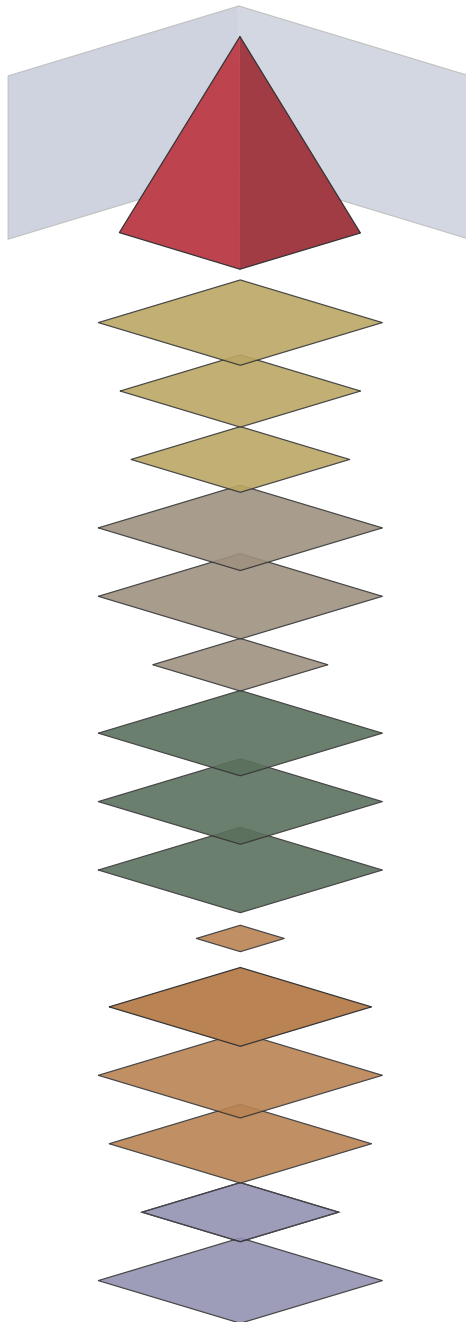
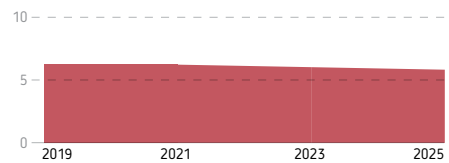


CÔTE D'IVOIRE



5.78 ± 0.23
CRIMINALITY SCORE

20th of 54 African countries ± 6
5th of 15 West African countries ± 3



CRIMINAL MARKETS **5.67** ± 0.27

HUMAN TRAFFICKING **6.50** ± 0.50

HUMAN SMUGGLING **5.50** ± 1.00

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING **5.00** ± 0.50

ARMS TRAFFICKING **6.50** ± 0.50

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS **6.50** ± 0.50

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS **4.00** ± 0.50

FLORA CRIMES **6.50** ± 0.50

FAUNA CRIMES **6.50** 0.00

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES **6.50** ± 0.50

HEROIN TRADE **2.00** ± 2.00

COCAINE TRADE **6.00** ± 0.50

CANNABIS TRADE **6.50** 0.00

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE **6.00** 0.00

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES **4.50** ± 1.00

FINANCIAL CRIMES **6.50** 0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.90** ± 0.20

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS **3.50** 0.00

CRIMINAL NETWORKS **6.50** ± 0.50

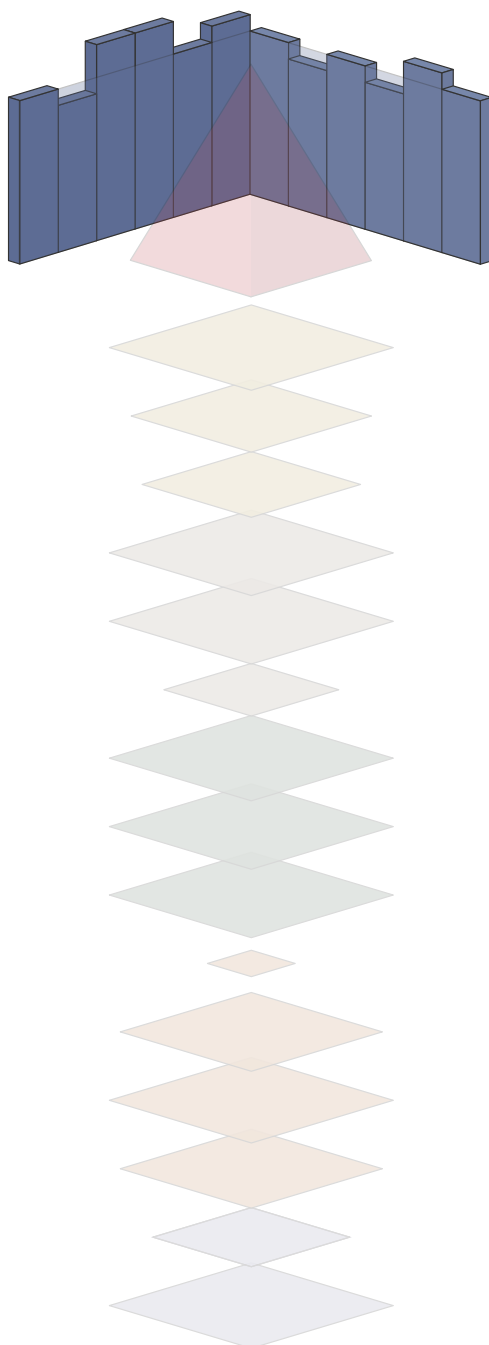
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS **7.00** ± 0.50

FOREIGN ACTORS **7.50** 0.00

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS **5.00** 0.00



CÔTE D'IVOIRE



CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

Côte d'Ivoire plays a complex role in human trafficking as a source, transit and destination country. Victims include both Ivorian citizens and foreign nationals who are subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation. Social media and e-commerce platforms are frequently used to lure people with false job offers or educational opportunities. Women and girls are primarily exploited within agriculture, domestic service and prostitution in the cocoa production zones and mining areas. Boys are often subjected to forced begging as well as forced labour on cacao plantations although the latter has declined in recent years. Migrant workers from neighbouring countries, including Burkina Faso and Mali, are particularly vulnerable to coercion into labour or sex trafficking within the country. Ivorian women are frequently trafficked for labour to Europe, North Africa and Western Asia. Criminal networks composed of both Ivorian and foreign actors – notably Nigerian groups – are central to this market. In fact, recent trends point to an increase trafficking along the Nigeria–Côte d'Ivoire corridor, especially of Nigerian girls and women who are often promised employment before being forced into sexual exploitation. Corruption among low-ranking border officials has been reported.

Côte d'Ivoire is also an origin country for irregular migration towards North Africa and Europe, and has a robust human smuggling market. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) facilitates visa-free travel among its members but, once they have entered Côte d'Ivoire, migrants often employ smugglers to help them bypass bribes and harassment at border posts when entering countries outside of ECOWAS. Criminal actors typically operate in loosely connected migrant smuggling networks, sometimes collaborating with foreign groups. Smuggling frequently involves document fraud and operators routinely confiscate identity papers until migrants can pay their fees. Many smuggled migrants depart from Abidjan, Daloa and Man, heading toward North Africa (mainly Tunisia and Morocco) and ultimately Europe. Ivorian smuggling networks also assist nationals from countries such as Cameroon and Senegal. The smuggling and trafficking markets are deeply intertwined. Smugglers, particularly those operating in Tunisia, are increasingly coercing the migrants that arrive there into forced labour or criminal activities.

Extortion and protection racketeering in Côte d'Ivoire is concentrated in the northern and north-eastern regions, where the presence of violent extremist groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) is significant.

These groups impose informal taxes on local populations (known as zakat) in exchange for protection, and also engage in kidnappings for ransom. Kidnappings tend to target wealthy traders and local elites, while there are also transnational elements are evident, with reports of Burkinabe citizens being kidnapped and detained within Côte d'Ivoire.

TRADE

The arms trafficking market in Côte d'Ivoire is well established, particularly in the tri-border area with Mali and Burkina Faso. The proliferation of arms is driven by the activities of violent extremist groups and traditional self-defence militias. The Ouangolodougou area in the Tchologo region serves as a major transit point for both licit and illicit goods, including weapons. Arms flow into the country from Guinea and Liberia, drawn by porous borders and regional instability. The legacy of the civil war in the 2000s can still be seen in the availability of small arms and light weapons. This market is sustained by clandestine gunsmith networks and criminal actors who supply arms for various criminal purposes, including cattle rustling, kidnapping and extortion.

Côte d'Ivoire also functions as a source, transit hub and destination for counterfeit goods. The market for counterfeit pharmaceutical products is especially prominent, largely due to the inadequacies of the formal healthcare sector. Counterfeit medicines, originating from Guinea and trafficked through the Roxy market in Abidjan, account for more than a quarter of all medicine sales in the country and cause significant economic and public health losses. Other counterfeit goods like textiles, automotive parts, school textbooks, alcohol and cigarettes are also widespread. The actors in this market include opportunistic individuals, organized criminal networks and corrupt elements within the public health and judicial systems. The market remains resilient in the face of legislative and institutional responses, including the establishment of anti-counterfeiting committees, due to persistent demand and gaps in law enforcement.

The illicit trade in excise goods, particularly contraband cigarettes and vehicles, is another active market. Côte d'Ivoire serves as both a source and transit country, with ports such as Abidjan playing a central role. Vehicles trafficked through these seaports are often destined for landlocked neighbours such as Burkina Faso. Cigarette smuggling networks exploit the regions porous borders, and the country is a known place of origin for contraband tobacco reaching neighbouring states like Ghana.



ENVIRONMENT

Côte d'Ivoire's flora crimes market is driven predominantly by illegal logging linked to the expansion of cocoa farming. The country's forests, among the most biodiverse in West Africa, are experiencing rapid degradation. Illegal loggers, often supported by organized criminal networks and corrupt officials, operate in tandem with cocoa farmers. Timber extraction far exceeds legal limits, with illegal operations reportedly producing 15 to 30 times more wood than licensed entities. In Folon and Soubré in particular, timber trafficking is widespread with considerable consequences for the environment. This deforestation is not only compromising biodiversity but also threatens long-term agricultural productivity.

Fauna crimes are also prevalent. Illegal hunting and trafficking of species such as forest elephants, pangolins and sea turtles pose significant conservation challenges. Pangolin trafficking is driven by demand in Asian markets, while coastal communities rely on sea turtles for income due to declining fish stocks. National parks are frequent targets for poachers, and the scale of exploitation is severe enough to threaten some species with extinction. In addition, cattle rustling is common in the tri-border area, often carried out under coercion by violent extremist groups. Livestock theft contributes to the broader insecurity in these regions and places further strains on rural livelihoods.

Non-renewable resource crimes, particularly illegal artisanal gold mining, are a growing threat. The sector involves diverse actors, including local operators, foreign nationals and violent extremist groups. There are growing suspicions that extremist groups are getting some of their funding from mining in the north of the country. Mining activities often lead to environmental degradation, including water pollution due to the use of mercury and cyanide in extracting gold. Key rivers, such as the Bandama and Comoé, are heavily affected. Gold smuggling routes lead to destinations within the region and beyond, with Dubai frequently identified as an endpoint for Ivorian gold.

DRUGS

While Côte d'Ivoire is increasingly affected by drug trafficking in general, the heroin trade remains limited. Heroin is considered a luxury substance, consumed mainly by tourists, expatriates and affluent locals. No major seizures have been recorded recently, although law enforcement struggles to intercept heroin shipments. Corruption within police ranks further impedes efforts to control this trade.

The cocaine trade, by contrast, is well developed and expanding. Côte d'Ivoire's coastal cities, notably Abidjan and San Pedro, are major transit points. The presence of foreign criminal actors, including the Italian mafia, especially the 'Ndrangheta, and Albanian criminal networks has been reported. Trafficking methods have evolved, with small watercraft used to bypass port controls and land cocaine

for transfer to inland warehouses. Seizure volumes have increased significantly in recent years, reflecting the growth of the market. Domestic consumption is also on the rise, with a large share of those seeking drug treatment in the country doing so for addictions to cocaine or crack.

Côte d'Ivoire is a major cannabis producer in West Africa. Although precise production levels are unknown, frequent seizures indicate a thriving market. Cannabis cultivation has become more localized in response to greater scrutiny, and domestic consumption is widespread, particularly among young people. In urban areas like Abidjan, 'smokehouses', known locally as gbôffô (meeting places for the sale and consumption of narcotics), and digital platforms facilitate distribution.

Synthetic drug trafficking is a rising concern. Amphetamines and opioids such as Tramadol are widely consumed, and often mixed with alcohol to create the drug known as khadafi. This drug has become increasingly normalized, especially among the Ivorian youth, and its use is frequently glamourized on social media. The Roxy market in Abidjan serves as a major distribution point.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crime is an emerging threat in Côte d'Ivoire. Cybercrime groups, such as OPERA1ER, use open-source tools and malware to target financial institutions, often deploying sophisticated emails to specific teams to gain access. High-profile attacks on banks have contributed to significant financial losses and undermined public trust in digital systems.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes, particularly embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, are endemic in Côte d'Ivoire. These crimes are often perpetrated by high-level officials, including directors of public enterprises and ministers. The country is also a hub for francophone internet scams. Young men, known locally as 'grazers', manage romance scams and inheritance fraud from cybercafés. These activities have expanded from Abidjan to other cities such as Soubré and Divo. The transnational impact of these scams is substantial, with victims often based in Europe.

Criminal actors

Mafia-style groups operate in the urban areas of Côte d'Ivoire. The syndicats – as they are called – are transport unions with rigid leadership structures which function like mafias, overseeing much of Abidjan's informal transport sector. These unions employ youth gangs, known as 'microbes' (who work as enforcers) and gnammbros (who manage routes), to collect informal taxes and engaging in



drug distribution. Violence among rival syndicates and their affiliates is an ongoing concern, contributing to instability within urban transport corridors.

Criminal networks in Côte d'Ivoire are widespread and adaptive, spanning a wide range of illicit markets. These loosely organized yet influential actors are involved in human trafficking, human smuggling, drug trafficking, arms trading, and environmental crimes such as illegal logging and wildlife trafficking. Ivorian networks have particularly strong ties to Nigerian human trafficking syndicates and operate migrant smuggling routes that reach as far as Tunisia, demonstrating their transnational scope. Youth gangs are prominent within these networks. Often manipulated by more senior criminal or political figures, 'microbes' are deployed to carry out violent tasks including intimidation at political events. Their involvement in the criminal economy highlights the blurred boundaries between opportunistic crime and political utility, further complicating enforcement efforts.

State-embedded actors help to facilitate several criminal markets in Côte d'Ivoire. Although the state does not directly control these markets, there is documented involvement from public officials in illicit activities. Extortion at security checkpoints, often perpetrated by uniformed personnel, reflects an entrenched subculture of corruption within the country's security services. Low-ranking border police, for example, have been implicated in human trafficking, particularly by being complicit in irregular border crossings. Such behaviour not only perpetuates trafficking networks but also undermines institutional integrity at key control

points. At the higher levels, senior state actors, including directors-general of state-owned and semi-public enterprises as well as government ministers have been involved in embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds.

Foreign actors exert substantial influence over Côte d'Ivoire's criminal landscape. They participate in a range of illicit economies and often collaborate with local actors to expand their transnational networks. Foreign citizens contribute to a thriving but unregulated gold trade. Malian and Burkinabe nationals are heavily involved in illegal artisanal gold mining in the country, working as miners and site operators particularly in northern regions near to their shared borders. In human trafficking, Nigerian actors are persistently active, particularly in sexual exploitation. They work alongside Ivorian networks or operate independently, targeting vulnerable populations. Belarussian organized crime groups have also been linked to the country, notably through the provision of fraudulent Schengen visas used to facilitate irregular migration. The drug trade illustrates further foreign entanglement. Latin American and European actors, particularly the Italian 'Ndrangheta mafia group, are involved in cocaine trafficking that transits through Côte d'Ivoire en route to Europe. Additionally, networks from south-eastern Asia are active in counterfeiting and wildlife trafficking.

The private sector in Côte d'Ivoire is involved with organized crime primarily in the mining and informal transport sectors. In the mining industry, the opaque nature of financing creates opportunities for money laundering, with gold being used to launder proceeds from other illicit activities.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Côte d'Ivoire has exhibited notable improvements in governance since emerging from a prolonged period of civil conflict in the 2010s. The current administration has implemented a range of reforms that have contributed to institutional stability, improved international governance ratings and boosted international recognition. Nevertheless, challenges remain over political consensus building, reconciliation, corruption and impunity. Ethnic and regional tensions, land disputes and the lingering effects of past instability continue to impede the country's democratic transition. Furthermore, there are still enduring structural weaknesses in the political system, despite gradual improvements in governance indicators. Despite these challenges, the government acknowledges the threat posed by organized crime and has actively sought to strengthen

the state's legal and institutional frameworks in response. Yet, the effectiveness of such initiatives is constrained by the state's limited enforcement capacity and by low-level complicity in illicit activities, particularly among state-embedded actors operating along border areas.

In terms of government transparency and accountability, Côte d'Ivoire has made some progress, establishing specialized institutions to address corruption. The state has also developed various reporting mechanisms, including digital platforms, to enable citizens to report corruption anonymously. Civil society organizations have supported accountability efforts through public forums, investigative reporting and awareness campaigns. However, these efforts face resistance, with recent surveys highlighting widespread public scepticism about the government's commitment to fighting corruption. Many citizens perceive



that anti-corruption measures are insufficient and fear retaliation if they report misconduct. Legal frameworks are incomplete, with significant data gaps and limited access to key public records. Furthermore, slow investigations and apparent impunity for high-level financial crimes undermine public trust in accountability institutions.

International cooperation forms a strong pillar of Côte d'Ivoire's resilience framework. The country maintains robust diplomatic networks and is a party to numerous international treaties. Recent partnerships include joint operations with regional law enforcement agencies to address human trafficking and document fraud, as well as the signing of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement on forest governance and trade with the European Union. International organizations have supported border management reforms and information-sharing initiatives to target transnational crime. These engagements reflect Côte d'Ivoire's active role in regional and global crime prevention. Some international cooperation is merely performative, leaving gaps in translating commitments into effective policies on the ground. Nevertheless, the country has maintained positive relations with both Western and non-Western partners and sustained high levels of international support.

Côte d'Ivoire's legal and policy frameworks addressing organized crime are comprehensive and cover cybercrime, money laundering and human trafficking. Reforms to the penal code and criminal procedure code aim to modernize prosecutions. Additional sector-specific legislation, including laws addressing wildlife trafficking and child protection, complement broader crime prevention efforts. However, implementation remains inconsistent. While the enforcement of child protection and environmental laws has strengthened in recent years, it continues to rely heavily on external support and international initiatives.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Côte d'Ivoire's judicial system features specialized units to tackle specific forms of criminal activity. International organizations have contributed significantly to building prosecutorial capacity, including by providing training on asset recovery and transnational drug trafficking. Despite these efforts, the judiciary suffers from limited independence, corruption and susceptibility to political influence. Furthermore, a lack of prosecutorial capacity and a consistent backlog of cases has limited the impact of legal reforms. Case assignment procedures remain opaque, and judges are vulnerable to external interference and bribery. Reports also highlight the apparent impunity of people involved in embezzling public funds, further weakening judicial credibility. Court rulings are often perceived to align with the interests of the ruling party. Prison conditions in Côte d'Ivoire present serious human rights concerns. The system suffers from extreme overcrowding. Facilities

lack adequate hygiene, especially for women, and there are no dedicated cells for mothers with children. Pre-trial detention is prolonged and abuses by security forces and prison officials have been reported, including violence, extortion and sexual exploitation.

Law enforcement plays a central role in Côte d'Ivoire's response to organized crime. The General Directorate of Judicial Police and its specialized units oversee critical functions, such as anti-trafficking, narcotics control and cybercrime investigation. Specialized agencies in Côte d'Ivoire address a range of complex criminal threats, including wildlife trafficking, falsified medicines and organized child exploitation. These efforts are supported by national intelligence and financial analysis units that contribute to cross-border information exchange and strategic coordination. However, enforcement capacity is once again limited by corruption, resource constraints and low public trust. Law enforcement personnel, especially in rural areas, are frequently implicated in extortion, bribery and abuse of power. Entry into the police academy has reportedly been tainted by bribery, undermining institutional integrity. While external partners have provided training – including on topics like online child exploitation and document fraud – the impact of these initiatives is constrained by systemic governance deficiencies.

Territorial integrity remains a critical area of vulnerability. The porous northern borders with Burkina Faso and Mali are key transit corridors for traffickers and violent extremist groups. These areas are difficult to police due to the presence of organized armed groups, conflict spillovers and a weak state presence. Recognizing these risks, the government has implemented a series of border management reforms with support from international partners. Infrastructure improvements, joint coordination mechanisms and capacity-building efforts have been initiated to strengthen border control. However, challenges persist, particularly in the Bounkani and Tchologo regions, where illicit flows and extremist groups undermine state authority. Reports of complicity from border police in trafficking continue to hamper efforts to reform.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Côte d'Ivoire has made some progress in developing its anti-money laundering (AML) regime, aligning with most of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations and improving its institutional frameworks. The financial intelligence unit has played a central role in coordinating financial reporting and analysis. However, some sectors continue to pose significant risks, with real estate, agriculture and unregulated casinos particularly vulnerable to money laundering. Weak oversight, limited enforcement and lack of awareness among private sector actors contribute to systemic deficiencies. The AML framework falls short in key areas such as transparency over the beneficial ownership of assets and oversight of the non-profit sector. Ivorian



authorities have struggled to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of money laundering and terrorist financing methods, which has held back the adoption of a risk-based approach. In 2024, Côte d'Ivoire was added to the FATF grey list, which highlighted remaining deficiencies in supervision of at-risk sectors, beneficial ownership transparency and implementation of financial sanctions. Despite efforts to digitalize government systems and some regulatory improvements, the practical application of AML laws remains limited.

The economic regulatory environment in Côte d'Ivoire is characterized by uneven enforcement. While there are legal frameworks for investment and competition, their implementation is often undermined by corruption and weak judicial oversight. Tax incentives and pro-business reforms have attracted investment into infrastructure and manufacturing, but administrative inefficiencies and weak property rights continue to have a chilling effect on investor confidence. Companies report frequent encounters with corruption in the civil service, judicial proceedings and customs administration. The artisanal gold mining sector, in particular, remains largely outside state control and is heavily influenced by organized criminal actors. Despite these challenges, Côte d'Ivoire has maintained robust economic growth, among the fastest in Sub-Saharan Africa, supported by strong industrial production and strategic exports in agriculture, mining, light manufacturing and housing. The government has made strides in improving transparency and digital governance systems, but the disconnect between regulation and enforcement continues to limit its resilience in this domain.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim and witness support structures in Côte d'Ivoire have improved in recent years. The government has increased its identification and referral of trafficking victims and expanded support services. Civil society organizations and international partners provide critical assistance in the form of shelters, psychosocial support and legal aid. Despite this, significant gaps remain, such as in government-run shelters for adult victims of trafficking. Legal aid provision is similarly inconsistent, preventing victims from pursuing justice or resolving immigration issues. Moreover, the absence of a centralized data system and the conflation of trafficking with other crimes limit the reliability of victim

statistics. For decades, Côte d'Ivoire's response to drug use was grounded in punitive legislation which criminalized addiction, imposed prison sentences for simple possession and pushed users away from vital health services. This shifted in 2022 with the adoption of a landmark law that reframed drug use as a public health issue rather than a criminal offence. However, the new approach still lacks clear implementation guidelines and sufficient support services.

Côte d'Ivoire's prevention plans target a range of organized crime threats, with a particular focus on trafficking and illicit mining. National action plans for combating human trafficking and child labour have been given dedicated funding, and law enforcement capacity has been reinforced with training from international partners. Other initiatives include abolishing school fees, increasing labour inspectorate staff, and raising awareness through campaigns involving traditional authorities. Despite these policies, enforcement and funding gaps persist, and corruption continues to hinder their overall effectiveness. International organizations have also supported preventive work through projects targeting drug trafficking, fisheries crime and terrorist threats with infrastructure investments and other capacity-building activities. Ultimately, the legacy of the civil war and continued governance challenges have hindered how the scalability and sustainability of these efforts. Whistle-blower protections are soon to be strengthened by dedicated legislation, but existing legal instruments are not yet being fully utilized.

Non-state actors, particularly civil society organizations, play a pivotal role in Côte d'Ivoire's resilience landscape. Civil society organizations provide essential victim support services, human rights monitoring and anti-corruption advocacy. Nevertheless, the operating environment remains difficult due to political polarization, media repression and weak state-civil society relations. Journalists face harassment and censorship, and opposition-aligned media outlets have faced suspensions. Civil society actors operate across diverse areas – such as women's rights, transparency and social protection – but risk being perceived as political when engaging in accountability work leading them to self-censor. The sector is further hampered by limited resources and being co-opted by political actors. Overall, the country's resilience is boosted by the active engagement of non-state actors, but significant structural constraints hold it back from reaching its full potential.

