

Support to the Mitigation of Destabilizing Effects of Transnational Organised Crime (M-TOC)

Mitigating the destabilization of border regions in West African coastal countries caused by spill-over effects from regional conflict hotspots.

The Challenge

Transnational Organised Crime (TOC) remains a major threat in West Africa. It involves the illicit trafficking in drugs, human beings and firearms, cattle rustling as well as related crimes such as money laundering and terrorism financing. The scale and impact of TOC undermine good governance, the rule of law, and hinder economic and human development across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In the region, TOC groups and traffickers exploit regional trade integration, weak state capacities, porous borders, and corruption. Rising political instability has enabled non-state armed groups (NSAG), both criminal and violent extremist groups, to expand their territorial control, increasingly affecting the northern border regions of coastal states like Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Illicit economies flourishing in these borderlands directly finance conflict and strengthen the operational capacity of NSAGs. These dynamics, when combined with weak governance, long-standing social and economic marginalization, and a heavily securitized state response, create fertile ground for instability.

Our Approach

Funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, the project aims at strengthening stability in border regions through targeted measures against TOC. In a unique integrated approach, it combines traditional security responses with bottom-up community resilience measures while drawing on a body of research developed on the intersection of illicit economies and

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Implemented by	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime (GI-TOC)
Project region	ECOWAS region, with a focus on Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana
Political partner	ECOWAS Commission
Overall duration	01/2024 – 03/2026
Financial volume	EUR 4.5 million

instability. The project supports the (re-)establishment of state authority, counters the destabilising effects of TOC and illicit economies, prevents the risks of overly securitised responses, and contributes to de-escalating tensions between security forces and local communities.

To achieve its objectives, the project carries out activities in three strategic areas:

1: Criminal Investigation into destabilizing TOC cases

The project supports law enforcement and border agencies in West African coastal countries to effectively investigate and prosecute transnational organised crime, particularly in illicit economy hubs linked to instability. It enhances cross-border



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Left: ECo Volta Noire General Assembly in November 2024 in Accra, Ghana

Right: A GIZ Adviser and a gendarmerie from Côte d'Ivoire analyze the project's target area on a map.



cooperation and strengthens the capacity of law enforcement actors operating in pilot areas to contribute to national investigations and prosecution efforts. To mitigate the risks of exacerbating local grievances, the project promotes conflict-sensitive and human-rights based approaches to law enforcement responses, ensuring that interventions do not unintentionally disrupt livelihoods or target actors with no links to organised crime or armed groups.

2: Strengthen Community Resilience against TOC

The project conducts community-based resilience interventions in close partnership with local civil society and community stakeholders to disrupt the link between illicit economies, violence, and instability in border regions. It targets individuals already involved or at risk of being drawn into illicit economies by offering alternative livelihood options and raising awareness about the long-term risks of engagement with organised crime and armed groups. To reduce incentives for communities to seek protection from criminal actors, the project engages law enforcement agencies in addressing local security-related grievances and promotes mediation efforts through national and local peace infrastructures. These measures aim to foster trust, strengthen locally owned peacebuilding, and build community resilience to the destabilising effects of illicit flows.

3: Strengthening the Knowledge Base on TOC through Research and Investigative Journalism

To improve understanding of the destabilising effects of illicit economies in the region, the project supports the production of crime-sensitive analysis and its use in policy and programming at national and regional levels. It works with research institutions to

conduct and disseminate evidence-based studies and regularly maps the links between illicit flows, instability, and conflict. To ensure sustainability and local ownership, the project strengthens regional and national capacities for independent research and investigative journalism, such as through support to networks like WARNOC. By partnering with investigative journalists, the project seeks to correct false narratives, expose the impact of TOC on communities, and promote accountability and informed public debate.

Key achievements

- **Two Crime and Instability Sensitivity Assessments (CISA) were conducted**, offering key insights into the project's target area and informing implementation strategies.
- **Validation of a Joint Security Framework** between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana on cross-border cooperation to address illicit activities.
- **Targeted training for 104 law enforcement agents** was held in four locations in Northern Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana to improve intelligence, surveillance, and coordination skills.
- **Law enforcement agencies in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire received 14 motorbikes** to enhance their mobility, as well as 25 walkie-talkies and 25 binoculars.
- **Community sensitization activities in three locations** in Ghana's Savannah and Upper West Regions **reached 900 people**, building trust and encouraging collective action against illicit activities.



Annual project planning workshop in Tamale, Ghana

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