MADAGASCAR

Madagascar ranks 21st in Africa for criminality and is reported to have severe problems in many areas, most notably in the environmental crime markets.

They are assessed as having a negative influence on nearly every part of society. Foreign actors and state-embedded actors have a significant and spreading negative impact, due to their pervasive role throughout many criminal markets.

In terms of resilience, Madagascar performs worse than the majority of African states, ranking 35th on the continent. Madagascar has legislation and frameworks in place to deal with organised crime, but due to reported corruption and poor economic stability, little has been done to ensure the efficacy of responses.
Criminal Markets

Given its unique biodiversity, there are concerns surrounding the illegal logging of Madagascar's much sought-after timber in foreign markets and increased illicit trade in vanilla. Madagascar's biodiversity is one of the richest and most unique in the world, with approximately 14,000 flora species, 90% of which are endemic. An estimated 2 million rosewood and ebony logs have been shipped from Madagascar since 2010. Between March 2010 and March 2015, roughly 350,430 trees, mainly rosewood, had been cut down in Madagascar, and over a million logs of timber had been illegally exported.

Reports also suggest poaching, wildlife trafficking and illegal fishing are rife throughout the country. In 2018, over 18,000 radiated tortoises, a rare and highly endangered species found only in Madagascar, were confiscated, destined for the illegal pet trade in Asia, uncovering a large-scale organised trafficking business. Overall, experts
describe both flora crimes and fauna crimes as having a negative influence on nearly all parts of society, with scores of 8.

Similarly, the illicit trade in non-renewable resources, such as gemstones and gold, is prevalent, scoring 7.5 in the Index. The environmental impacts of gemstone mining include abandoned pits, some as deep as 50 metres, and eroded river banks. Illegal operators tend to move swiftly from between locations, with labourers in search of a livelihood to tow, and do not rehabilitate or reforest land, which poses safety hazards for local communities. Gold mining in Madagascar, on the other hand, is a fairly new phenomenon. 90% of mining exploitation in Madagascar is illegal, some of which is occurring in protected areas and is threatening important biodiversity. Artisanal gold mining is typically a major source of mercury in the environment, which can contaminate freshwater systems and negatively impact child development.

Madagascar is noted as an important centre for the production, consumption and transit of cannabis. Production is limited to specific areas of the country, so the cannabis trade is only considered to have a moderate effect on parts of society. Given its location in the Indian Ocean, Madagascar is vulnerable to drug smuggling and is becoming a trans-shipment country for heroin from Afghanistan, and cocaine from South America destined for Middle Eastern and Asian markets. There are concerns over the growth of the cocaine market.

Madagascar’s location has also been linked to the moderate influence of arms trafficking on society, which experts describe as a hotspot, reflected in a score of 5. Arms trafficking contributes to other illicit activities including cattle rustling, piracy and the smuggling of contraband goods.

Criminal Actors

Experts attribute a score of 8 to foreign actors, indicating their negative impact on nearly all parts of society. Endangered animals and cattle are often exported to China and Middle-Eastern countries, while nationals of various countries have been arrested for drug trafficking in Madagascar. East Asian businesspeople have been identified as significant actors in the illegal logging market, and French and Italian nationals have been associated with child trafficking.

Experts describe a system where national criminal networks are often linked with state-embedded actors, corrupt government officials facilitating organised crime in sectors such as wildlife trafficking and the cannabis trade. Reports indicate that at least two criminal networks operate under internal directives with a known leader, suggesting a small-scale mafia-style group. However, experts note that Madagascar does not appear to have large organised mafia-style groups.
Madagascar is ranked 35th for resilience, in part due to its ratification of a number of international treaties relating to organised crime, and its involvement with CITES and international conservation groups. Although Madagascar has national policies and laws to tackle various criminal markets, the country lacks a general organised crime law.

Experts deem that Madagascar has an underdeveloped financial system, which is not surprising as it is one of the poorest countries in the world. This has directly affected several factors that would help fight organised crime, such as law enforcement capacity and the judicial and detention system, both of which are described as under-funded and under-resourced. Corruption is widespread throughout the government, which curbs many attempts to prevent organised crime.