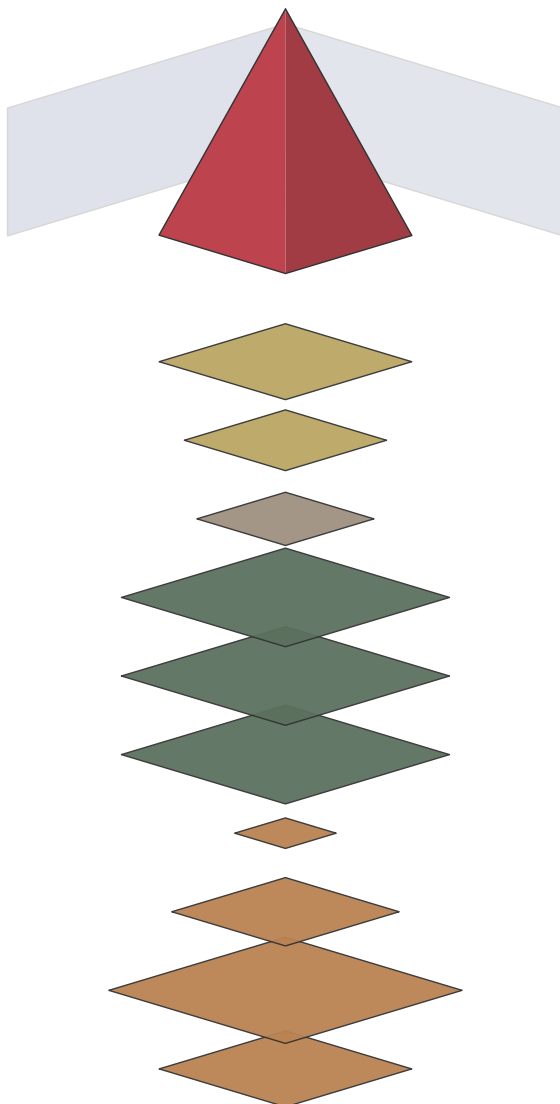





 **SIERRA LEONE**



 **5.40**
CRIMINALITY SCORE
23rd of 54 African countries
8th of 15 West African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **5.05**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.50
FLORA CRIMES	6.50
FAUNA CRIMES	6.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6.50
HEROIN TRADE	2.00
COCAINE TRADE	4.50
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.00

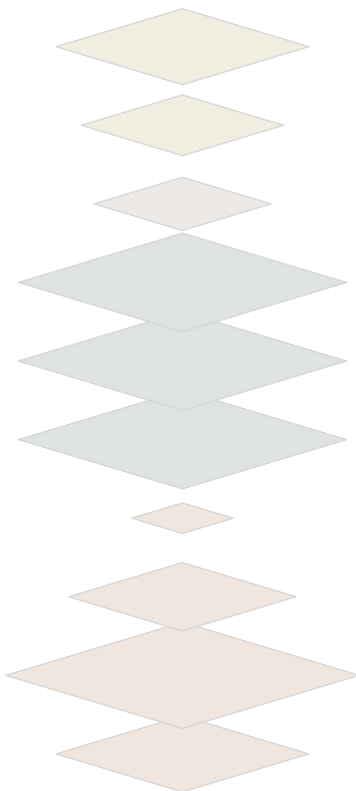
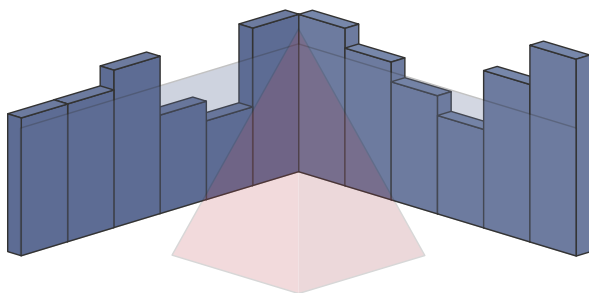
 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.75**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.00

 **3.46**
RESILIENCE SCORE
30th of 54 African countries
10th of 15 West African countries



 **SIERRA LEONE**





 **3.46
RESILIENCE SCORE**

30th of 54 African countries
10th of 15 West African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	3.50
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	3.50
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	4.00
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	2.50
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	2.00
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	4.00
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	4.00
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	3.50
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	3.00
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	2.50
<u>PREVENTION</u>	4.00
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	5.00

 **5.40
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

23rd of 54 African countries
8th of 15 West African countries

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	5.05
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.75



CRIMINALITY

Criminal Markets

PEOPLE

Sierra Leone is a country of origin as well as a destination market for children, women and men forced into sexual exploitation and labour trafficking. Trafficking victims are for the most part recruited from the rural areas and are trafficked internally, to both urban centers and mining hubs, with local demand driving most of the child sex trafficking. Reportedly, human traffickers usually operate individually, assuring the parents of potential victims that the latter will have a better access to education. In addition, children from neighbouring countries are also exploited in Sierra Leone, while local children are trafficked to Niger, Mali and Guinea, where they are subject to forced and sexual exploitation. Similarly, men from different countries around the world have also been reported as forced labour victims in Sierra Leonean mines. Certain reports have indicated the existence of trafficking flows of children and women from Sierra Leone to the Gulf countries for domestic work.

Conflict and natural disasters in Sierra Leone have triggered large migration flows. Most Sierra Leoneans are described as migrating voluntarily, seeking to be smuggled to and through states outside the Economic Community of West African States, such as Libya. Once there, they become vulnerable to human trafficking.

TRADE

There have been several accounts of military officers and other government officials trafficking government weapons and ammunition. Cross-border smuggling of weapons is described as small-scale, with arms primarily flowing outwards to Liberia. Proceeds from other illicit activities, such as the illegal logging of timber, are occasionally used to buy weapons. Notably, however, domestic craft production of weapons is the most significant source of illicit arms in the country.

ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging constitutes a serious challenge to Sierra Leonean forests and wildlife. There is evidence of corruption and the selling of concessions to Chinese trading companies, in violation of the national trading moratorium. Access to artisanal logging is often contingent on support for certain political parties or politically connected

people. The widespread felling of trees for commercial charcoal production, in places such as the Western Area Forest Reserve, is also a serious concern. Additionally, an illicit fauna market exists in Sierra Leone where large shipments of pangolins originate for trafficking, facilitated by economic ties between the country and East Asia. Other species, such as the white-necked rockfowl, the pygmy hippo, forest elephants and various monkeys are also threatened by poaching. Chimpanzee poaching for bushmeat and the illegal pet trade is common as well. Most prominently, illegal fishing has increased in recent years, particularly by foreign fishing vessels and accounts allege that high-ranking officials have been involved in the trade as well.

In terms of non-renewable resource crimes, Sierra Leone experiences high levels of artisanal and small-scale gold mining and gold smuggling. Many actors are involved, and large parts of the country are affected. Additionally, domestic criminal groups and criminal entrepreneurs rather than international syndicates dominate the small-scale diamond mining in Sierra Leone.

DRUGS

Cannabis sativa is reportedly the most widely abused drug in the country. At the domestic level, cultivation and use has increased dramatically, not without the significant assistance of specific branches of the state's law enforcement agencies. Currently, cannabis sativa in the Mano River Union is produced predominantly in Sierra Leone, and the country is the largest West African exporter of the drug to countries across Africa, the US, Europe and the Middle East. In regard to synthetic drugs, Sierra Leone experiences high levels of trade and use of tramadol, although the rising prices have resulted in a decrease in the demand. Since the pandemic started, however, there has been a major influx of crystal meth in the country. Street hawkers sell most of the opioid drugs. Substances used by children and youth include benzodiazepines such as diazepam, chlorpromazine and other inhalants. The synthetic drugs market can be described as expanding and the transnational routing of synthetics out of Sierra Leone leads to European and Asian markets.

Local consumption of cocaine in Sierra Leone is low. Nevertheless, the country is used by South American criminal organizations and some West African countries as a distribution and waypoint centers for drugs intended



for markets in North America and Europe, and more recently to East and South East Asian markets. Reports of individual cases of heroin trafficking have been sporadic, indicating that Sierra Leone plays a minor role, if any, in the global heroin-trafficking trade.

Criminal Actors

Domestic criminal groups are for the most part composed of Sierra Leonean nationals who cooperate with foreign nationals on occasion. This type of criminal actor is mostly involved in the trafficking of drugs, arms, timber and illegal diamonds. Most criminal networks hide their illegal operations behind front companies or small legitimate ventures. While generally perceived as less sophisticated, some local organizations' reach extends internationally, beyond Sierra Leone.

Moreover, Colombian cartels have established safe passage for their cocaine contraband through Sierra Leone by bribing top government and military officials. Chinese companies, citizens and organized criminal groups are involved in illicit smuggling activities in Sierra Leone from abroad, in particular timber logging and wildlife trafficking, though both have declined due to a lack of demand and increased national and international

scrutiny. Sierra Leonean traffickers often partner with regional gangs for drug smuggling. Cooperation is also established with Kuwaiti gangs in order to recruit and traffic Sierra Leonean citizens to Europe, the US and Kuwait. Lebanese businesspeople, many of whom are naturalized Sierra Leoneans, and some with connections to Hezbollah, continue to control the legal and illegal trade in gemstones and diamonds. Not least of all, Nigerian cartels are also known to operate in the country, engaging in primarily in the cocaine trade and controlling certain areas in Freetown.

It is common for officials throughout the state apparatus to engage in bribery and turn a blind eye to organized crime. Research has also drawn attention to the connection between prominent politicians and gangs, which are primarily used to achieve political objectives. Most of these groups are prominent in Freetown, often extending to urban centres throughout the country. They are especially exploited around elections. Currently, mafia-style criminal groups in the form of organized gangs with known names, colors and symbols are operating in Sierra Leone. While they are allegedly linked to political parties and are reportedly involved in different trafficking operations, their influence is limited.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Corruption and mass poverty prevail despite the successful holding of four post-war elections and two peaceful transfers of power. The post-war governments have shown some willingness to address these problems but any attempt to promote change is threatened by vested interests. Given Sierra Leone's immense developmental constraints, prospects for political and economic transformation in the country are still fairly poor.

At the international level, Sierra Leone has ratified, and is participating in, international protocols and regional initiatives to combat transnational organized crime. The country is also a recipient of international funding to combat organized crime, including money to improve intelligence-led policing and the prosecution of organized crime cases. On the domestic level, Sierra Leone has a number of laws related to organized crime. However, the

overall framework is poorly financed and understaffed, and in need of significant improvement.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Although Sierra Leone has made several strides in strengthening its justice system since 2002, the judiciary is still politically dependent in practice. These efforts to bolster the sector continue to be hampered by many factors, including corruption, lack of resources, unprofessionalism of the police and overcrowding in prisons. People are thus forced to rely on the customary law system. As for law enforcement, policing in Sierra Leone remains sub-standard by most measures. The police force has sought to strengthen its response to growing crime, but the lack of adequate resources has impeded these attempts. Moreover, the inability of the police to cover remote areas, corruption as well as interference with their work continues to erode public



perceptions of the force. In terms of territorial integrity, Sierra Leone's borders, both land and sea, are porous, with a high number of illegal crossing points at which different types of goods are smuggled. Despite the formal closure of land borders in March 2020 in response to COVID-19, the lack of enforcement capacity and remoteness of some borders means smuggling is still possible.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Sierra Leone's economic development is described as low, with large parts of the population engaging in subsistence agriculture. In spite of having considerable natural, agricultural and fishery resources, GDP growth has been driven in the last decade by the mining sector, iron ore in particular. A number of factors, including corruption, weak regulatory capacity and poor oversight has put Sierra Leone at risk of money laundering, with dirty money flowing primarily from drug trafficking as well as illicit mineral transactions. There are also suggestions that casinos and high-end hotels are being used to launder illegal wealth. Moreover, the country's AML/CFT controls remain underdeveloped and underfunded.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The government has demonstrated significant efforts in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking as well as in identifying victims and referring them to proper care and temporary shelters. Yet, authorities continue to outsource almost all victim support to NGOs, while law-enforcement officials have allegedly even sexually assaulted trafficking victims. The government is also described as making uneven efforts to prevent trafficking. Moreover, freedom of expression, assembly and association are restricted, and media in the country is for the most part controlled by the government. Civil society organizations and journalists also support the government in raising awareness about issues such as human trafficking. However, there is limited investigative work done to shine a light on the issue and operations, or on organized crime more generally.

