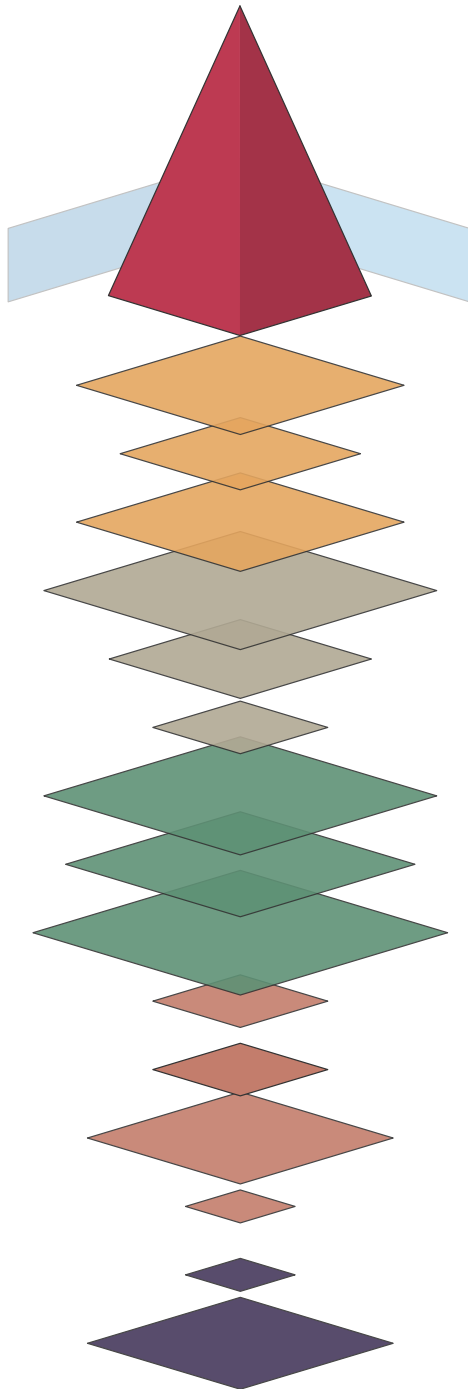




CONGO, DEM. REP.



7.35

CRIMINALITY SCORE

5th of 193 countries

1st of 54 African countries

1st of 11 Central African countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

6.20

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 7.50

HUMAN SMUGGLING 5.50

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING 7.50

ARMS TRAFFICKING 9.00

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS 6.00

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS 4.00

FLORA CRIMES 9.00

FAUNA CRIMES 8.00

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 9.50

HEROIN TRADE 4.00

COCAINE TRADE 4.00

CANNABIS TRADE 7.00

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 2.50

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES 2.50

FINANCIAL CRIMES 7.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

8.50

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 9.00

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 9.00

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 9.00

FOREIGN ACTORS 9.00

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS 6.50



2.38

RESILIENCE SCORE



Funding provided by the United States Government.

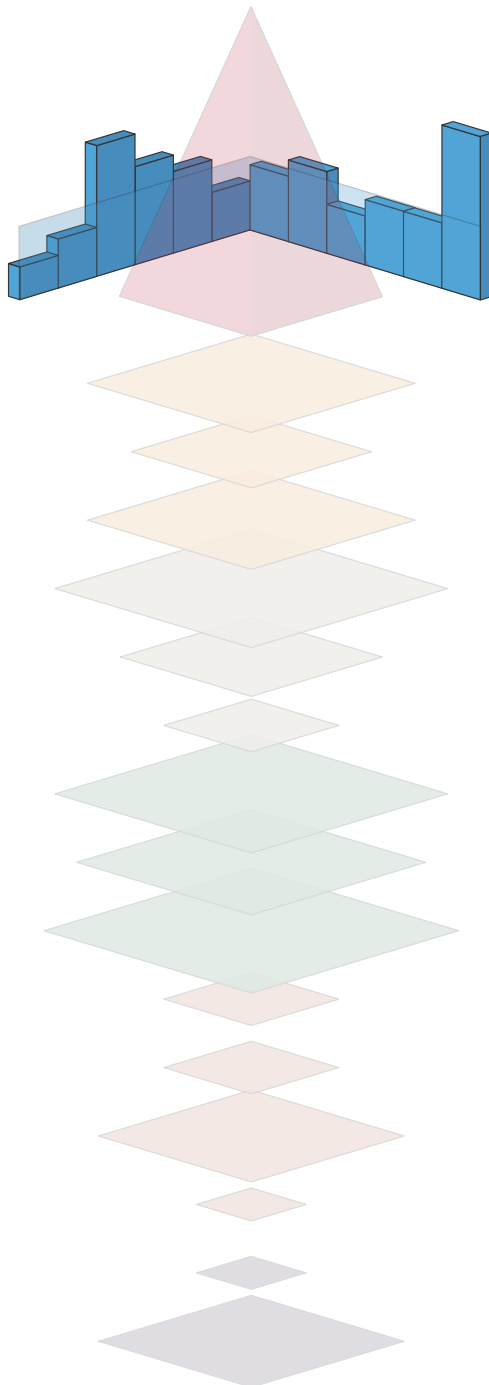


Funded by the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.



CONGO, DEM. REP.



2.38

RESILIENCE SCORE

176th of 193 countries

45th of 54 African countries

8th of 11 Central African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	1.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	1.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	4.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	3.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	2.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	1.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	2.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	2.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	1.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	2.00
PREVENTION	2.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.00



7.35

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS 6.20



CRIMINAL ACTORS 8.50



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is widespread in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), affecting large segments of the population. The DRC is still a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Human trafficking also occurs in the form of child recruitment into armed groups in the country's eastern regions because of ongoing conflict, and child labour in mines is pervasive. As living standards remain poor and human rights violations are common, it is often difficult to detect cases of human trafficking in the DRC.

Rampant conflict, violence, and displacement in the DRC continue to render human smuggling a crucial means for vulnerable smuggled individuals to move throughout the country and abroad. Professional smugglers that operate in the DRC are often South African or Zimbabwean nationals residing along the DRC's borders. Human smuggling is still not considered to be a particularly lucrative trade in the DRC nor a high-profile crime, however, it continues to benefit the few who can afford to use smugglers to reach to mainly European destinations. This has been an increasing trend in recent years. Extortion and protection racketeering are prevalent, especially in the eastern DRC, given the predatory and rapacious nature of the various illegal armed gangs and groups competing for the control and the illicit exploitation of the DRC's natural resource wealth, including minerals and timber.

TRADE

Arms trafficking and the use of illegal arms remain a major issue in the DRC. Armed conflict in the DRC and in neighbouring countries such as the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and Burundi, combined with high levels of border porosity, exacerbate small arms and light weapons trafficking in the DRC. Although weapons proliferation bolsters conflict, weapons are less present in western Congolese cities and/or in more 'traditional' organized crime settings. Weapon ownership is high in the DRC and the expansion of local and foreign rebel groups sparked a demand for illicit arms and ammunition. Moreover, government officials, including members of the military and eco-guardians, allegedly supply armed groups with weapons, which are being diverted into illicit circulation. Despite the problem, various governments worldwide continue supplying arms to the DRC, aggravating the issue.

There is evidence suggesting that the DRC is a conduit and end user of counterfeit pharmaceutical products and

medicines, including antibiotics, antimalarials and COVID-19 vaccines. There is also trade in illicit excise goods in the country exacerbated by its porous borders, lax border management and overall informal cross-border trade habits prevalent in the region. Many of these goods enter from countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and Cameroon. However, data pertaining to such activities is difficult to find because of the prioritization of the security situation in the eastern DRC as well as other more pressing organized crime markets such as arms trafficking, non-renewable crimes resource crimes, and fauna and flora crimes.

ENVIRONMENT

The DRC hosts Africa's largest tropical forest but has suffered significant tree cover loss over the past decades. While subsistence agriculture is the main driver of deforestation in the DRC, illegal logging is also a big concern. It is a country of origin for higher-value timber trafficked towards the east, west, and south through neighbouring countries. Forest governance is largely absent in the DRC. The charcoal trade in the DRC's eastern regions is reportedly a key source of income for criminal actors and militias. Corruption also reportedly occurs at each stage of the timber supply chain, including during the issuance of industrial and artisanal concessions, specifically involving Chinese companies. Inspections of the DRC's industrial logging concessions revealed a 'catalogue of illegality' in each and every case, including logging outside of permit areas, the felling of protected species, overexploitation, and the falsification of records and export permits. While most of the logging is carried out by large international companies, informal small-scale logging operations supply domestic markets. The cocoa farming industry is also targeted by armed groups, involving the appropriation of cash crops.

The biodiversity of the country, together with documented political instability, high level of corruption, and porous borders, continue to make the DRC a top target for criminal networks seeking to move ivory, pangolin scales, big cat, rhino horn, and other illegal wildlife products from Africa to Asia especially. In this context, the DRC plays a huge role in the illicit ivory global supply chain and as such, elephant poaching is a serious issue, even though stricter law enforcement policies have driven the market underground. Pangolin poaching for local consumption and export makes the DRC a logistical hub for the trafficking of pangolin scales. Certain species of great apes and monkeys are threatened by illegal bushmeat hunting, while armed groups engage in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, often resulting in high levels of violence. New studies show the volume of trade in some of the most widely trafficked commodities, raw ivory, pangolin scales, and rhino horn,

was resurging after temporarily being suppressed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The DRC has an abundance of non-renewable resources, creating large criminal markets. As a source country of gold, the illicit trade is pervasive in the DRC with both pro-government and rebel militias profiting from the market. More than 90% of DRC gold is smuggled to regional states, including Uganda and Rwanda, where it is then often refined and exported to international markets (particularly the UAE) and coupled with illicit financial flows. The DRC is also a source country for the so-called conflict materials of tin, tungsten and tantalum, which sustains armed groups within the country. Moreover, there is widespread corruption in the illicit cobalt market, which exacerbates exploitation of cobalt mining sites. It is well documented that child labour exists near mine sites, and that armed groups, in tandem with state forces, profit from the various trades and traffic. Despite the continued involvement of international cooperation agencies to help regulate the DRC's markets and non-renewable sources, its informal artisanal and illicit mining trade remains largely outside of the formal and government-regulated market.

DRUGS

The DRC serves as a transit country for heroin trafficked between eastern and southern regions of Africa into Europe. Heroin is primarily trafficked through Kinshasa's N'djili International Airport, the port of Matadi, and the ferry crossing between Kinshasa and Brazzaville in the Republic of the Congo. Domestic heroin consumption in the DRC is rising rapidly. The DRC is also a transit country for South American cocaine, and authorities have intercepted large shipments making their way to the country. The DRC is a trans-shipment point for cocaine from West African landing points to East Africa, specifically by air to the South African marketplace. Domestic consumption is high, and the highly violent trade flourishes in the capital of Kinshasa.

The DRC is a destination and source country for cannabis trafficked into neighbouring countries such as Uganda and Burundi, and a destination and transit country for cannabis trafficked destined for North African or Southern African markets. Cannabis consumption in the country is high, while domestic instability, the influence of armed rebel groups in the border regions, and high border porosity enable the cannabis trade to flourish. Conversely, the DRC's synthetic drug trade is limited, although minimal methamphetamine consumption is reported to occur.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes, specifically targeting banks and financial institutions in the country, is far-reaching, even though detection and disclosure of such incidents remain low, especially because of the lack of expertise on this subject.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Official estimates of the losses to the country caused by fraudulent activities and corruption are approximately US\$9 billion a year, which is close to double the national budget. Embezzlement and misuse of public funds are also common forms of financial crimes carried out in the country at the expense of the Congolese people. Furthermore, the complexity of the DRC's tax system creates incentives for corruption and abuse of power and represents harm to the business environment.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Armed mafia-style groups are prevalent in the DRC's eastern provinces, with more than 100 active in North and South Kivu alone. These groups have expanded because of ethnic polarization, insecurity and rampant human rights abuses, and are thought to engage in civilian attacks and various forms of organized crime, especially wildlife crimes. Urban gangs have also proliferated and institutionalized in the major cities attributed to poor urban governance and often have ties to security force personnel and politicians. There are numerous transnational criminal networks involved in the non-renewable resources market, particularly gold, operating both locally and transnationally in the DRC. These networks often comprise Congolese and foreign security personnel, customs officials, business leaders and politicians cooperating in the illegal export of ivory, pangolin scales, and minerals as well as in illicit arms, petrol, and drug trades. The country's economic crisis, worsened by the pandemic, has heightened the issue.

Corruption is rampant, and state-embedded actors at all levels are involved in organized crime. The state military is involved in arms trafficking, facilitating proxy militias to recruit child soldiers, and often carries out extrajudicial killings, rapes and extortion with impunity. However, many attempts have been made by the DRC to address impunity for human rights violations carried out by military and police officials through investigations and prosecutions. Police officials often operate a 'coop system' where they resell stolen goods provided by youth gangs. Businesses linked to public figures have been accused of embezzlement and other corrupt business partnerships. Recent revelations pertaining to corruption and financial crimes carried out under former President Joseph Kabila uncovered a kleptocratic system that enabled the siphoning of state funds from the DRC's Central Bank, a state-owned mining company, and other official sources.

The DRC has an international economy, particularly in its abundant non-renewable resource markets, where Chinese businesses reportedly wield considerable influence, alongside involvement from Lebanese, South African, Israeli, and Indian businesses with close ties to the DRC's state authorities. Foreign criminal gangs from neighbouring countries continue to operate in the DRC borderlands and

are notably active in drug, arms, and wildlife trafficking, working alongside state-embedded actors to facilitate these activities, coupled with fraudulent activities in the banking sector. Given the country's poor performance

against corruption, private sector actors are involved in criminal activities despite lack of data concretely evidencing such involvement.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Political leadership and governance in the DRC are weak and undermined by the criminal activity of state-embedded actors, making the country one of the most fragile states globally. Conflict and instability in governance are driven by the competition for control over the country's vast natural resources, particularly in the eastern provinces. Thus, the government is unable to control the security services implicated in criminal activity and provide support to rebel groups. Improvement in governance has been further impeded by corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, pandemic recovery, and insecurity in the east. There have been increasing political tensions within the government following the removal of the interim president. Though the government of the DRC bears primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, MONUSCO undertakes significant state substitution efforts by enhancing its presence in the eastern provinces even though it was affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, underscoring the weakness of the Congolese state in addressing its many problems. Moreover, rampant corruption hinders the DRC's governance capability. State-owned companies dominate the extractive industries, lacking basic transparency and operating corrupt licensing practices. Although anti-corruption frameworks are in place, implementation and enforcement are woefully absent, and there have been accusations that politicians ran fake anti-corruption campaigns to garner Western support. They have tried to improve transparency in extractive industries. However, the DRC continues to suffer from 'predatory governance', and conspiracy and mistrust characterize Congolese politics as a result. And the opacity of business reinforces the idea of elites benefitting at the expense of the Congolese people.

The country continues to depend on international assistance such as through MONUSCO, to help protect civilians, buttress law enforcement in countering illegal armed groups, and support national elections in 2023. It also relies on the US to support anti-corruption efforts in the country. There is also continued emphasis on regional cooperation in the Great Lakes between the DRC and its neighbours. The DRC is party to a number of international treaties pertaining to organized crime. On the domestic front, the DRC has legal framework pertaining to organized crime. Regulations have also tightened in the extractive industries. However, the implementation of these laws is poor and extortion

practices are prevalent, with the country falling well below the global average on rule-of-law markers.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system in the DRC remains highly dysfunctional, and impunity is far-reaching for criminal groups and corrupt state officials. The remoteness of certain areas and the poor infrastructures make it especially difficult for crimes to get reported and documented. Courts are concentrated in urban areas; rural areas rely on customary courts and hence informal justice mechanisms are common throughout the country. Civilians are often tried in military courts, which have weak safeguards for defendants' rights and poor witness protection mechanisms. Moreover, the state of siege imposed in May 2021 and ended in 2022 resulted in growing detentions and stalled judicial cases. The judiciary is also often seen as corrupt and subject to political manipulation. It often shows bias against the opposition and civil society, while government allies typically enjoy impunity for abuses. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common, as is prolonged pre-trial detention; much of the prison population consists of pre-trial detainees. Prisoners frequently pay bribes to avoid torture or meet basic needs.

The police forces are dysfunctional and ineffective, even in major cities and the capital, while local law enforcement's capacity to detect narcotics trafficking is inadequate. Corruption is prevalent in the police force on account of low salaries and poor treatment, meaning police intervention is limited and often involves illicit payments. Politicization is rising in law enforcement as the army's high command remains in the Kabila clan's control, dividing the country's intelligence services between two centres of power. Law enforcement is increasingly a hybrid activity in cities, with non-state vigilante groups allegedly playing a prominent role. Widespread sexual and gender-based violence in eastern DRC by state security personnel continues to elicit concern, which is exacerbated by an undisciplined military, impunity, and a breakdown in community protection mechanisms. Efforts were made to improve accountability which have produced some legal reforms and a few high-profile prosecutions in recent years.

The DRC has a long and permeable border with many unofficial crossing points as well as official border crossings

lacking security monitoring capacity. As a result, contraband flows freely over the border in the eastern regions, particularly the town of Ariwara. An illegal border post was established on the main road between the DRC and Zambia, and the border with the CAR remains entirely uncontrolled. The current situation between the DRC and its regional neighbours is more conducive to bilateral cooperation, particularly on the security front. The DRC's cyber integrity is also vulnerable.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Rampant corruption, weak law enforcement, a dollarized economy and a dominant informal sector render the DRC's banking system highly vulnerable to money laundering. Even though the country has regulatory framework and mechanisms to counter money laundering, they are not in line with international standards. The DRC is particularly exposed to money laundering risks related to the integration of the proceeds of corruption into the financial system, misappropriation of public funds, customs and tax fraud, poaching, trafficking in protected wildlife and forest species, and mineral trafficking. These risks are heightened by vulnerabilities inherent in the size of the informal sector, the extensive use of cash in financial transactions, the low level of financial inclusion, and the inadequacy of the legislative and regulatory frameworks.

An estimated 70% of the country's economy is informal with political instability making economic reform difficult. In particular, government attempts to reduce informal artisanal mining have allegedly failed, and at times resulted in violence in both the Kasai and Katanga regions. Pervasive patronage networks, bureaucratic inefficiency and political instability hinder international investment prospects. The DRC underwent an economic recession caused by the pandemic, and the DRC's economic recovery remains vulnerable to the continuing impact of demographic pressures, security, political unrest, falling commodity prices, and declining demand for minerals.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The DRC government still lacks national standard operating procedures to identify and refer trafficking victims to appropriate care systematically, however, some victims are referred to NGOs on an ad-hoc basis. Most victims mistrust the system due to an environment rife with impunity. Denunciations of abuse are likely to lead to reprisals, and victims have little to no recourse or state protection, especially in cases where state-embedded actors are the perpetrators. The country endeavours to prevent the recruitment of children as child soldiers through the government's joint technical working group and curbs child labour in cobalt mines through the Fair Cobalt Alliance, financially backed by international private donors. There has also been an increase in law enforcement activities to end the illicit ivory trade, which has served to push the illicit market deeper underground rather than restrain it.

There are plenty of non-state actors in the DRC working to improve and address the DRC's myriad problems, from trafficking, and recruitment of child soldiers and labour, to the need for increased transparency in the extractive industries as well as support for justice and judicial reforms. However, civil society organizations are also vulnerable to political manipulation, corruption and financial scandals themselves and have also been split along pro-government and pro-opposition lines. Relations between government and civil society have improved since 2018 and the election of the new president, with civil-society groups playing a key role in delivering social services and fighting corruption. However, the DRC's media landscape is still hostile and biased in favour of the government. Freedom of information is regularly violated, evidenced in the periodic closure of media outlets that deviate from pro-government reporting. Violations of press freedom, including arrests, attacks, and threats against journalists and the ransacking or closure of media outlets, continue at alarming levels.

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