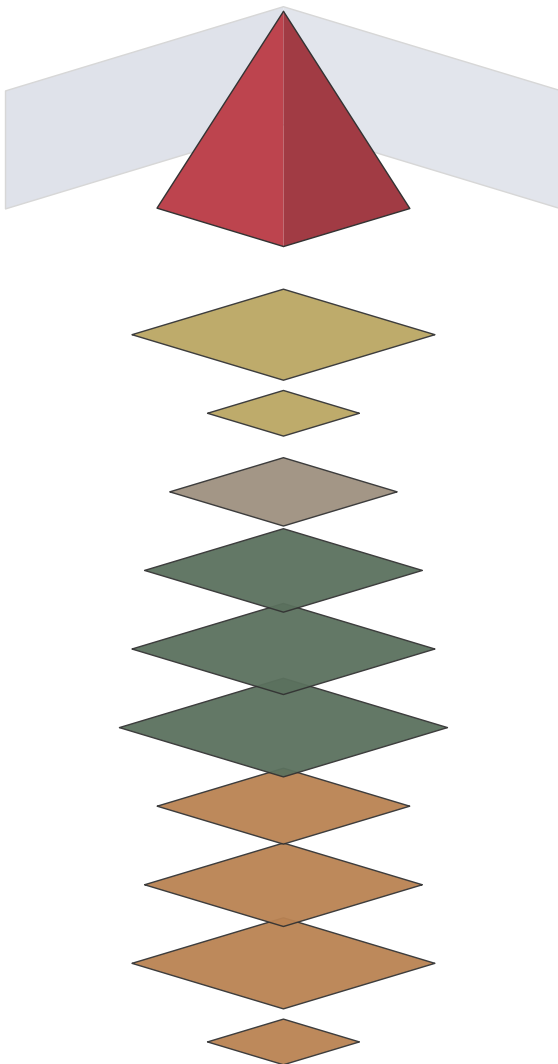




 **LIBERIA**



 **5.05**
CRIMINALITY SCORE
29th of 54 African countries
12th of 15 West African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **5.10**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.50
FLORA CRIMES	5.50
FAUNA CRIMES	6.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6.50
HEROIN TRADE	5.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.50
CANNABIS TRADE	6.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.00

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.00**

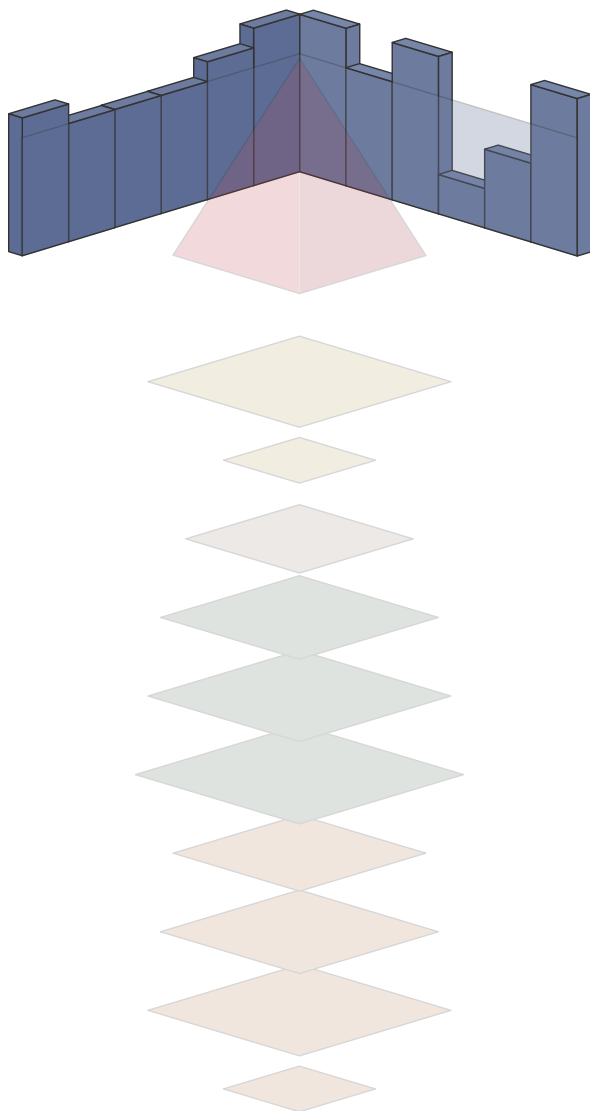
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00

 **3.17**
RESILIENCE SCORE
36th of 54 African countries
12th of 15 West African countries





LIBERIA



3.17 RESILIENCE SCORE

36th of 54 African countries
12th of 15 West African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	3.50
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	3.00
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	3.00
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	3.00
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	3.50
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	4.00
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	4.00
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	3.00
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	4.00
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	1.00
<u>PREVENTION</u>	2.00
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	4.00



5.05 CRIMINALITY SCORE

29th of 54 African countries
12th of 15 West African countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS **5.10**



CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.00**



CRIMINALITY

Criminal Markets

PEOPLE

Sex trafficking and forced labour are the two most common forms of human trafficking in Liberia, with women, children and men being subjected to exploitation. For the most part, victims are Liberian citizens who are trafficked within the country. While exploitation is widespread, it is rarely facilitated by an organized criminal network. Perpetrators are rather members of the victims' extended families or part of their communities. Notably, forced begging is the most organized of these exploitative activities. Foreign victims, mostly young women originating from other countries in the West African region, are also trafficked into Liberia – largely by their families for arranged or forced marriages. There are some known instances of international trafficking of women from Eastern Europe and northern Africa brought to Liberia for sex work and domestic labour, and there are also some instances of Liberians, typically young women, being taken to Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East under contested circumstances.

Human smuggling within Liberia is a low-level, low-profit and broadly violence-free operation. Liberia's borders are porous and poorly guarded. In most cases, Liberians en route to the Middle East are abandoned by smugglers in the Sahara desert when trying to cross the borders into Niger or left stranded in northern Africa. The human smuggling market is not dominated by organized crime syndicates, but it has surely facilitated the growth and formation of criminal groups in the country.

TRADE

The level of firearm and ammunition smuggling in Liberia is moderate, but it is still a prevailing issue in the country. Liberia was known to transfer arms to Sierra Leone during its embargo period from 1992 to 2016, while the Liberian civil war also led to massive flows of illicit arms. Today, there is little evidence of military-grade material moving through Liberia. Instead, there is the smuggling of artisanal single-barrel pistols and shotguns, which are used in armed robberies. The country's old smuggling routes are still viable for arms trafficking. Additionally, the country's open seas continue to offer easy access to arms brokers.

ENVIRONMENT

The promotion of massive illegal logging by international logging and agricultural firms has posed a major threat to Liberia's forests. This threat is amplified by the country's poor legal and regulatory protections. Moreover, logging often happens with permits obtained through bribery, although some success in countering the illegal felling of trees has been registered over the past two years. Liberia is also a major site for wildlife trafficking as well as poaching, which includes the widespread hunting of animals for bushmeat, also used in cultural practices across the country. Moreover, the domestic market is intertwined with the international wildlife trade. Importantly, Liberian marine wildlife is also threatened and endangered as a result of the illegal trade. In regards to non-renewable resource crimes, most mining of gold and diamonds in the country is ungoverned by national authorities. The smuggling of gold and diamonds is prevalent, especially along the border Liberia shares with Guinea. The industries provide a livelihood to many actors and involve criminals and local elites alike. Additionally, Lebanese families with connections to Belgium and the United Arab Emirates dominate the diamond trade, both legal and illegal. Nevertheless, the volumes involved in the illegal gold and diamond industries are not very large in absolute terms, compared to other countries, but are still fairly significant given the size of Liberia.

DRUGS

Cannabis is widely available in Liberia, which is a major producer and consumer of the drug. The trade between Liberia and Sierra Leone is particularly robust, but movement into Guinea and up through the Sahel is another significant route. Additionally, consumption of cannabis has increased since the country's civil conflict. Information on cannabis producers is lacking, though larger production operations are arguably either part of known gangs or tied to them. Liberia is also a dynamic waypoint for cocaine originating in Latin America. Liberian officials believe there is a slightly larger domestic market for cocaine than heroin, but it is considered small-scale compared to other countries. Although the country has a comparatively limited domestic market, the trade has had a significant impact on regional drug-consumption habits, particularly the rise in crack cocaine consumption.

While it has a limited domestic market, Liberia continues to be an important hub for heroin from Latin American and Asian producing countries destined for the European



markets. Liberian territory, especially the ports, offers excellent opportunities for heroin smugglers to exploit, which arguably fuels the growing domestic market as well. Naturally, these illicit flows pose a persistent challenge for law enforcement. Conversely, the population reportedly lacks the disposable income necessary to purchase synthetic drugs, which is why the market is negligible. While there has been a rise in the prevalence of amphetamine-type stimulants within Liberia, empirical evidence for this is missing.

Criminal Actors

Criminal networks in Liberia appear to largely consist of young people that are tied by family, ethnic or conflict-era links, and play a small, niche and detrimental role in Liberian society. For the most part, the members of these loose networks are Liberian, although there is some evidence to suggest that foreign individuals are involved as well. Overall, the protracted civil conflict led to the departure of many foreign nationals in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Nevertheless, there are still some African and non-African individuals involved in criminal networks within the country. The typical operational

structure of Liberian groups has its roots in both traditional loosely structured West African criminal networks and structures that have emerged during the civil war. These gangs, mostly engaging in the distribution of drugs and armed robbery, are active largely in urban areas, but available information suggests they operate to a lesser extent in remote or rural area as well.

In regards to state-embedded actors, the private sector in Liberia is reportedly being subjected to increasing levels of corruption, including bribery demands from senior government officials, which worsen the country's business environment. While ubiquitous corruption that permeates state structures also undermines trust in institutions, there is little evidence that the state-embedded actors control criminal markets. Although most gangs in the country are semi-organized and non-permanent, there are a number of groups with structures that resemble a mafia-like groups. These have known names and an organized hierarchy, engaging in extortion and drug trafficking. The risk of mafia-like gangs increasing their influence in Liberia, however, is minimal at this point in time.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Under the current administration's policy agenda, countering the influence of criminal networks and organized crime is not a priority. This is in part because of the Ebola virus outbreak, which shifted the focus to the country's weak health system and economy. Moreover, although the government has shown some commitment to limit the influence of organized crime groups and prevent them from securing a major foothold in the country, it is not in the position to achieve that due to lack of resources and technical capacity. Meanwhile, corruption remains a big problem in every sphere of Liberian society, including many sectors of government and the private sector. A significant pool of donor funds also fuels public corruption. Additionally, since taking office, the current government has further undermined accountability institutions by eliminating the tenure of office holders and appointing political allies without relevant backgrounds or skills.

On the international level, Liberia is also party to a number of treaties pertaining to organized crime. Thus, there has been an ongoing effort to reform laws in order to align the country's legislative framework with international conventions. However, Liberia's legal frameworks are not consistent with international instruments related to the smuggling of migrants and human rights. In regards to the drug laws, while they are crafted from a criminalization perspective, there is punitive disparity that favours traffickers over users. Meanwhile, wildlife rangers have intensified efforts to arrest and confiscate endangered species that are protected under the banner of the Liberian wildlife law.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Liberia's justice system has severe capacity gaps in the form of insufficient numbers of prosecutors, public defenders and judges, and their ensuing high workload contributes to the very slow progress of court cases. Furthermore, most Liberians seek justice outside of



formal legal channels because they do not trust the formal legal system to produce results, and believe that proceeding through formal mechanisms require costly bribes. Additionally, the system is overburdened and lengthy pre-trial detention is common, which leads to prison overcrowding in poor conditions. The primary law enforcement entity in Liberia is the Liberia National Police, but the agency reportedly suffers from a lack of resources. However, special law-enforcement units such as the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency do exist. Liberian law enforcement has been involved in some large drug busts, but these are usually the result of joint operations with US counterparts, demonstrating the lack of professional capacity of national agencies and their reliance on international cooperation. Liberia has a poor road system, which makes access of authorities to remote areas difficult, in essence limiting their scope of coverage to Monrovia. The insufficient management of borders also contributes to most organized-crime activities in the country.

Meanwhile, the country has a vibrant civil society that works in various areas of human rights protection, security-sector reform, governance and accountability. In spite of some NGOs working on preventing illicit logging, poaching and mining, non-state actors do not for the most play a significant role in combating organized crime in Liberia. The current administration has promised to support greater media freedom, but there is continued uncertainty about certain draconian provisions, and self-censorship is widespread. Moreover, most media outlets still lack financial autonomy and depend on government contracts or funding from politicians.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Income in Liberia is low and the economy is heavily reliant on remittances from the Liberian diaspora abroad as well as on foreign aid. Most Liberians have very limited access to health care, education or other government services. Doing legitimate business in the country is extremely difficult. Moreover, Liberia is at a significant risk of illicit flows, including trafficking of drugs and money laundering. Despite the government's efforts to strengthen its anti-money laundering regime, implementation is often impeded. Liberia's financial intelligence unit also lacks the equipment as well as the know-how to effectively gather, evaluate and produce financial intelligence. Furthermore, a number of factors, including limited capabilities of law enforcement and justice institutions, poor financial transparency and record keeping, corruption and political interference, often impede investigations related to money laundering.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Awareness of human trafficking is missing both among the public and law enforcement authorities, which, coupled with the lack of resources, means most victims of trafficking remain unidentified. The government also does not consistently promote the participation of victims in the investigative process and in the prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking. On occasion, authorities would grant food, shelter and transport to human trafficking victims to testify during trials. Witness protection programmes are essentially non-existent.

