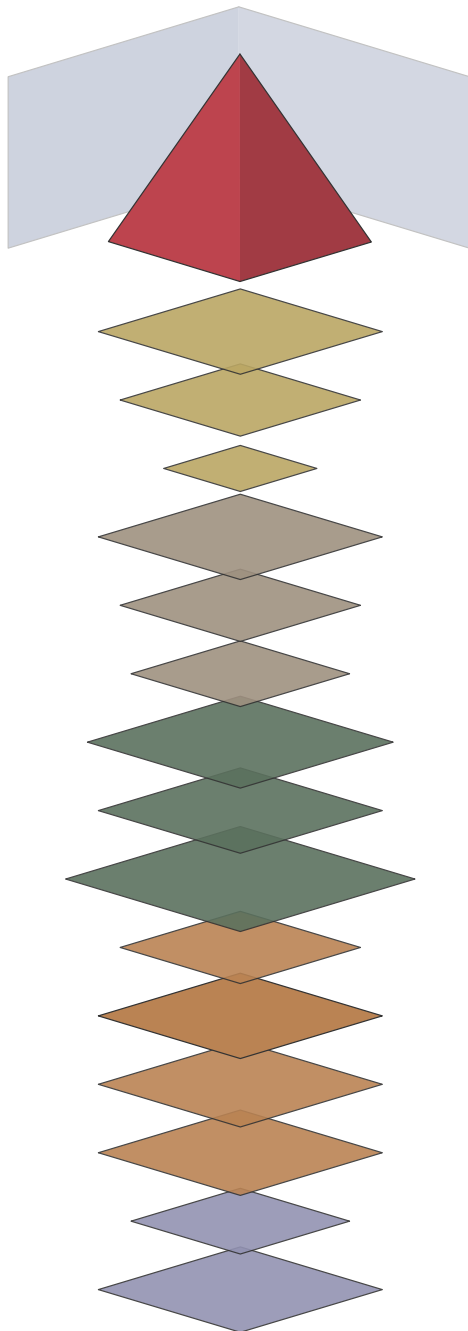




# GHANA

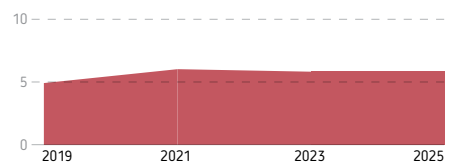


5.77  $\triangleright 0.03$

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

21<sup>st</sup> of 54 African countries  $\triangleright 4$

6<sup>th</sup> of 15 West African countries  $\triangleright 1$



## CRIMINAL MARKETS

6.03  $\triangleright 0.03$

|                                     |                            |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| HUMAN TRAFFICKING                   | 6.50 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| HUMAN SMUGGLING                     | 5.50 0.00                  |
| EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING | 3.50 0.00                  |
| ARMS TRAFFICKING                    | 6.50 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS          | 5.50 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS    | 5.00 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| FLORA CRIMES                        | 7.00 0.00                  |
| FAUNA CRIMES                        | 6.50 0.00                  |
| NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES       | 8.00 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| HEROIN TRADE                        | 5.50 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| COCAINE TRADE                       | 6.50 0.00                  |
| CANNABIS TRADE                      | 6.50 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE                | 6.50 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES              | 5.00 $\triangleright 1.00$ |
| FINANCIAL CRIMES                    | 6.50 $\triangleright 0.50$ |



## CRIMINAL ACTORS

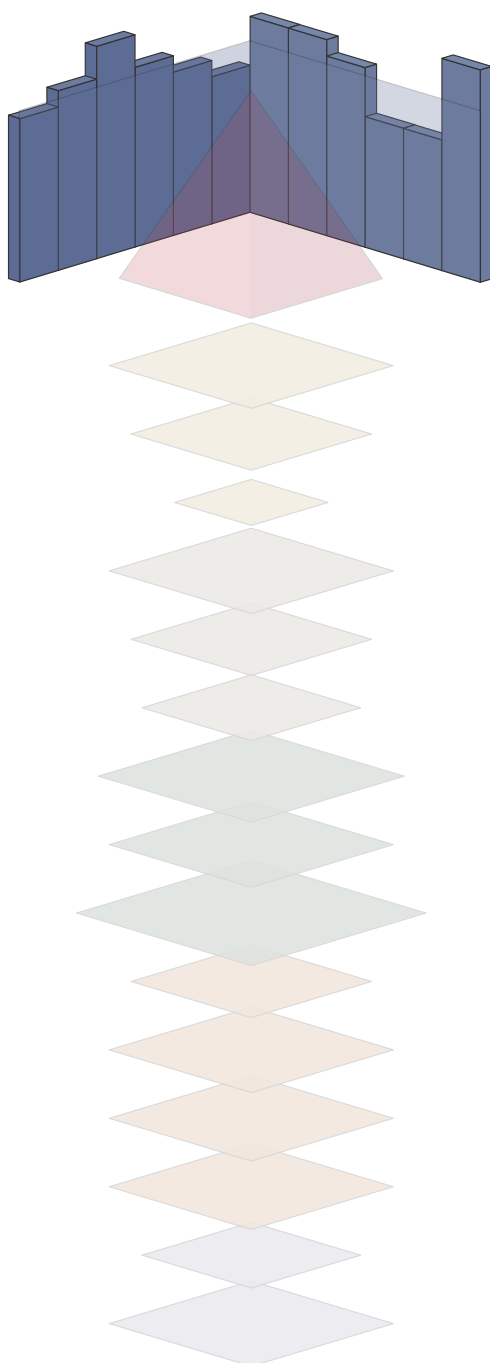
5.50  $\triangleright 0.10$

|                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS    | 2.00 $\triangleright 1.00$ |
| CRIMINAL NETWORKS     | 7.00 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS | 7.50 0.00                  |
| FOREIGN ACTORS        | 6.00 $\triangleright 0.50$ |
| PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS | 5.00 $\triangleright 0.50$ |





# GHANA

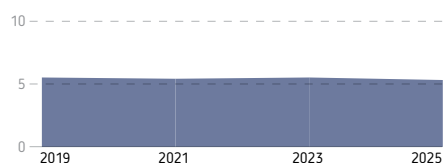


5.33  $\downarrow 0.12$

## RESILIENCE SCORE

8<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  $\downarrow 1$

4<sup>th</sup> of 15 West African countries



|   |      |                   |
|---|------|-------------------|
| POLITICAL LEADERSHIP<br>AND GOVERNANCE        | 5.00 | $\downarrow 1.00$ |
| GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY<br>AND ACCOUNTABILITY | 5.50 | 0.00              |
| INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION                     | 6.50 | 0.00              |
| NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS                    | 5.50 | $\uparrow 0.50$   |
| JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION                 | 5.00 | 0.00              |
| LAW ENFORCEMENT                               | 4.50 | 0.00              |
| TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY                         | 6.00 | 0.00              |
| ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING                         | 6.00 | 0.00              |
| ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY                  | 5.50 | $\downarrow 1.00$ |
| VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT                    | 4.00 | $\uparrow 0.50$   |
| PREVENTION                                    | 4.00 | 0.00              |
| NON-STATE ACTORS                              | 6.50 | $\downarrow 0.50$ |



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal markets

### PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a serious problem in Ghana, encompassing forced child labour and sexual exploitation. The country is used as a transit point for West Africans, who are often destined for sex trafficking in Europe. Major cities such as Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi, as well as smaller border areas of Elubo, Aflao, Bawku and Bolgatanga, are hotspots for this crime. The issue permeates Ghanaian society, with traffickers embedded throughout the economy and children being routinely offered to traffickers by their family members. The exploitation of Ghanaian children is prevalent in fishing, domestic service, street hawking, mining and agriculture. Foreign nationals are also forced into indentured labour. For instance, Chinese nationals are frequently made to work in mining and fishing, in both the formal and informal sectors. Ghanaians working on Chinese-owned industrial vessels are allegedly exploited, enduring forced labour, abuse, underpayment, limited medical care and poor living conditions.

Ghanaian smugglers are reported to play a notable role in the regional human smuggling market. Ghana, as one of the more stable and economically attractive countries in the region, acts as an important transit and destination country for irregular migrants. This is allegedly facilitated by local knowledge of clandestine routes into the country, especially from neighbouring Burkina Faso. The free movement protocol within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) zone means the vast majority of intra-regional movement does not require the services of smugglers. However, once in Ghana, many irregular migrants are then smuggled beyond ECOWAS, mainly to Europe and Western Asia. Ghana is also known as a regional hub for the production of fake travel documents and counterfeit American and European visas, largely due to corruption at the many foreign consulates in Accra. People smugglers are deeply integrated into Ghanaian society and are often perceived as facilitators of movement rather than criminals.

Extortion and protection racketeering in Ghana is generally limited to isolated incidents, with no indication that the activity is organized or widespread. However, specific practices – such as the use of ‘land guards’ to protect property – have increasingly led to intimidation and occasional violence, particularly in urban areas. Other forms of petty extortion, including the use of road blocks to target motorists, have also been reported. While Ghana itself has not experienced large-scale incidents of kidnapping for ransom, its proximity to countries affected by violent extremism heightens the potential risk, especially near the northern border.

### TRADE

Arms trafficking is a notable and growing problem in Ghana, with Kumasi and Accra serving as key markets for illegal weapons. Kumasi, renowned for its gun-manufacturing centres, boasts skilled craftsmen who contribute to the proliferation of quality weapons. The availability of affordable raw materials and attractive retail prices make gun manufacturing a highly profitable venture. The demand for illicit arms extends beyond traditional communities participating in hunting and poaching to urban and rural areas where rising crime rates threaten safety and livelihoods. Criminal networks are involved in arms trading within Ghana and across its borders, connecting international traders and local purchasers. Ghana is also a principal source of commercial explosives used in sub-regional conflicts, particularly in Mali and Burkina Faso.

Turning to counterfeit goods, it is estimated that most of the electrical products sold in Accra are counterfeit and fail to meet safety standards. The illegal trade of counterfeit medicines has also been a long-standing issue. Counterfeit goods are commonly bought and sold in markets such as Makola, for textiles, and in Abossey Okai, which is known for car spare parts. Many of these counterfeit products are produced in Chinese factories and brought to West Africa, including Ghana, through the Port of Tema. The illicit trade in excisable goods in Ghana primarily involves tobacco and alcohol products. The country’s porous borders – especially with Togo and Burkina Faso – facilitate widespread smuggling, with the port of Lomé serving as a key transit hub. High excise taxes encourage smuggling and illegal production, which is facilitated by organized groups and enabled by corruption within customs and law enforcement.

### ENVIRONMENT

Over the past two decades, Ghana has experienced a notable loss of tree cover. Illicit logging poses a huge threat to the country’s forest reserves, particularly in the Bono, Ahafo and Western North regions. Reports indicate that criminal networks of Ghanaian and Chinese groups are increasingly engaged in illicit logging, with Ghana serving as a major supplier of illicit rosewood to Asia. Despite intermittent bans on rosewood harvesting and export, the trade continues due to bribery and corruption. Illicit logging is prevalent in the Savannah region, where corrupt officials are exploited, and rosewood is exported through its land borders and ports. Logging is also connected to other illegal activities, such as opaque cocoa and mineral mining operations.



The illegal trade of pangolins, elephants and birds poses a threat to the country's fauna. Despite legislation prohibiting the hunting and possession of pangolins, poaching persists for bushmeat consumption and use in traditional medicine. The decline in Ghana's elephant population has led poachers to shift to large birds such as hornbills, causing their numbers to dwindle. Ghana's fish stocks have been severely depleted by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, with Chinese long-distance trawler vessels being the primary culprits in Ghana's waters.

Non-renewable resource crimes in Ghana mainly revolve around the illicit gold trade, as the country is a large global supplier. Licensed gold buyers based in Accra purchase gold from agents at small mining sites before transporting it to Accra for export. The involvement of political elites in artisanal gold mining in the Western region, has fuelled significant exports. Ghana also serves as a transit route for gold smuggled from Mali and Burkina Faso, with routes passing through towns such as Wa (into Burkina Faso) and Dorimon (into Côte d'Ivoire). Illicit gold flows are substantial through Ghana, as it is a key supplier of semi-pure gold to refineries in India and the UAE. Other non-renewable resource crimes in Ghana include oil and fuel smuggling.

## DRUGS

Ghana is as a transit and destination country for heroin trafficking, mostly originating from Afghanistan. Seizures of inbound and outbound heroin shipments have indicated that it tends to be imported by East African nationals, some is consumed domestically, before the majority is repackaged and exported to the US by Ghanaian nationals. Corrupt officials are involved in facilitating the movement of heroin through Ghanaian seaports and airports. While heroin distribution and consumption were historically concentrated in urban areas of Accra and Tema, Ghana's domestic market is believed to have expanded throughout the country, including to rural northern regions. Ghanaian trafficking groups, along with their Nigerian counterparts, have played an influential role in expanding the global heroin trade and illicit drug markets across West Africa.

Ghanaian organized crime groups have also emerged as big players in the global cocaine trade. As cocaine seizures have declined and media coverage has decreased, law enforcement officials and civil society stakeholders suggest that political protection being given to illicit markets, particularly the cocaine trade, by sections of the government is the main reason for a drop in visible trafficking. Brazil remains the primary source country for cocaine imported by sea, often concealed in sugar containers and transported through trans-shipment points such as Spain or Turkey before reaching Ghana's ports at Tema, and to a lesser extent Takoradi.

Ghana has emerged as a prominent cannabis cultivation area in Africa. The Volta region, particularly Brong Ahafo, is the primary hotspot for cannabis growing and serves as the main source of income for many in the area. Cannabis cultivation expanded after Ghana decriminalized its use for health and industrial purposes, due to a significant extent to a misunderstanding of the new legal regime. Cannabis seizures have also risen, accounting for the bulk of drug interdictions in Ghana. In particular, there has been a notable rise in the seizure of cannabis-laden cargo at the Kotoka airport and at border towns, driven by increasing demand for the high-THC cannabis produced in Ghana. Renowned for its potency, Ghanaian cannabis has become sought after in North American and European markets, with the UK now the primary destination for the country's cannabis exports.

The synthetic drug trade is also prevalent in Ghana. The abuse of Tramadol, mainly imported from India, has become a problem in the country. Despite the reported decrease in use over recent years, the illegal Tramadol trade has been associated with increased violence. Precursor chemicals intended for legal purposes are also being diverted to criminal networks in Ghana. Synthetic drug use and trafficking are prevalent in the Northern and Western regions, as well as in Volta. Ghana is a transit point for methamphetamines moving from Nigeria to South Africa, a major consumption hub. While there have been repeated suspicions of methamphetamine manufacturing taking place within Ghana, this is unconfirmed. Ghana also operates as a transit point for ephedrine, a methamphetamine precursor, trafficked to production facilities predominantly in Nigeria. However, ephedrine flows appear to have decreased, probably linked to changes in manufacturing techniques in Nigeria.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

In recent years, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghana has experienced a rise in cyber-dependent crimes, affecting both businesses and individuals. This has had a detrimental effect on the growing digital sector and hindered the adoption of technology in the country. Criminals can exploit victims' fears, insecurities and vulnerabilities using various tactics. Sophisticated organized crime groups use malware to access the personal data of unsuspecting people and businesses in order to steal money. Ghanaian businesses have experienced an above-average rate of botnet and cryptominer attacks, further hampering economic growth and raising concerns for Ghanaian businesses operating globally.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes, including various types of fraud and tax evasion, are pervasive in Ghana, affecting various sectors such as banking, import/export, real estate and industries such as fishing, gold and cocoa. Ghana is a known hub for individuals and networks perpetrating online fraud, including romance scams. Cases of online Ponzi schemes



and banking fraud have also been reported, and high-profile individuals have faced charges of breach of trust and bribery. Cases of tax evasion have also emerged, involving companies engaged in economic crimes against the state, resulting in substantial losses. The misuse of funds designated for Ghana's COVID-19 efforts has prompted collaboration between different agencies to prosecute the officials and private actors involved. Meanwhile, the rise of cyber-enabled financial crimes, particularly online romance scams, remains a concern.

## Criminal actors

Corruption is entrenched within various sectors of Ghana's public administration, including public procurement, some elements of the judiciary, the Ghana Police Service, and the land, tax and customs administrations. It is estimated that the country loses around US\$4 billion annually to corruption, roughly 20% of the national budget. This highlights the serious impact of systemic corruption on the public finances and development efforts. There are allegations that politicians have amassed wealth through links to illicit economies, particularly drugs and the gold sector, and that political parties have benefited from financing from those involved in the drugs market – as well as allegations that elite drug money has funded the country's housing boom. Members of the security and intelligence services, including immigration, customs, excise, preventive services and the police, have been implicated in facilitating drug and arms trafficking, illicit mining and other organized criminal activities.

Foreign criminal actors, particularly from China and Nigeria, also play a sizeable role in various illicit activities in Ghana. Chinese criminals are entrenched in illicit gold mining operations, exerting substantial economic influence over the non-renewable resource crimes market in the country. They exploit connections within the state to bypass certification requirements for fishing, logging

and other activities. Nigerian criminals are prominent in smuggling methamphetamine and other drugs, especially in the southern regions around Accra. Criminal actors from Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger are believed to be active in Ghana's illicit gold mining and logging sectors, predominantly in areas such as Tinga, Bole and the country's northern regions. Foreign criminal networks have allegedly infiltrated the highest levels of power in Ghana.

Mafia-style groups in Ghana maintain a low profile, keeping their activities away from the public eye. However, clashes between rival gangs have led to the arrest of several leaders and members and the seizure of ammunition. Smaller informal criminal networks in Ghana engage in a range of activities, including drug trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, human smuggling, cybercrime and vehicle theft. These networks run various routes, through sea borders, airports and land borders, often utilizing their local knowledge of internal waterways. Some criminal enterprises in Ghana, particularly in Accra, have affiliations with larger African criminal networks, including groups in Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Bound by ethnic, religious or familial ties, these networks have a profound impact on Ghanaian society, undermining public institutions and exerting influence on democratic elections – primarily through financial pressure rather than violence. The intertwining of criminal and legitimate networks has become widespread, making it challenging to distinguish between them.

Private sector actors, including companies and individuals, have been implicated in facilitating organized crime and trafficking. Ghanaian-owned front companies have enabled Chinese industrial vessels to sail under the Ghanaian flag in order to evade fishing restrictions. There are also concerns about corporate ethics and suspicious transactions involving various companies in the gold trade. Numerous high-level business people have been arrested for bribery, fraud and money laundering.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Ghana has made progress in addressing public malfeasance, however, there is limited political will to combat some forms of organized crime or to tackle the challenges posed by criminal profits infiltrating legitimate markets. Cooperation between official and traditional Ghanaian leaders is limited, and there are widespread allegations of drug money having an influence on politics, weakening legislation on illicit financial flows and the government's

stance on drugs. While Ghana has attempted to combat human trafficking and regulate the logging sector, executive pressure on some key regulatory institutions has hampered their effectiveness. The country's failure to comply with international regulations on wildlife trafficking reflects a paucity of political will to address the issue. Endemic corruption across some state institutions continues to be a challenge for Ghana, with the incumbent government implicated in the misappropriation of COVID-19 funds provided by international organizations. Although Ghana has



a strong anti-corruption framework, enforcement challenges persist, and anti-corruption bodies face concerns regarding their independence and limited resources. Political parties are required to publish financial reports but often fail to do so, leading to the perception of opacity and corruption among the public. Police corruption is also widespread, eroding public trust. Efforts to enhance transparency over government oil revenues have not been fully addressed.

Ghana has ratified various international treaties on organized crime, but the implementation remains a challenge. The country participates in regional and international initiatives and cooperates with international organizations. Ghana has successfully dismantled criminal syndicates and seized sizeable quantities of illegal substances through joint operations with international partners. While the country has successfully executed extraditions, there are still issues in high-profile, politically sensitive cases. There is a legal framework in place to address organized crime in Ghana, but the fragmented nature of these laws and lack of cooperation between agencies hinders their effective implementation. Attempts are being made to consolidate sanctions into a cohesive framework, but progress has been slow. The country still relies on outdated laws to combat human smuggling, despite the need for alignment with international standards.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Corruption is a challenge within Ghana's judicial system, and it has a shortage of specialized units to combat organized crime. A high percentage of Ghanaians perceive judges and magistrates to be engaged in corrupt practices, which has led to a distrust of the court system and even instances of attempted mob justice. While some reports suggest there has been a decrease in corruption in recent years, a lack of high-quality judges has made it difficult to prosecute organized criminal actors. Ghana's prisons are severely overcrowded due to underfunding and inadequate funding is allocated for inmates' meals.

The Ghana Police Service has tried to address personnel shortages with a recruitment drive in 2021, although the police-to-population ratio still falls well below the UN's recommended standard. Efforts have been made to establish community policing units across the country with international cooperation in order to strengthen police-public partnerships. However, reports of Ghanaian police officers being involved in bullion robberies have raised concerns about the involvement of law enforcement in organized crime. Ghana's capacity to combat organized crime is hampered by corruption permeating all levels of the police infrastructure, with the police being perceived as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country. Capacity limitations, particularly in investigative techniques, missing police evidence and procedural violations also

pose a challenge to effective law enforcement. Corruption investigations are often marred by the involvement of officials in the bodies responsible for probing such cases.

Like many countries in the ECOWAS region, Ghana's extensive land borders are highly porous, in part due to high levels of corruption among border officials. This facilitates various cross-border illicit activities such as human smuggling, human trafficking, drug trafficking and arms trafficking. The country's coastal ports and airports have been major entry and exit points for illicit commodities. Initiatives have been undertaken to address the porosity of maritime, air and land entry points, including by employing more guards and building military camps at designated points, especially in response to illegal logging. However, most border checkpoints in Ghana, apart from a few locations, are short of advanced technology and the databases required to monitor the entry and exit of people and goods. Northern Ghana is also facing an increased risk of violent extremism, influenced by instability in neighbouring countries.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

While the government has tried to strengthen anti-money laundering (AML) laws, there are substantial gaps in enforcement. Non-profit organizations and cash-based operations from designated businesses and professions pose risks for money laundering and terrorist financing. In Ghana, the most prevalent money laundering schemes are linked to narcotics trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, environmental crimes, fraud, corruption and romance scams. Criminals are increasingly using digital currencies, such as bitcoin, gift cards and other digital exchanges for money laundering. However, Ghana faces challenges with low numbers of investigators and prosecutors trained in AML, as well as the absence of certified financial crime investigators specialized in asset forfeiture.

Ghana's regulatory environment offers both opportunities and challenges. While the formal banking sector is strong, a significant portion of the population do not have bank accounts, often turning to informal financial services due to mistrust and past losses from Ponzi schemes. Efforts to foster private sector growth are also hindered by pervasive corruption, a large informal economy and concerns over employee thefts, which have contributed to the collapse of some local businesses. High inflation has driven the government to pursue bailouts and engage in debt relief negotiations, highlighting the need for stronger fiscal management. Weak property rights protection continues to limit economic freedom, and despite some reforms, corruption remains a major obstacle to inclusive and sustainable development. Regulatory efficiency still lags behind that of peer economies, and although labour regulations have been updated, informal labour remains widespread.



## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim and witness support programmes in Ghana face significant limitations and challenges. Efforts to improve support for trafficking victims include expanding trauma care through a refurbished secretariat, establishing a multilingual hotline and mobile app to report trafficking, and conducting labour inspections to remove children from exploitative work. Despite this progress, support for drug users remains inadequate, with ongoing concerns about militarized policing and treatment without consent. Much of the support relies on private, often religiously funded, rehabilitation institutions, and the lack of shelters for victims of other crimes raises questions about the impartiality, independence and professionalism of Ghana's victim and witness support systems.

The implementation of preventative policies and plans remains limited, and a lack of resources has restricted the operational capacities of government agencies. Nonetheless, the government has implemented labour safeguards, including oversight of international recruitment and pre-departure training for foreign workers. Ghana

also introduced local community policing in 2022, which is also expected to contribute to the prevention of criminal activities in the country. Civil society organizations have also run awareness campaigns to address the proliferation of counterfeits, illegal pesticides and fertilizers, which adversely affect farmers, food security and the environment.

Ghana's civil society sector is active and engaged on various issues, despite facing criticism and pressure from the government, notably in drug rehabilitation and treatment. Media coverage of organized crime, particularly the cocaine trade, has been more limited in recent years, reportedly because of threats made to journalists for writing about topics deemed to be sensitive. A small number of journalists attempting to report on sensitive topics such as drugs, political vigilantism and corruption, have been violently targeted and even killed, but most are able to carry out their work without this extreme level of risk. Although Ghana guarantees media pluralism and independence, concerns persist regarding the harassment and intimidation of journalists facilitated by a restrictive legal framework.

