investigating Unit,¹ into irregularities in a R332 million personal protective equipment deal at the department.² Deokaran's testimony would have allegedly implicated top-level officials.³

Deokaran was attacked outside her home on 23 August 2021. Hitmen opened fire as she returned home after dropping her child at school. She was transferred to hospital but died from her wounds.⁴ The hitmen had allegedly been monitoring her for over a month and had meticulously planned the operation, ensuring the nearby CCTV cameras were turned off at just the right time.⁵ However, thanks to evidence from a neighbour regarding the registration of the hitmen's car, the police were able to arrest the hitmen within a few days.⁶ Investigations are ongoing, but the identity of those who ordered the hit have yet to be confirmed.

Just two days before, Ntobe Shezi, an African National Congress (ANC) candidate for ward councillor in Mid

Ilovo in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, survived an assassination attempt. Hitmen opened fire while she was returning home after a voting meeting.⁷ Six weeks earlier, on 12 July, Ward Councillor Nokuthula Bolitye was also gunned down outside her home.⁸ Bolitye was a ward councillor in Crossroads, a notoriously dangerous area of Cape Town. Like most other hits, there have been no reported arrests in either of these cases, but the modus operandi of attacking a victim outside their home is a common feature of assassinations carried out by organized crime groups. Our monitoring has found that there have been six other political hits in South Africa in the past two months.

Political assassinations in context

Political hits, like those on Deokaran, Shezi and Bolitye, have been a consistent feature of South African politics for at least two decades. The GI-TOC has been monitoring assassinations in South Africa since 2000 and has built a database to analyze the nature and extent of targeted killings. Between 2000 and 2020, our database recorded a total of 1 822 assassinations, of which 404 (22%) were political hits. Overall, recent years



Ward Councillor Nokuthula Bolitye, here pictured on the right during a community meeting in Cape Town, was assassinated in July 2021.

Photo: GCIS/South African government/Flickr

have been more violent, with the last six years of the 21-year data set accounted for 47% of the total number of assassinations.⁹ As can be seen in Figure 7, the number of cases steadily increased from 2015, peaking in 2018, followed by a decline in 2019 and 2020.

The number of hits classified as political, organized-crime related and personal have remained fairly stable through the 21-year period. Cases related to political motives and organized crime show a slight but steady increase over time (barring a decline in 2020), while cases related to personal gain remain consistently low. The major volatility in rates of assassinations over time have been caused by notable peaks and troughs in hits in the taxi industry. This was likely due to increases specifically in Gauteng and the Western Cape. This sector is the largest single source of assassinations in South Africa: for the period 2015–2020, taxi hits accounted for 51% to the total number of assassinations in South Africa (Figure 8). Hits associated with political motives and organized crime accounted for 21% and 20% of hits respectively, while 8% of hits were for personal gain.

Characteristics of political assassinations

The assassination of whistle-blowers (like Deokaran) and local government officials (such as Bolitye) are two of the most common types of politically motivated assassinations in our database.

The targeted killing of ward councillors, or candidates for councillors, leading up to local government elections is not new. Our database shows that in the lead-up to elections the increase in competition for ward council nominations often ends in violence as candidates ‘take out the competition’.¹⁰

The position of ward councillor provides not only status and connections within the community but also comes with a significant financial benefit: ward councillors for the municipality of eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal, for example, are estimated to earn around R400 000 per year,¹¹ almost 10 times the national minimum wage (around R45 000 per year).¹² This financial incentive may in part drive the trend for eliminating the competition. Although councillors are barred from serving on any tender committees, they allegedly often have influence over the outcome through their connections. Being elected as a councillor is also considered one of the key first steps in climbing the political ladder.

Between 2015 and 2020, political assassinations were concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 9), which matches trends shown by earlier data.¹³ The province accounted for 56% (103 deaths) of the total number of political hits in this period.¹⁴ This was followed by 22 cases (12%) in Gauteng, 20 cases (11%) in the Eastern Cape and 15 cases (8%) in the Western Cape.

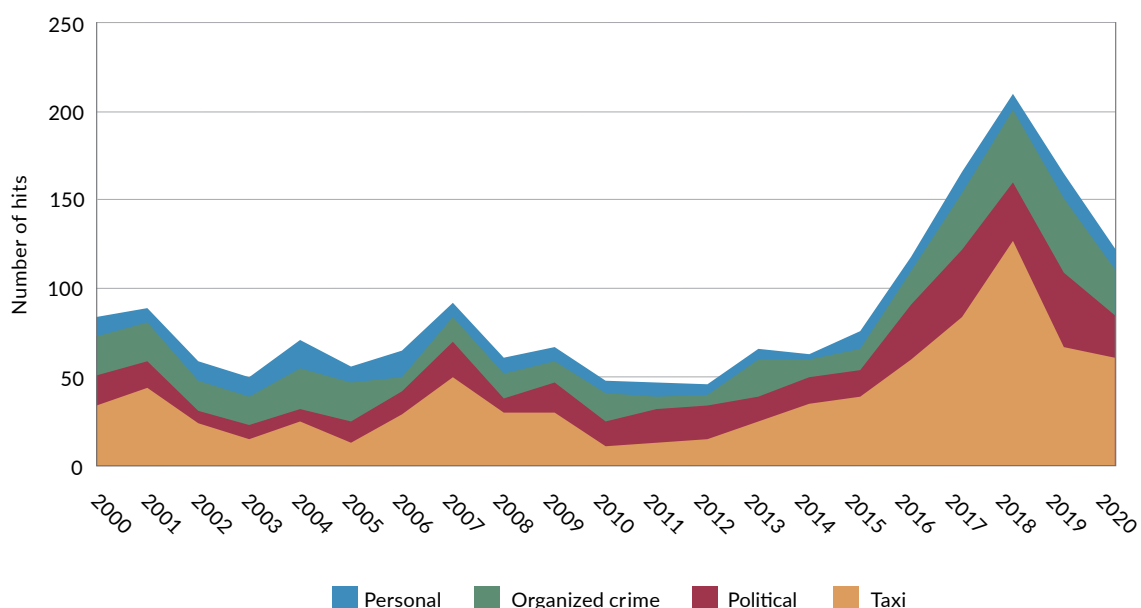


FIGURE 7 Assassination cases in South Africa recorded by the GI-TOC, 2000–2020, by category.

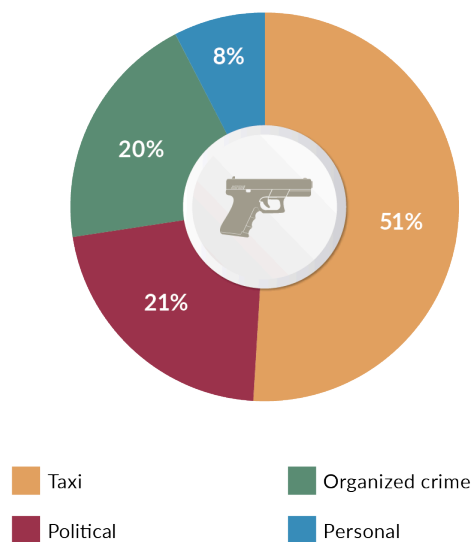


FIGURE 8 Assassinations by category, 2015–2020.

Assassinations in KwaZulu-Natal peaked in 2016 and 2019. Both years were election years: 2016 saw municipal elections in August and national elections were held in 2019. The attempted assassination of Ntobe Shezi continues this trend of pre-election targeting of candidates.

In 2020, there was a drastic decrease in political hits in KwaZulu-Natal. This was probably due, at least in part, to the national COVID-19 lockdown, which meant that

political branch meetings and conferences, which can be flashpoints for violence, did not take place. But the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic means that the 2020 decline in political hits in KwaZulu-Natal is likely to be a temporary pause in violence rather than the start of a long-term trend.

The province has a long-standing history of political violence, both during apartheid and in the transition to democracy.¹⁵ Previously, violence was largely related to interparty conflict between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party, and mostly linked to political ideology.¹⁶ However, the trend now seems to be that violence results from intraparty conflict particularly within the ANC; with targeted killings fuelled by power struggles and competition for lucrative government tenders.¹⁷

The magnitude of political violence in the province resulted in an official government-appointed inquiry being established in 2016, headed by Advocate Marumo Moerane. The Moerane Commission's report, released in 2018 and based on the testimony of 63 witnesses, including police, activists, academics and violence monitors,¹⁸ found that that 'there was overwhelming evidence from the majority of witnesses that access to resources through the tender system is the main root cause of the murder of politicians'.¹⁹

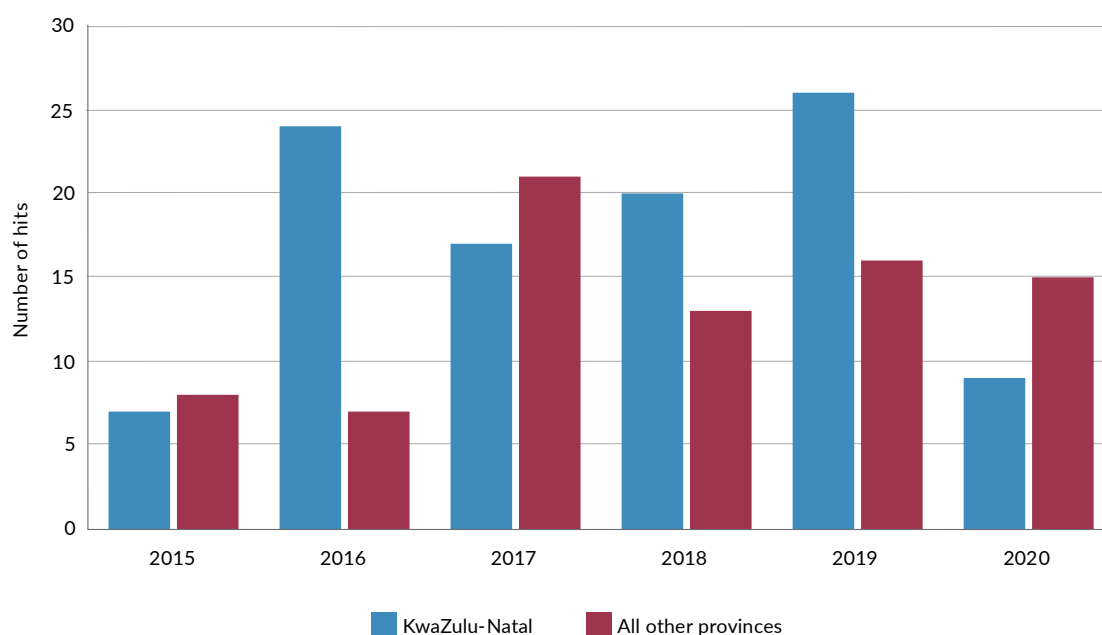


FIGURE 9 Assassinations by province, 2015–2020.

The commission further found that ‘criminal elements are recruited by politicians to achieve political ends, resulting in a complex matrix of criminal and political associations that also lead to the murder of politicians’.²⁰ Councillors have also allegedly been killed after publicly criticizing corruption.²¹ The report made valuable findings and it is hoped that the recommendations – if implemented – will lead to a long-term decrease in political violence in the province.

KwaZulu-Natal was also the epicentre of the violence that flared up following the imprisonment of former president Jacob Zuma. It was the worst episode of civil unrest since apartheid,²² coming after months of increased political tensions and violence during the first half of 2021. The unrest in the province, and to a lesser extent Gauteng, included widespread protests, looting, burning of buildings and violence, resulting in over 300 deaths.²³ In this trying and volatile environment, some industries and corrupt officials have resorted to violence for political or financial gain.

The assassinations of Bolitye and Deokaran and the attempted assassination of Shezi have seen the number of recorded political hits rise to 15 in 2021 so far. With the current political tensions in South Africa and violent

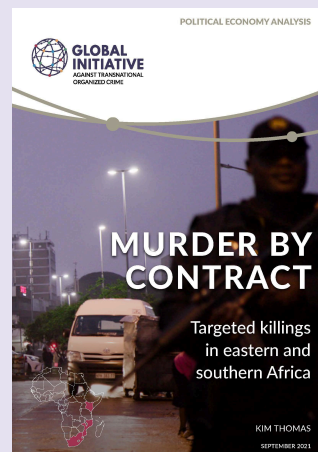


A candlelit vigil is held in memory of whistle-blower Babita Deokaran on August 2021 in Johannesburg, South Africa, after she was shot and killed in what investigators believed was a targeted hit.

Photo: Fani Mahuntsi/Gallo Images via Getty Images

competition leading up to the local government elections due to be held on 1 November 2021, more councillors and candidates may fall victim to political hits. Likewise, the increase in whistle-blowing and corruption investigations could mean that more witnesses and whistle-blowers will meet the same fate as Deokaran before the year is over, especially given the lack of protection afforded to witnesses in such cases.²⁴

This article draws on research from the GI-TOC's recent report 'Murder by contract: Targeted killings in eastern and southern Africa'. The report analyzes targeted killings in Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa for the period 2015–2020. It explores the impact of these killings on the respective countries' society, economy and democracy, identifying causes and possible solutions to the phenomenon.



Notes

- 1 The Special Investigating Unit provides forensic investigation and civil litigation services to combat corruption, serious malpractices and maladministration to protect the interests of the State and the public in South Africa. For more see: <https://www.siu.org.za/>.
- 2 Vincent Cruywagen, Police closing in on killers of corruption whistle-blower Babita Deokaran – sources, Daily Maverick, 25 August 2021, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-25-police-closing-in-on-killers-of-corruption-whistle-blower-babita-deokaran-sources/>.
- 3 Vincent Cruywagen, Slain whistle-blower Babita Deokaran potentially unveiled a criminal syndicate at the Department of Health, Daily Maverick, 28 August 2021, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-28-slain-whistle-blower-babita-deokaran-potentially-unveiled-a-criminal-syndicate-at-the-department-of-health/?utm_source=homepagify.
- 4 Vincent Cruywagen, Slain whistle-blower Babita Deokaran potentially unveiled a criminal syndicate at the Department of Health, Daily Maverick, 28 August 2021, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-28-slain-whistle-blower-babita-deokaran-potentially-unveiled-a-criminal-syndicate-at-the-department-of-health/?utm_source=homepagify.
- 5 Vincent Cruywagen, Police closing in on killers of corruption whistle-blower Babita Deokaran – sources, Daily Maverick, 25 August 2021, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-25-police-closing-in-on-killers-of-corruption-whistle-blower-babita-deokaran-sources/>.
- 6 Suthentira Govender, Corruption buster Babita Deokaran's suspected 'killers' to appear in court, TimesLive, 30 August 2021, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-08-30-corruption-buster-babita-deokarans-suspected-killers-to-appear-in-court/>.
- 7 Fanele Mhlongo, Two ANC councillors living in fear after being attacked in KZN, SABC News, 20 August 2021, <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/two-anc-councillors-living-in-fear-after-being-attacked-in-kzn/>.
- 8 Unathi Obose, Murder investigated, News24, 15 July 2021, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/local/city-vision/murder-investigated-20210714>.
- 9 There were 858 assassinations between 2015 and 2020. See: Kim Thomas, The rule of the gun: Hits and assassination in South Africa, 2000–2017, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2018, https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-rule-of-the-gun_AssassinationWitness.pdf.
- 10 Mark Shaw, *Hitmen for hire: Exposing South Africa's underworld*. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2017; and Kim Thomas, The rule of the gun: Hits and assassination in South Africa, 2000–2017, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2018, https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-rule-of-the-gun_AssassinationWitness.pdf.
- 11 See the councillor salaries budgeted for in the eThekweni municipality 2021–2022 budget, available at: http://www.durban.gov.za/Resource_Centre/reports/Documents/EthekweniMunicipality2021_22MediumTermBudget.pdf. The city has 200 councillors, meaning the R80 million budget equates to a R400 000 salary average per councillor.
- 12 Department of Labour, Employment and Labour Minister TW Nxesi announces minimum wage increases, 9 February 2021, <http://www.labour.gov.za/employment-and-labour-minister-tw-nxesi-announces-minimum-wage-increases?platform=hootsuite>.
- 13 Kim Thomas, The rule of the gun: Hits and assassination in South Africa, 2000–2017, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2018, https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-rule-of-the-gun_Assassination-Witness.pdf.
- 14 For consistency across the data set, the data is drawn from media reports of assassinations across the country and time period. Yet data collected by our research team in the province suggest that the media picks up only a portion of the cases (about 60–70%), and our database therefore does not reflect the full magnitude of political killings in the province. However, the general trends are in line with the data collected on the ground and therefore can be regarded as a useful barometer of the situation.
- 15 Rupert Taylor, Justice denied: political violence in KwaZulu-Natal after 1994, *African Affairs*, 2002, 101, 405, 473; Jo Beall, Sibongiseni Mkhize and Shahid Vawda, Traditional authority, institutional multiplicity and political transition in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 2004, Development Research Centre, Working Paper No. 48, 2; Mario Kramer, Violence, autochthony, and identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa): A processual perspective on local political dynamics, *African Studies Review*, 2019, 1; Report of the Moerane Commission of Inquiry into the underlying causes of the murder of politicians in KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 2018, 417.
- 16 Richard Carver, KwaZulu-Natal – Continued violence and displacement, 1996, WRITENET, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=publisher&docid=3ae6a6bc4&skip=0&publisher=WRITENET&querysi=kwa-zulu%20natal%20continued%20violence&searchin=fulltext&sort=date;SR> Maninger, The conflict between ANC and IFP supporters and its impact on development in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994, (unpublished), University of Johannesburg, 5; Maria Schuldt, Voting and violence in KwaZulu-Natal's no-go areas: Coercive mobilisation and territorial control in post-conflict elections, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 2013, 13, 1.
- 17 Report of the Moerane Commission of Inquiry into the underlying causes of the murder of politicians in KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 2018, 413.
- 18 Greg Arde, War party: How the ANC's Political Killings are Breaking South Africa, Tafelberg, 2020; Report of the Moerane Commission of Inquiry into the underlying causes of the murder of politicians in KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 2018.
- 19 Ibid., 418.
- 20 Ibid., 415.
- 21 Ibid., 66.
- 22 Andrew Harding, South Africa riots: The inside story of Durban's week of anarchy, BBC, 29 July 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57996373>.
- 23 Loyiso Sidimba, Unrest death toll in KZN revised down by government, IOL, 23 July 2021, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/unrest-death-toll-in-kzn-revised-down-by-government-68557f9a-7b31-4d2c-aafc-e229da8d7a2d>.
- 24 Mark Heywood, Babita Deokaran: How not to get away with murder, Daily Maverick, 31 August 2021,

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-31-babita-deokaran-how-not-to-get-away-with-murder/>.

How informal miners in Mozambique bear the brunt of criminalization while elites seize more control of mining concessions.

Mozambique is estimated to produce as much as 80% of the world's ruby supply.¹ In northern Mozambique, most ruby mining is concentrated around Namanhumbir, east of Montepuez in the Cabo Delgado province, and to a lesser degree around M'Sawize in the Niassa Special Reserve, a protected wildlife area along Mozambique's border with Tanzania.

Many of these rubies are extracted by artisanal and small-scale mining operations. However, much of this activity is illegal, either because it is unlicensed – following the Mozambican government's introduction of compulsory mining licences in 2016 for artisanal miners – or because it takes place in protected areas or private mining concessions owned by large-scale mining companies.²

Pushing informal mining into the illegal sphere means that these miners – typically referred to as *garimpeiros* – have to operate clandestinely and often negotiate with corrupt security forces for access to mining areas. Their precarious and criminalized position also puts them at risk of abuse from security forces.

Meanwhile, new investigations into the ownership of mining concessions have found that political elites have been tightening their hold over mining rights in Cabo Delgado, even as a fierce insurgency has raged in northern part of the province.

The experiences of the *garimpeiros*

In GI-TOC fieldwork in early 2021 in Montepuez, M'Sawize and surrounding mining areas, miners and gem traders described how corrupt police – nominally charged with securing the mine concessions – and the Associação dos Combatentes, a mining association controlled by former independence fighters in Lichinga that holds the licence to mine at M'Sawize³ act as gatekeepers to the informal miners in the respective locations.⁴ As one middleman put it: 'There is no law that protects artisanal miners in Mozambique. As such, the police monopolize everything.'⁵ It was reported that police officers may allow access to mining areas for a small bribe.⁶ Officers stationed near mine sites will often bribe their superior officers to ensure that they are not redeployed. In other cases, police officers enter into



Artisanal miners stand above a site where they search for rubies on the outskirts of the mining town of Montepuez, northern Mozambique.

Photo: Emidio Josine/AFP via Getty Images

profit-sharing agreements with miners or run mining operations themselves.⁷

In Montepuez, at the large-scale ruby mining concession controlled by Montepuez Ruby Mining (MRM) – a joint venture between Mozambican company Mwiriti and global gemstone-producing giant Gemfields – miners continue to illegally mine the concession, often bribing police to gain access at night,⁸ typically for a slot of two to four hours, before the police or security guards signal that it is time to leave. Miners then take excavated soil with them for washing and processing,⁹ before selling their rubies to Thai, Sri Lankan and West African buyers in Montepuez.¹⁰ There are reports that local gemstone buyers fund excavation teams and, in some cases, provide miners with the money to pay the necessary bribes.¹¹

On 10 June 2021, three police officers, three members of MRM security contractor GardaWorld and one MRM employee were found guilty of facilitating illegal mining at the MRM concession by the Montepuez district court.¹² Other police officers have also allegedly been funding teams of *garimpeiros* to mine in the concession.

Some female mine workers report that law enforcement officers have demanded sex in exchange for allowing them to enter the MRM concession. Often these women are Tanzanian who, because of their status as undocumented migrants in Mozambique, frequently do not report cases of sexual assault to the police, fearing that their complaints will not be investigated, or worse, that they will suffer reprisals such as being forced to pay bribes to avoid being arrested because of their illegal residency status. Some female miners form sexual relationships with law enforcement officers to protect themselves from other predatory officers.¹³

While allegations of misconduct by local law enforcement persist, there are also reports that an increasing number of officers are no longer accepting payments in return for access to the concession. As a result, gaining access to the concession has become more difficult for artisanal miners,¹⁴ cutting them off from the livelihood they had previously been (illegally) able to negotiate access to.

There has been tension between police and private security around mining concessions and artisanal miners for many years. Since 2012, there have been allegations of land clearances and violent removals being carried out by police units around the MRM concession.¹⁵ After the

government changed the regulations governing artisanal mining in 2016, introducing the requirement for artisanal miners to be licensed by forming registered associations, state and private security forces forcibly removed thousands of artisanal miners digging in the ruby fields near Montepuez.¹⁶

In Niassa Special Reserve, in addition to the Associação dos Combatentes controlling access to mine sites, miners made similar allegations that police officers are involved in the sector themselves,¹⁷ controlling and extorting miners through the threat of violence and facilitating illegal mining through bribes.¹⁸ Allegations of punitive measures such as forced expulsions, lengthy imprisonment and extrajudicial beatings to control and reduce illegal mining were also made against police in Niassa Special Reserve following the introduction of compulsory licences.¹⁹

In 2019, Gemfields settled a case – including agreeing to pay US\$7.6 million compensation – to a group of artisanal ruby miners and residents in the local vicinity of the MRM concession.²⁰ The claimants alleged that the mine's security forces had committed serious human rights violations, including shootings, beatings, rapes and degrading treatment. The group of claimants included families of artisanal miners who were allegedly killed on the mine, either shot, beaten or buried alive in mine shafts. The company did not admit liability for the violence but did acknowledge that violence had taken place on its mining area.²¹

As the insurgency in Cabo Delgado has advanced, increasing numbers of displaced people – estimated to be as many as 10 000 – have arrived at the mining concession in Montepuez, fleeing the violence around their homes further north. Desperate for an income source, many have sought illegal mining work on the MRM concession.²² This has resulted in intensified clashes between mine security and artisanal miners.²³

Control of mining concessions by the Mozambican political elite

In July 2021, Maputo-based NGO the Public Integrity Centre (CIP) published an analysis finding that attributions of mining concessions have shot up since the start of the Cabo Delgado conflict.²⁴ From 1992 to 2016, the year before the start of the armed conflict in Cabo Delgado, 67 mining concession licenses were attributed in the province. However, from 2017 to February 2021, after the start of the conflict, 46 licenses

resources in Mozambique are concentrated in the hands of a privileged few.

The study went on to investigate the owners of these new concessions using data obtained from the National Mining Institute and other government sources, revealing the extent to which some of the richest

The CIP analysis found that ‘the ownership of a good portion of the concessions is owned by politically exposed people or directly linked to influential individuals from the Frelimo party’. Many owners remained unidentifiable, as many companies involved are registered outside Mozambique, including several based in Mauritius, which is considered a tax haven.

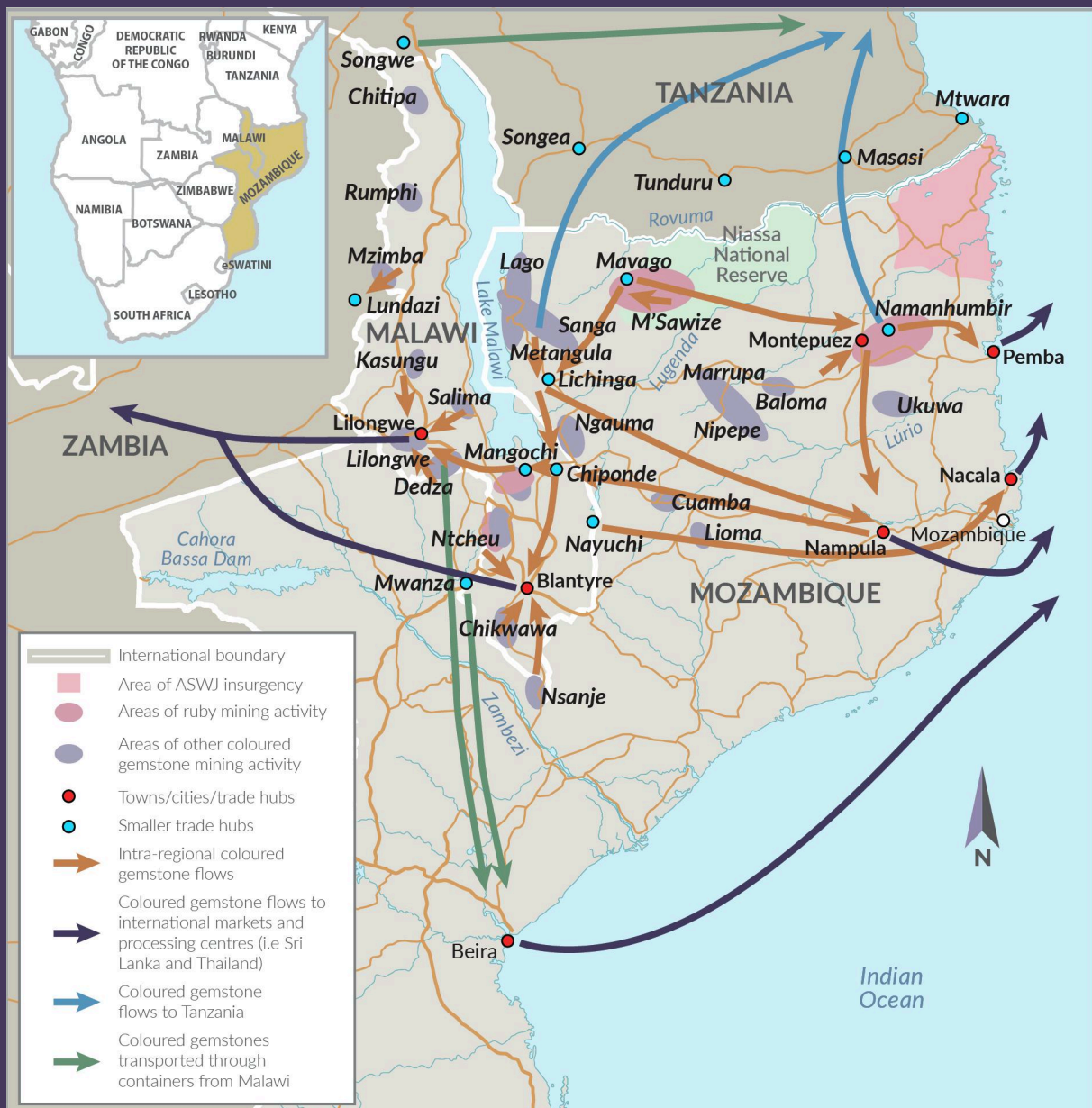


FIGURE 10 Northern Mozambique ruby flows.

The biggest single holder of concessions in the province is Mwiriti, owned by retired general Raimundo Domingos Pachinuapa and his business partner Asghar Fakhrleali. Mwiriti owns MRM in partnership with Gemfields, and owns 7% of mining concessions in the province (according to CIP analysis).

Pachinuapa, a former independence fighter and the first governor of Cabo Delgado, is a senior figure in the ruling Frelimo party.²⁵ He is a member of the Makonde ethnic group to which President Filipe Nyusi belongs.²⁶ Pachinuapa's son Raime is MRM's director of corporate affairs and MRM is chaired by Samora Machel Jr, son of Mozambique's independence-struggle leader.²⁷

Economic exclusion and radicalization

Resentment among local communities at elite capture of the economic benefits of the natural resources of northern Mozambique – including the ruby fields and the natural gas resources –, which lie beneath the land they farm and which they rely on for their livelihoods, is something that many analysts view as a factor that has fuelled the radicalization across the region and brought fighters to the Islamist insurgency.²⁸

Analysis published in June by the International Crisis Group argued that the violent expulsions from the mine areas deprived ethnic Mwani of an income stream, and that several farmers joined the militants in a reaction against the control of ethnic Makonde over the mining concession in Montepuez.²⁹

João Feijó at the Mozambique-based think tank Observatório do Meio Rural has published information on what is known about the leaders of the insurgency. One key leader, Maulana Ali Cassimo, has reportedly

protested against the harsh treatment and detention of artisanal miners working in Niassa Reserve, arguing that mining was one of the few economic options available to these miners.³⁰

MRM has refuted claims that the impact of its project may have fed community feelings of exclusion that have fed into the insurgency, telling *The Continent* newspaper that its own investigations have found this suggestion to be 'absurd and misleading'.³¹

What is the impact of framing informal mining as a criminal issue?

Informal mining is a large part of the local economy in northern Mozambique, a region with exceptionally high levels of poverty and few legitimate economic opportunities. As people have been displaced from the northern area of Cabo Delgado, the clashes between security forces and informal miners have intensified.

While these clashes with informal miners are framed as an issue of criminality, mining in northern Mozambique is much more complex. It is an issue of justice and land rights over the richest resources available in a deeply impoverished region. It is also an economic issue, because mining – even while risky and criminalized – is one of the few livelihood opportunities available in the region. Finally, it is a health and environmental issue due to the impact of mining activities on the health of local populations and ecosystems.

There is a stark contrast between the experiences of the *garimpeiros*, negotiating a corrupt system that can turn brutal, and the Mozambican political elite tightening control of natural resources amid a violent insurgency.

This article draws on research from the upcoming GI-TOC report 'Scratching the Surface: Tracing coloured gemstone flows from northern Mozambique and Malawi

to Tanzania, Thailand and Sri Lanka' by Marcena Hunter, Chikomeni Manda and Gabriel Moberg.

Notes

- 1 Jason Boswell, Mozambique's lucrative ruby mines, BBC, 10 February 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/business-38934307>.
- 2 In 2003, artisanal mining licences and permits were created for Mozambican citizens. More recently, there has been a push to get artisanal miners to register as associations. In 2016, this policy became law, rendering what was previously merely 'informal' mining illegal. Built into this initiative have been efforts to exclude non-Mozambican nationals from artisanal and small-scale mining, with artisanal mining associations required to consist solely of local stakeholders. However, compliance with the new rules has been limited due to lack of state capacity, corruption, high levels of bureaucracy and artisanal mining zones lacking sufficient deposits. As a result, much of the coloured gemstone artisanal and small-scale mining in northern Mozambique today is illegal.
- 3 Interviews with Mozambican and Tanzanian dealers, Mavago and Lichinga, January 2021.
- 4 The study followed a mixed-methodology approach, taking advantage of primary research carried out by field investigators, complemented by a literature review. Remote interviews were also conducted by telephone. Researchers visited trading centres, including Lichinga, Mavago, M'Sawize, Montepuez, Namanhumbir and Nampula in Mozambique in January 2021, and Lilongwe and Mangochi in Malawi in February 2021. Interviews were carried out with government officials, police officers, civil society actors, industry experts, private sector actors and security officials, gemstone dealers, brokers and miners.
- 5 Interview with gemstone middleman, January 2021.
- 6 Interview with NSR conservationist, Niassa, January 2021.
- 7 Interviews with miners and dealers, Mavago, January 2021.
- 8 Interviews with Tanzanian buyers, brokers and miners, Montepuez, January 2021.
- 9 Interview with Tanzanian miner and dealer, Montepuez, January 2021.
- 10 Roundtable interview with industry experts, June 2021, by teleconference.
- 11 Interview with Tanzanian female miner and dealer, Montepuez, January 2021.
- 12 Mozambique: six sentenced for facilitating illegal ruby mining, Club of Mozambique, 10 June 2021, <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-six-sentenced-for-facilitating-illegal-ruby-mining-194205/>.
- 13 Interview with Tanzanian female miner and dealer, Montepuez, January 2021.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 The business interests of General Raimundo Pachinuapa, Centro de Jornalismo Investigativo, 13 April 2020; Estacio Valoi, The blood rubies of Montepuez, Foreign Policy, 3 May 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/03/the-blood-rubies-of-montepuez-mozambique-gemfields-illegal-mining/>.
- 16 David Matsinhe, Mozambique: the forgotten people of Cabo Delgado, Daily Maverick, 29 May 2020, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-05-29-mozambique-the-forgotten-people-of-cabo-delgado/>.
- 17 Note that only the Association of Former Combatants of Lichinga has the right to mine in Niassa Special Reserve, and that other local communities and foreign miners operate in the reserve illegally.
- 18 Marcena Hunter, Pulling at golden threads, ENACT, April 2019.
- 19 See for example Gemmological Institute of America, Conservation, rubies and gold mining in Mozambique [video], YouTube, 2018, <https://youtu.be/TBXdnma7QBQ>.
- 20 Cecilia Jamasmie, Gemfields to pay \$7.8m to settle human rights abuses claims in Mozambique, mining.com, 29 January 2019, <https://www.mining.com/gemfields-pay-7-8m-settle-claim-human-rights-abuses-mozambique/>.
- 21 Leigh Day statement on the Gemfields case, 2019, <https://www.leighday.co.uk/latest-updates/cases-and-testimonials/cases/gemfields/>.
- 22 Roundtable interview with industry experts, June 2021, by teleconference.
- 23 Joseph Hanlon, Special report: Evolution of the Cabo Delgado war, Club of Mozambique, 27 February 2020, <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/special-report-evolution-of-the-cabo-delgado-war-by-joseph-hanlon-153785/>.
- 24 Public Integrity Centre (CIP), Requests for mining concessions increase as armed conflict in Cabo Delgado intensifies – Who are the owners of mining licences in Cabo Delgado?, 20 July 2021, <https://www.cipmoz.org/en/2021/07/20/8153/>.
- 25 Luis Nhachote, Cabo Delgado is a warzone, but profiteers strike it rich, *Mail & Guardian*, 4 September 2021, <https://mg.co.za/africa/2021-09-04-cabo-delgado-is-a-warzone-but-profiteers-strike-it-rich/>.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Estacio Valoi, The deadly rubies of Montepuez, Oxpeckers, 15 March 2016, <https://oxpeckers.org/2016/03/the-deadly-rubies-of-montepuez/>.
- 28 Joseph Hanlon, Special report: Evolution of the Cabo Delgado war, Club of Mozambique, 27 February 2020, <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/special-report-evolution-of-the-cabo-delgado-war-by-joseph-hanlon-153785/>; Joseph Hanlon, Mozambique's jihadists and the 'curse' of gas and rubies, BBC, 18 September 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54183948>.
- 29 International Crisis Group, Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado, 11 June 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/303-stemming-insurrection-mozambiques-cabo-delgado>.
- 30 João Feijó, From The "Faceless Enemy" To The Hypothesis Of Dialogue: Identities, Pretensions And Channels Of Communication With The *Machababs*, OMR, 10 August 2021, <https://omrmz.org/omrweb/wp-content/uploads/DR-130-Cabo-Delgado-Pt-e-Eng.pdf>.
- 31 Luis Nhachote, Cabo Delgado is a warzone, but profiteers strike it rich, *Mail & Guardian*, 4 September 2021, <https://mg.co.za/africa/2021-09-04-cabo-delgado-is-a-warzone-but-profiteers-strike-it-rich/>.

Risk Bulletins are regular outputs of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's regional observatories, which draw on civil society networks to provide new data and contextualize trends related to organized crime networks, illicit trade and state responses to them. If you would like to subscribe to future editions of the Risk Bulletin, please sign up here or email julia.stanyard@globalinitiative.net.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with 500 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.

www.globalinitiative.net



The Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa works in association with ENACT to develop regional capacity to tackle organized crime.



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME