

Trafficking and Fragility in West Africa

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Abstract

Trafficking is an emerging concern in West Africa. In 2011, 17 percent of all cocaine consumed in Europe—21 tons—passed through the region, for a retail value of US\$1.7 billion. This paper discusses the evolution of trafficking in the region and provides estimates of the size and value of trafficking flows to demonstrate the significance of this illegal activity. Although this topic is gaining increasing attention, less attention has been paid to how

trafficking is perpetuating fragility. This paper contributes to this area of research by identifying five channels through which trafficking is intensifying fragility in the region. The relative importance of each channel is discussed, with specific countries as case-study examples. Possible programmatic responses are then suggested with examples of policy approaches successfully adopted elsewhere in the world.

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Introduction

Trafficking is an emerging concern in West Africa, gaining increasing attention from the international community. In 2011, 17 percent of all cocaine consumed in Europe—or 21 tons— passed through the region, for a retail value of US\$1.7 billion (UNODC, 2011a). As well as being a trafficking hub, West Africa has recently displayed signs of becoming a producer of narcotics, in particular methamphetamine; labs were discovered in Nigeria in 2011–2012 (UNODC, 2013). Drugs are not the only illicit goods trafficked through the region. Firearms, illegally acquired oil, and humans also form part of this illicit trade.

Over the past decade, trafficking has grown in scale due to several internal factors. Geographic location and institutional weaknesses have attracted criminal networks looking to traffic drugs from Andean producing countries to the European consumer market. The region's extensive coastline and many offshore islands more easily allow the undetected transshipment of goods. Criminal networks needing to suppress competition or escape conviction benefit from fragile political institutions that allow for coercion, corruption and patronage.

Furthermore, external factors, such as the growing demand for cocaine in Europe, increased availability of small arms due to the collapse of regimes, and rising prices of oil have all contributed to the intensification of trafficking of these goods.

This paper discusses the evolution of trafficking in the region through an extensive review of the literature on the subject. The various relationships between trafficking and governance in the region are described and an overview of the trade routes is given. To demonstrate the significance of this illegal activity, estimates of the size and value of different trafficking flows are presented.

Trafficking, however, can increase fragility and exacerbate existing institutional weaknesses, limiting long run growth and stability. Thus this paper also focuses on understanding how trafficking feeds back into fragility and how the impacts of trafficking may be addressed. Through an extensive review of existing knowledge and data on the subject, five channels are identified, through which trafficking increases fragility. The relative importance of each channel in the region is discussed, using specific countries as case-study examples. Possible programmatic responses are then suggested, using examples of policy approaches successfully adopted elsewhere in the world.

The five channels can be summarized as follows. First, trafficking provides a source of financing and weapons for criminals and rebel groups. Second, trafficking rewards and promotes skills related to violence. Third, trafficking can lead to the emergence of groups that constitute a significant challenge to state authority. Fourth, the existence of trafficking affects the incentives of policy makers and military leaders and can lock states into cycles of fragility with elites deviating from maximizing social welfare. Fifth, competition over the economic rents attached to trafficking can lead to conflict between groups.

Evidence for the first channel is most significant in northern Mali where the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) appear to receive financing from trafficking operations (Lacher, 2013), while others such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), as well as MUJAO, access weapons from the illegal arms market in Niger (International Crisis Group,

2013). Oil bunkering in the Niger Delta region has been an important source of financing to rebels present there as well.

The second channel – the promotion of skills related to violence – is most prevalent in Nigeria, where there is demand for labor for the process of oil bunkering and the protection of this illegally acquired good. As West Africa has not yet developed a large local market for narcotics and the process of transporting drugs does not require large amounts of labor, the demand for workers willing to undertake risky and violent operations is not large. However, should a local market develop, secondhand criminality has scope to develop on a large scale, as the youth in the region display many of the risk factors for gang membership, such as social disorganization, lack of social and economic opportunities, and prior exposure to traumatic experience (Martinez et al., 2013).

Trafficking has led to the emergence of alternate social order and governance systems in northern Mali and Niger. In both situations, relative economic marginalization in periphery regions and the effective handover of security control to local elites and businessmen has led to the tolerance and even direct support to trafficking groups that are able to provide economic benefits to local residents.

Across the region, there are many instances of ties between political elites and international traffickers. In most cases they appear to be relatively isolated occurrences. However, Guinea-Bissau is a case where trafficking is endemically intertwined with control of the country through politics and the military. While there is only one country in the region that is as significantly affected by state capture of the trafficking industry, it is an important example of the extent to which trafficking can deteriorate development and stability.

The last channel, where competition over the economic rents associated with trafficking directly leads to conflict or violence, can be observed between armed groups active in northern Mali over control of trafficking routes and in the Niger Delta over control of access to bunkering. To an extent this channel has also been present in Guinea-Bissau, as several of the assassinations in recent years have at least been partially attributed to control of cocaine trafficking.

In the remainder of the paper, I begin by providing a formal definition of trafficking to frame the analysis. Next, the background and history of trafficking in West Africa is discussed in more detail to elaborate on the internal and external drivers of this illicit trade. An overview of the trafficking economy and routes across the region is provided, as well estimates of the value of the trade. Then the channels between trafficking and fragility are discussed, with attention paid to the actors involved (organized criminal groups, rebels, local or national level politicians, the military, and civilians) and their relevance to specific countries. To conclude, possible policy and programmatic responses are suggested, based on identifying both regional and external dimensions to the problems.

A Definition of Trafficking

Over the last decade trafficking has drawn a lot of attention, both in the media and the development world, with “drug trafficking,” “arms trafficking,” and “human trafficking” becoming the subjects of specific UN conventions. While there are definitions for specific forms of trafficking (such as “human

trafficking”), there is no widely accepted definition of trafficking at a general level, and it is not always clear how trafficking differs from other illegal activities, such as smuggling.

To frame the analysis, trafficking is defined as the international movement of goods or persons that originate from either the illegal sector of the exporting country and/or move to the illegal sector of the importing country (see Figure 1).

Trafficking therefore combines the illicit character of smuggling—it is conducted in a secretive manner to avoid law enforcement—and the illegal nature of crime—it deals with items produced or acquired by breaching the law. I include in this analysis narcotics, human trafficking, illegally acquired firearms, oil, timber, and diamonds. However, smuggling is left aside, which is illicit but not illegal (see Table 1).

Figure 1. What is trafficking?

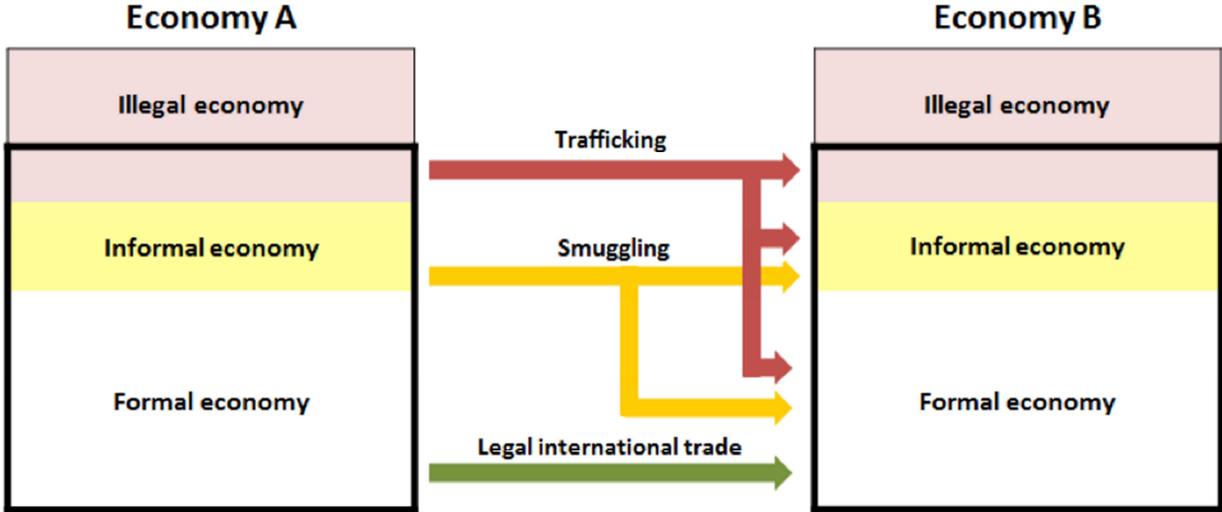


Table 1. International trade, smuggling, and trafficking

		Is the good commercialized/traded in a lawful manner?	
		Yes	No
Is the good legal?	Yes	International trade	Smuggling
	No		Trafficking

Certain flows, such as the trade of counterfeit cigarettes or the export of stolen vehicles from Libya into Niger (Shaw and Mangan, 2014), could also be considered as trafficked goods. However, given their more limited impact on local governance and development, they have been left aside.

Background

In this section, an overview is given of the factors shaping the evolution of trafficking across the region. Over the past decade, cross-country smuggling routes have grown and powerful international criminal networks have developed a greater presence integrating West Africa into the global trafficking industry. Within West Africa, this industry revolves around three hubs: the Gulf of Guinea, the Atlantic coastline, and the Sahel-Sahara region.

The region's evolving criminal economy

Illicit trade and crime are not new to West Africa; both have been a longstanding part of the region's economy. Research suggests that the region began to serve as a heroin and cocaine transshipment point as early as the 1950s, albeit on a small scale with diasporas in the region (first the Lebanese, then the Nigerians) establishing these early networks. A second phase started in the 1980s when trafficking and smuggling bloomed on a much larger scale. In the Sahel, the smuggling economy connected countries and communities across borders. Cigarettes imported from Mauritania, Benin, or Togo found their way to Mali and Niger. Local smugglers would then trade them northward to Algeria, Morocco, and Libya while importing subsidized goods (fuel, staple food) from these same markets (Lacher, 2012). On the Atlantic coast, the rise of organized crime was enabled by a combination of weak governance and protracted conflicts (Shaw and Reitano, 2013). The Liberian civil war and conflict in Sierra Leone created a demand for weapons and armed combatants that was at least in part funded by the extraction and trafficking of high-value commodities such as diamonds and timber (Patrick, 2004; Phillipe, 2008). Even in more resilient states such as Nigeria or Senegal, smaller-scale internal conflicts have created opportunities for arms traffickers to sell their goods (Alemika, 2013). Gradually trafficking has infiltrated public structures and local politics in the region. For example, in Ghana, a heroin trafficking ring was enabled by a local diplomat providing diplomatic passports to its associates (Akyeampong, 2005). In Nigeria, a former senator was arrested in New York for trafficking heroin, and some heads of state, such as Liberia's former president Charles Taylor, were repeatedly suspected of associating with traffickers (Ellis, 2009). By the end of the 1990s however, West Africa's criminal landscape was still mainly composed of fragmented networks and actors interacting with one another on an *ad-hoc* basis. The primary forms of trafficking involved exporting natural resources for cash and weapons, with drugs representing only a negligible amount of the criminal proceeds in the region. Corruption was present, but focused on low/medium-level officials.

This trajectory laid the foundation for the current criminal landscape. At the turn of the millennium, underlying drivers of fragility made certain states of the region prime targets for criminal networks. This coincided with increased external pressure from international criminal entrepreneurs—notably narco-traffickers—looking for a transshipment hub to better serve neighboring end markets (Europe, the Middle East, and Asia) and ushered in a new era for West Africa's criminal economy.

Internal factors: Crime and governance in West Africa

West Africa offers many advantages for organized criminals. For South American cocaine traffickers, it stands midway between the Andean producing countries and the European consumer market. For

Moroccan producers of cannabis resin, it can be used as a back door to circumvent customs control along the Maghreb coastline. But more than its geography, it is the region's weak governance that makes it attractive to criminal networks. Criminal networks are not political organizations; they are profit-maximizing entities. However, to run their operations undetected, suppress competition, or escape conviction, they often take advantage of fragile political institutions. They rely on coercion, corruption, and patronage to build their own political capital or tap into the local elite's (Cockayne, 2013). In that regard, West Africa's weak rule of law, widespread corruption, and political instability create many opportunities for traffickers. Trafficking can thus penetrate multiple levels of government. As such, it is possible to identify three configurations between crime and governance that have emerged in the region:

1. State capture. In certain extreme cases, crime can exist as a state-sponsored industry. In this configuration, high-level elites seek to capture the state to insulate certain criminal activities, from which they can profit, from law enforcement. Trafficking in Guinea-Bissau illustrates this configuration. One of the poorest states in the world, Guinea-Bissau has a long history of fragility characterized by a highly politicized military, weak institutions, and a set of elites bent on controlling the state to extract revenues (O'Regan, 2013). Evidence suggests that the government was already sponsoring weapons trafficking to the Casamance rebels in Senegal in the 1990s (O'Regan, 2013), making it a well-placed entry point for cocaine trafficking in the early 2000s. As the local economy contracted and political competition increased, Colombian traffickers found ready business partners in politicians, businessmen, and military leaders (Kemp et al., 2013). All saw cocaine trafficking as yet another potential source of wealth into which to tap. This configuration creates an enclave where traffickers are free to conduct their operations. The example of Guinea-Bissau highlights how even a small state can have a large impact on the region's criminal economy.

2. Decentralized control and state patronage. Paradoxically, trafficking can be used as a tool for state building. States lacking the ability to deliver development and services to marginalized areas may strategically turn a blind eye to criminal activities, particularly when such activities provide security and economic benefits. By coopting and forging pacts with local criminal entrepreneurs, the state can even reinforce its hold over remote areas and end conflicts. In Mauritania, former president Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya remained in power in his later years through a coalition of tribes (Smacid, Ouled Bou Sba, and Rgyebat) built around the control of smuggling (Lacher, 2012). In Mali, former president Amadou Toumani Touré sought to leverage trafficking to support his northern allies (Lamhar and Berabiche Arabs) in their struggle against secessionist rebels (Ifoghas and Idran Tuaregs) (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014). This configuration is not limited to West Africa and has been observed in other parts of the world such as Burma (Patrick, 2011). While it can lead to stability in the short run, it depletes the state's political will to fight traffickers and creates a culture of impunity, with peace resting on elite pacts rather than on inclusive settlements.

3. State resilience. Trafficking and organized crime do not always translate into fragility, instability, and conflict. Certain states display greater resilience than others. In West Africa, countries such as Senegal, Cape Verde, or Ghana have managed to keep their political process relatively insulated from trafficking. Though little research has been conducted on the sources of this resilience, some parallels between the

three states can suggest some leads. First, all have judicial systems that have allowed them to prosecute and convict high-profile targets rather than just petty criminals. In Cape Verde this aided the dismantlement of a cocaine trafficking network through “Operation Speedboat,” where an in-depth investigation resulted in the conviction of the former president’s stock exchange for money laundering (A *Semana*, 2011; A *Semana*, 2013). Similarly, Senegal’s police chief was recently dismissed as he came under investigation for trafficking and retailing drugs (Ba, 2013). Second, the governments have shown more political will in tackling organized crime. For example, in Senegal and Ghana, the respective governments have been working with the UNODC to create joint task forces and training programs to bolster national plans against organized crime (US Department of State, 2013).

External factors: Market trends in worldwide trafficking

The evolution in West Africa’s criminal economy has in part been prompted by its integration into the global economy. Better communications, improved transportation, and access to new markets not only opened the region to globalization but also exposed it to changes and turnarounds in illegal markets, including:

1. Cocaine—shifting demand. Cocaine is by far the most significant form of trafficking in West Africa. It commands the highest mark-up (see Table 2) and has swept across the region in little more than a decade. The reason lies in the fact that cocaine consumption in the United States has been declining since the early 1980s. In addition, the current Mexican drug war has made trafficking cocaine to the United States riskier.¹ In contrast, the number of cocaine users in Europe has doubled over the last decade, prompting traffickers to redirect part of their flows there (UNODC, 2010). In the early 2000s, traffickers realized that West Africa was a viable and less monitored route to reach this market. Consequently, the region served as a transit point for about 17 percent of the cocaine consumed in Europe in 2009—or 21 tons of cocaine for a retail value of US\$1.7 billion.

2. Methamphetamines—demand in emerging markets. While the amphetamine trade is not new in West Africa, it has expanded as the consumption in East and Southeast Asia has picked up throughout the 2000s (UNODC, 2013a). Using established crime syndicates with networks and contacts in the region from the early days of West African trafficking (Lacher, 2012), Nigerians have been able to transport, process, and distribute these drugs, importing raw materials (such as ephedrine) from Asia to turn it into methamphetamine in West Africa and re-export it to the end market (UNODC, 2008a).

3. Cannabis resin—circumvention. Cannabis resin from Morocco started to appear in the late 1990s, as traffickers sought to circumvent the presence of law enforcement along the Maghreb’s coastline. Mauritanian intelligence estimates that about one third of Morocco’s production—around 300 tons—passes through the Sahel on its way to Egypt and the Arab Peninsula (Lacher, 2012).

4. Weapons—demand and supply. West Africa lacks the capacity to produce military-grade weapons, but recent and ongoing conflicts in the region have sustained a demand for them, while the collapse of

¹ In 2006, Mexico implemented a new national strategy to crack down on trafficking networks. The cocaine flow passing through the country then declined over the period 2006–2011 (UNODC, 2013b) and the increased number of armed clashes between the Mexican cartels and security forces increased the cost of shipping drugs through the country (UNODC, 2012).

Libya and the end of conflict in Chad have created local sources for weapons. Nigerian President Mahamadou Issoufou recently declared that “arms were stolen in Libya and are being disseminated all over the region” (Maylie, 2011), while the UNODC estimates that up to 12,000 arms—including 9,000 assault rifles—could have been trafficked from Qaddafi’s former arsenals (UNODC, 2013a).

5. Natural resources—rising prices. Driven by a rising demand from emerging economies, the spot price of a barrel of Nigerian oil increased fourfold between 2000 and 2012 (British Petroleum, 2013). Similarly, the demand for diamonds and timber has remained high over the period. This has created the opportunity for theft, illegal extraction, and trafficking throughout the region.

The routes and hubs of West African trafficking

As described, both weak governance and strong demand for illegal commodities has spurred the recent growth in trafficking across West Africa. Within the region, traffickers optimize their activities by taking advantage of each state’s comparative advantage. States where trafficking is entrenched with elite capture are used as hubs for the entry and exit of trafficked commodities. Countries with good air connections to Europe are used to ship drugs through air couriers. Countries with more developed economies have become a place for investment for criminal proceeds (UNODC, 2008a). Consequently, West Africa’s trafficking economy has become increasingly complex and structured itself around three specialized hubs (see Map 1).

The Atlantic coast hub—composed of Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and to a lesser extent, Senegal—appears to be the main beachhead for cocaine trafficking into the region. The cocaine is shipped to Guinea-Bissau from South America by sea or air. Part of the flow is then redirected to the surrounding international airports to be shipped to Europe through air couriers. With 434 kg of cocaine seized from passengers in 2008, Senegal stood out as the busiest air exit point in the region (UNODC, 2008a). However, this is to be expected, as Dakar’s airport is one of the busiest in the region. Other airports—notably in Conakry and Bamako—stand out in the area for the large amount of cocaine seized compared to the volume of passengers. The rest of the cocaine is trafficked by land to northern Mali, where it integrates into the Sahelian hub.

The Sahelian hub stretches along the borders between Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Niger, and Libya. It encompasses vast swathes of desert and arid lands that local law enforcement cannot effectively monitor and where local communities (Arabs, Tuaregs) have long thrived on illicit trade (Judith, 2012). The Sahelian hub is the main corridor between West Africa and the Maghreb. As such it is at the center of several trafficking routes. Cannabis resin passes from Morocco to Mauritania and arrives in Mali. From there, it follows the same routes as cocaine: the “short trajectory” and “long trajectory” (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014). The first trajectory passes through the Malian regions of Timbuktu and Kidal to Algeria, where local crime syndicates operate. This trajectory requires good connections with local security forces and criminal networks, making it a more difficult route for small-scale traffickers to operate. The second trajectory provides an easier but longer route and goes from northern Mali into Niger, Chad, Sudan, and then Egypt. Recently, this trajectory has diverted into Libya (Shaw and Mangan, 2014). As Libya is also a major source of weapons, arms as well as cannabis are trafficked along this route. The flow starts from the remote towns of Sebha, Ubari, and Murzuq in

the south of Libya and enters Mali and Niger through areas respectively controlled by Tuareg and Tubur groups. From there, they get to the traditional weapons trading centers that are Agadez (Niger) and Gao (Mali) (UNODC, 2013a).

The Gulf of Guinea hub goes from Ghana to the Niger Delta. It is a highly interconnected region where criminal networks—overwhelmingly Nigerian—are extremely mobile and well integrated. Though not as important as in the Atlantic hub, some maritime shipments of cocaine have been detected (notably in Ghana) and the hub is also a popular destination for the region’s air couriers—many of which are Nigerians. The remaining cocaine that is not moved by air couriers is transported by land through Benin or Burkina Faso to Niger, where it follows the “long trajectory” route described above. Other trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea revolves around Nigeria, with the neighboring states generally providing an exit point. For instance, most of the women trafficked for sexual exploitation in Europe come from the vicinity of Benin City, in the Nigerian state of Edo. However, the victims travel under the surveillance of their “handler” to Europe by plane and depart from a variety of airports in the region—notably Ghana’s (UNODC, 2008b). Similarly, part of the oil stolen and trafficked from Nigeria’s Delta region is suspected to feed into Ghana’s refineries (Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). Once again, traffickers are quick to take advantage of the complementarities and synergies offered by neighboring states and regional integration.

The size and value of trafficking flows in the region

How large are these trafficking flows? Answering this question is difficult. First, there is a lack of reliable data on drug flow at the national level; not all states consistently report their drug seizures (UNODC, 2011b). Second, estimates on the size and value of the flows can only be obtained at a regional level. This is due to the fact that they are generally extrapolated or obtained through the input-output regional model developed by UNODC (UNODC 2005; UNODC, 2011a). Finally, the value of the flows can be misleading. Should a ton of cocaine seized in Mali be valued at its European retail price or the African import price? In Table 2, “value” refers to the size of the flow times the price at which the trafficked good will sell in its end market. However, this measure only gives an idea of the proceeds of trafficking at a global level and does not tell how much money it generates in West Africa per se. Where possible an estimate of the mark-up by West African traffickers is reported. This is computed as the difference between the import or local trade price and the export wholesale price multiplied by the size of flows.

Table 2. Estimated value of some the flows going through the region (US\$ million)

	Value	Mark-up	Source
Oil	\$4,168 ²	\$1,146 ³	Katsouris and Sayne, 2013; UNODC, 2008b; British Petroleum, 2013.
Cocaine	\$1,764 ⁴	\$1,176 ⁵	UNODC, 2011a.
Cannabis	\$595 ⁶		UNODC, 2008a.
Human trafficking	\$226 ⁷		UNODC, 2008b.
Methamphetamine	\$225 ⁸		UNODC, 2013a.
Firearms	\$167 ⁹		UNODC, 2008b.
Total	\$7,145		

² Estimated by multiplying the estimated numbers of barrels stolen in 2012 according to Chatham House by the average spot price of a barrel of Nigerian crude oil for the year, as reported in the BP Statistical Review.

³ Estimated by applying the best estimate of the discount rate at which local traffickers sell their oil (72.5 percent).

⁴ Estimated by multiplying the size of the flow (21 tons) by the wholesale value of a kg of cocaine in Europe (\$84,000). Using the retail value would yield an even greater figure but would be inconsistent with the methodology generally used by UNODC.

⁵ Estimated by taking the difference between the wholesale price in Europe (\$84,000 per kg) and West Africa (\$28,000 per kg), time the size of the flow (21 tons). According to UNODC, only a third of the traffic is conducted by African groups, which would put their gross profits at US\$392 million. I chose to include the mark-up of all traffickers, as their proceeds impact West Africa regardless of nationality (through corruption, violent competition for control, and so on).

⁶ Estimated by multiplying the regional production (3,500 tons) by the average regional retail price (\$0.17 per gram). It should be noted the retail price is the West African retail price, as West Africa virtually exports none of its cannabis abroad and grows it mainly for local consumption.

⁷ Estimated by taking the midpoint of UNODC's estimates for the annual flow of humans trafficked for sexual exploitation out of West Africa (4,750) times the midpoint UNODC estimate of the price on one individual (\$47,500). The estimates for the flow were originally obtained by looking at the numbers of victims detected in Europe and assuming that 1 out of 30 trafficked humans was detected on average.

⁸ Estimated by taking the mean of the estimated values of the flow according to UNODC, which took the possible sizes of the flow (750–3000 kg)—extrapolated from the number of seizures in 2010—times the midpoint estimate for the wholesale price in the end markets (\$120,000 per kg).

⁹ Estimated by extrapolating the legal imports of ammunitions and firearms in West Africa and assuming that rebel and criminal groups at least match the government's purchases.

Five channels between trafficking and fragility: Trafficking and its impact in West Africa

In this section, I lay out five major channels through which trafficking can feed into fragility and provide examples of the relative importance of these channels using country case studies. While, this framework is conceptually valid for all the forms of trafficking, drug trafficking remains the most relevant flow given its high financial value.

Channel 1—A source of financing and weapons for criminals and rebel groups

As an economic activity trafficking can generate substantial revenues, as illegal goods have no substitutes in legal markets, enabling traffickers to command a premium at the resale point. In addition, trafficking may not require additional investments for many criminals or militants. For example, they may already have access to the illicit networks needed to move the goods. As they already operate illegally, the marginal risk of undertaking new criminal activities is also lower for them.

Trafficking is therefore an attractive source of income for actors who do not fear law enforcement or already operate outside the limits of the legal sector. Having criminals and rebels involved in trafficking creates two problems. First, it makes them more resilient and entrenched. With the profits from trafficking, which can rival military budgets (see Table A3), criminals and rebels can buy the means to help them resist the state's backlash (for example, official favor, new recruits, off-road vehicles, communication equipment). Arms trafficking will even give them direct access—at a lower cost—to weapons. Involvement in the illegal arms market in Niger is an important source of weapons for al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) in Mali and Boko Haram in Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2013). This helps explain why conflicts involving trafficking can last on average more than five times longer than those that do not (Fearon, 2002). The northern Mali rebellion of 2012 is an interesting example. Before the conflict, some reports linked the rebel group AQIM to drug traffickers (Savage and Shanker, 2012), prompting officials to speak of the dangers of “narco-terrorism” in the Sahel (Lacher, 2013). It later turned out that most of the evidence was unsubstantiated. However, other local armed groups such as MUJAO or the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) have repeatedly surfaced in accounts of drug deals across the subregion (Lacher, 2013). Oil bunkering has also financed and provided arms to various insurgencies of the Niger Delta regions (Junger, 2011). This underlines the complexity of the links between traffickers and militants in the Sahel. Some rebel groups remain distinct from traffickers and rely only lightly on their money through a contracting model where traffickers pay either a fee in exchange for protection (in contested areas) or a tax for safe passage (Shaw and Mangan, 2014). Others make deliberate alliances with local prominent traffickers to hold key cities and facilitate the transit of drug convoys (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014). However in both cases, trafficking is a large source of funding and power for the militants and can promote their access to firearms.

Second, trafficking can steer criminals' and rebels' preferences toward material gains. Rebel groups that start as political movements, rather than profit-maximizing entities, but experience large increases in revenues through trafficking, incur greater opportunity costs for laying down their weapons. While this

can be addressed in certain cases by creating a revenue-sharing scheme for the trafficked good (such as what happened with trafficked timber in Indonesia [Hailu et al., 2011]), illegal commodities such as narcotics will prove harder to compensate. Thus, rebel groups involved in trafficking can get caught in a “crime-rebellion” nexus, which makes conflicts harder to end (Cornell, 2005). Mali is a case in point, as militant groups have been described as “narco-traffickers first, ideologues second, if at all” (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014, p. 15).

Channel 2—Rewarding and promoting skills related to violence

The presence of trafficking in a country creates a demand for nonproductive skills that are associated with violence. The process of trafficking may involve enforcement, extortion, assault on the competition, all activities requiring “violent” skills, and the organizers of these operations have the means to pay for these skills at a premium rate. In fragile states and post-conflict societies, which have an excess of labor with these nonproductive skills, the persistence of trafficking can thus make it harder to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants (Collier, 1994; Cunningham et al., 2008). Joining trafficking operations has detrimental long-term impacts on an individual’s economic trajectory. For example, youth involvement in criminal groups can discourage the long-term investments needed to perform well in the formal sector (for example, education, learning-by-doing on the job, and so on) and can subsequently lead to higher rates of unemployment and lower incomes (Levitt and Venkatesh, 2001). In addition, by encouraging individuals to develop skills adapted to the illegal economy rather than the formal sector, trafficking may lock them into the former, limiting their future economic prospects.

At a social level, having individuals work in a violent and lucrative industry has destructive effects. It disrupts social relations by making them less financially reliant on and emotionally responsive to the traditional sources of authority (family, elders, law enforcement) and lowers social support for democracy and the law both among traffickers *and* non-traffickers (Adams, 2012; Levitt and Rubio, 2000). However, it should be noted that all these effects are a function of the number of jobs created by trafficking, which is in turn determined by how labor intensive the industry is (Felbab-Brown, 2009).

Drug and arms trafficking currently do not require large amounts of labor given that there are relatively small local markets to be serviced and the process of transporting these goods does not require large amounts of labor. Natural resource extraction and trafficking, however, do depend on larger amounts of labor. The theft of crude oil in Nigeria (also known as “bunkering”) during the heydays of the Niger Delta rebellion (2004–2009) demonstrated to the local youth the risks and benefits of oil trafficking. In a region with 6 to 7 million unemployed youth (Sayne, 2010), anti-oil violence pays (Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). This violence has predominantly been associated with the extraction and protection process, but has evolved to also include kidnapping of foreign oil workers and sabotage of oil companies facilities (the multinational oil company Eni reported 108 accidents between August and February 2012 alone [Katsouris and Sayne, 2013]).

Finally, trafficking can lead to the development of a local drug market and gang criminality. Currently, most of the drugs trafficked through West Africa are intended for markets located abroad. However, as the UNODC noted in 2008, some criminals in trafficking networks are paid “in kind, rather than cash” and this can generate “local cocaine markets, which pose hazards of their own” (UNODC, 2008a, p. 5).

This secondhand criminality has yet to develop on a large scale, but West Africa is at a particular risk. In many countries in the region, the youth display many of the risk factors for gang membership—social disorganization, lack of social and economic opportunities, troubled families, academic failure, street socialization, prior exposure to traumatic experience, and, of course, availability of drugs in the neighborhood (Martinez et al., 2013).

Channel 3—Leading to alternate governance systems

As noted above, criminal networks and traffickers can have complex relations with the state. Rather than challenging it directly, they may infiltrate gaps in its ability to reach marginalized or isolated locations. Through their increased presence in these communities, they may effectively provide an alternate system of governance. However, these alternate systems may rely on different governance mechanisms, such as coercion and corruption (Cockayne, 2013). Over time these alternate governance systems can become entrenched, and even legitimized by local populations, who benefit from the provision of goods and social services that the state has not provided. For example, Haitian gangs have been known to provide medical services to the communities in which they operate. This enables criminals to build up local popular support, helping them resist any attempt at rolling them back (Felbab-Brown, 2009).

In West Africa, Mali and Niger offer examples of this channel at play. In the north of Niger, smugglers and traffickers have become part of the local governance and security architecture. For instance, in June 2011, a local Arab leader, Abta Hamidine, and a former Tuareg leader were arrested by the Nigerien army for trafficking weapons and explosives from Libya. Both were released eight months later without being prosecuted, following concerns that their associates were mobilizing forces against the government (Lacher, 2012). In Mali, the decentralization following the Algiers Accords of 2006 paved the way for traffickers to play a major role in local politics.¹⁰ With the informal support of the state—which sent senior military officers such as Colonel Mohamed Ould Meydou and Lieutenant Colonel Ould Bou to train and occasionally head these irregular forces—local businessmen set up their own security forces and policed the area. This *de facto* handover of security benefited trafficking in the region, as several businessmen were directly involved in this trade (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014). In addition, local traffickers laundered money through development projects, building roads, wells, property, and infrastructure. Buying local herders' livestock also became a new way of turning trafficking money into legitimate assets (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014). This bought the traffickers unparalleled local influence and legitimacy. When newly elected President Touré toured the north to promote his new Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali, he met with the local youth. He explained how the program would target them and provide them with training and employment opportunities as mechanics, masons, tailors, and so on. His speech was met with derision. The audience responded by saying these were not “jobs” and that they were happy with the ones they had held for the past decade—guides and drivers for traffickers (Reitano and Shaw, 2014).

¹⁰ This was signed between the government and the Tuaregs.

Channel 4—Shifting the incentives of policy makers and military leaders

Trafficking poses a similar problem to that of natural resource extraction in that both command significant economic rents from which local officials may be in an advantageous position to tap into. In particular, trafficking may alter the behavior of local officials on two levels. First, it makes turning to illegal activities more attractive, as the benefit of becoming patrons of traffickers relative to enforcing laws and limiting trafficking rises. Second, it may shift the attention of policy makers away from important state-building and development investment decisions, either because they are partaking in trafficking activities themselves, or because they are spending more time confronting those involved in the trade. If political elites focus less on economic growth and more on rents from trafficking, the problem can become self-perpetuating. This effectively distances them from their constituencies' long-term needs and desires (Batmanglich and Hoyer, 2013).

Many instances of collusion between trafficking and politics have been observed across the region. In Guinea, the son of former President Lansana Conté was linked to the shipping of drugs from South America by plane and seized cocaine has routinely disappeared from custody (*New York Times*, 2008). In Sierra Leone, the minister of transportation was forced to resign after his cousin was found to have used an aircraft to ship 700 kg of cocaine (UNODC, 2013a). In Nigeria, a dozen officers—including two admirals—were convicted for their role in oil trafficking (Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). Similar anecdotal evidence has been reported all over the region (Brown, 2013) but nowhere is the effects of this channel more visible than in Guinea-Bissau.

Guinea-Bissau had long been struggling with weak institutions, a politicized military, and endemic clientelism (O'Regan, 2013), but the onset of cocaine trafficking, which started in the early 2000s, has magnified these weaknesses. With a sluggish annual growth rate of 0.4 percent over the past three decades, no other industry in Guinea-Bissau could generate as much liquidity as cocaine trafficking. As money underpins the patronage system upon which local politics is built, certain factions started to actively channel state resources into expanding trafficking. Troops were used to unload and protect shipments (Snow, 2008), police officers and judges were prevented from doing their job, and government facilities were used to store the merchandise (AFP, 2009). Trafficking has further reinforced the weight of the military in politics. For example, in 2012 the chief of staff, General Antonio Indjai, toppled the government, as one of his rivals was poised to win the presidential election, and the country was then governed by a transitional government backed by the military until elections in April 2014 (O'Regan, 2013).

Channel 5—Causing conflict between competing groups

Trafficking can generate conflicts at two levels—among the traffickers themselves and within a country's polity. Broadly speaking, all activities in an illegal economy can generate violence, as there are no formal institutions to assist market failures. Property rights and contracts can only be enforced through peer pressure, threats, and violence (Levitt and Venkatesh, 2000). In addition, the illegal nature of criminal industries limits the use of traditional competition techniques (advertising, marketing, price cutting and so on) to win market shares, leading criminals to resort to direct assaults on the competition to ensure control of the market (Levitt and Rubio, 2000). Finally, criminal organizations do not have access to an

enforcer of labor contracts. To strengthen their command-and-control structure, they thus often draw upon traditional identities and values (Cockayne, 2013). If these identities overlap with ethnic, religious, or cultural fault lines, crime can exacerbate rivalry between competing groups.

In all those aspects, trafficking is no exception. Empirical evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean supports the idea that increased competition between traffickers leads to violence. Moreover, government attempts to disrupt the drug trade by eliminating cartel leaders can inadvertently lead to increased violence, as factions compete to gain access to new territories when incumbent cartel leaders are removed (Keefer and Loayza, 2010; Dell, 2011). In the Sahel, the growth of trafficking has changed the nature of the old smuggling economy. Attacking smugglers hauling cigarettes might not be very profitable, but preying upon convoys of hashish or cocaine can be. The risk prompted the growth of the protection business between traffickers and armed groups. In turn, it led to attacks between competing groups (Lacher, 2013) and the displacement of the smugglers unable to afford protection. In particular, since 2007 local violence in northern Mali has often been associated with struggles for control over trade routes and even cargo, notably between state-backed coalitions of mainly Arab militias and anti-state Tuaregs (Lacher, 2013; Scheele, 2012; Tinti, 2014).

Access to bunkering routes is considered to be one of the explanations for some of the major and minor conflicts in the Niger Delta (Human Rights Watch, 2006; Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). In addition, since 1990, at least 70 agents working for the Nigerian national Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) were killed in the line of duty (Agence France Presse, 2014).

Stepping back from the underworld, trafficking can also lead to political conflicts. As noted above, trafficking can provide a source of economic rents appropriable by public officials. If the rent is large enough, it will significantly raise the stakes of local political competition, effectively turning it into a winner-takes-all game (USAID, 2013). With no avenue for peaceful political contest and so much at stake, political conflicts become more likely (Douglass et al., 2009).

It has been widely argued that in Guinea-Bissau trafficking has fueled a greater frequency political violence and coup attempts. It is widely believed that the 2009 coup was largely motivated by struggle over the control of the drug trade. The large rents associated with drug trafficking have not only raised the stakes for political competition, but also polarized it, as currently one group: the military control access to the trafficking rents.

Possible policy and programmatic response

Trafficking does not always lead to instability, but it certainly contributes to fragility through the channels outlined above. As such, it creates a state-building problem that calls for a development response. To conclude this analysis, I present an overview of policy and programmatic responses to these channels using examples of successful approaches adopted in other parts of the world wherever possible. I begin by making some suggestions that are applicable to all countries in the region, before moving on to suggest targeted responses to specific channels.

Including crime-sensitivity in our analysis

Given the prevalence of organized crime and trafficking in West Africa's fragile states, development actors could benefit from including criminal analyses in their strategy. Like conflict-sensitive strategies, crime-sensitive strategies allow for better informed project designs and better donor coordination. Specifically, crime-sensitive strategies should focus on two goals:

1. *Understanding the relationship between the state and civilians with regards to trafficking.* To design crime-sensitive development responses, development practitioners need to identify the local sources of support and opposition to trafficking.

First, analysts should examine who in the state takes part in the trade and who opposes it. Particular attention should be paid to the level at which these forces play (for an example, see figure A2 in the appendix). In Ghana for instance, high-level officials have displayed strong opposition to trafficking while corruption and cooperation efforts from traffickers seem to have largely focused on low-level politicians and law enforcement agents (Aning et al., 2013). This allows for direct engagement with the central government on capacity-building programs for anti-trafficking enforcement units or financial forensics to counter money laundering. On the other hand, such efforts are likely to yield little results in Guinea-Bissau, where high-level opposition to trafficking is not likely. In such contexts, donors can focus on limiting damage and containment of the possible ill effects of trafficking, for instance by proactively preventing the development of a local market for drugs with targeted health programs and providing alternative economic opportunities for youth who might otherwise be drawn into the trade.

Second, analysts should pay closer attention to the interactions between traffickers and civil society at large. While civilians may not partake in trafficking, they may have a vested interest in seeing the industry or some of its practices preserved. In the Sahel, local herders have been said to become increasingly reliant on traffickers buying their livestock to launder money (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2014). Similarly, local tribes depend on smuggling or low-value trafficking (for example, counterfeited cigarettes) for their livelihood (Lacher, 2012). Cracking down on all flows without first addressing this dependence could tighten the links between traffickers and locals and lead to a backlash.

2. *Getting the sequencing right.* A crime-sensitive development response should also look at the timing of development programming in relation to law enforcement efforts. Proper coordination and sequencing between development and law enforcement can be mutually reinforcing, while ignoring these aspects can have unintended consequences. In Afghanistan, for instance, aggressive anti-narcotics efforts achieved some success in disrupting trafficking operations, but they also allowed rebels-cum-traffickers to gain support locally from opium farmers' anger against foreigners disrupting their livelihoods (Felbab-Brown, 2009). The use of "alternative development" in Thailand offers a counter-example, although it is the sole instance in which a development-focused approach succeeded in eliminating illicit crop cultivation. To truly root out local trafficking, the state needs not only to enforce the law but also to out-compete traffickers in the provision of public goods, services, and economic opportunities. That means focusing on the provision of socioeconomic goods at the same time as—or even before—classic law enforcement operations.

Possible targeted interventions

Once an analysis of who is involved in trafficking and how they are involved has been conducted, the focus should shift to disrupting the link between trafficking to fragility. The following points provide some examples of potential interventions to disrupt the channels discussed previously.

Channel 1—A source of financing and weapons for criminals and rebel groups. Two types of interventions can help cut the flow of money and weapons going to traffickers. The most straightforward is to raise the transaction costs by creating systematic obstruction along the trafficking routes. In the Caribbean, Dutch and Antillean customs officers have a joint program in which each flight leaving the region to the Netherlands is searched. Rather than focusing on the courier, the program focuses on the merchandise—if the courier carries less than 3 kgs, the drugs are seized but the couriers are not arrested. Instead they are flown back to their country with a receipt for the drugs taken to explain the loss to their employers. Four years after the implementation of the program, the number of couriers had dropped by 96 percent (World Bank and UNODC, 2007). A similar initiative to reduce and deter trafficking by air recently began in West Africa,¹¹ with the UNODC partnering with INTERPOL, the World Custom Organization (WCO) to create joint task forces in eight airports deemed strategic to drug traffickers (Kavanagh and Walker, 2013).¹² In addition to training and mentoring these task forces, the project (dubbed “AIRCOP”) also created a real-time communication system between the airports to report arrests and potential suspects (Bertrand, 2011).

A second type of intervention could focus on providing support for financial forensic and anti-money laundering activities. This would effectively make it harder for traffickers and rebels to monetize the proceeds of trafficking. The UNODC and the European Commission are already providing support to such activities in the region. ECOWAS has also sought to scale up the activities of its Inter-Governmental Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), though they have mostly been limited to monitoring the implementation of anti-money laundering regimes at a country level. As evidenced by Cape Verde’s Operation Speedboat or the Amoateng case in Ghana, however, the revenues from trafficking can still be easily laundered by powerful political or economic elites.

Channel 2—Rewards and promoting skills related to violence. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), strengthened livelihoods, and employment and violence prevention programs are all interventions that can provide an alternate productive demand for labor and deter at-risk youth from engaging in violence. First, they raise the opportunity cost of starting a criminal career (Becker, 1968; Fougère et al., 2009), especially if they are conducted alongside renewed law enforcement efforts. Second, they can help remove individuals from risky social networks (Spear, 2006) and reduce preferences toward risky behaviors (Bertrand and Crépon, 2013). As most trafficking in West Africa is not labor-intensive, steering people away from the industry has not been a priority for local governments. However, as was noted earlier, this could change if domestic markets for narcotics grow.

¹¹ In January 2010.

¹² Namely: Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport (Dakar, Senegal), Bamako-Sénou International Airport (Bamako, Mali), Praia International Airport (Praia, Cape Verde), Murtala Muhammed International Airport (Lagos, Nigeria), Port Bouet International Airport (Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire), Kotoka International Airport (Accra, Ghana), Conakry International Airport (Conakry, Guinea) and Guarulhos International Airport (São Paulo, Brazil).

Natural resource trafficking is currently labor-intensive, and several programs have been introduced in the region.¹³ The biggest is the Nigerian amnesty program offered to Niger Delta militants in 2009 which included job training, stipends, and placement for former rebels and oil bunkerers.

One avenue for intervention would be to execute a more systematic review of these initiatives and introduce rigorous evaluation methods if no impact assessments are yet in place.¹⁴ Another would be to push—if only experimentally—for violence prevention programs in urban areas. West Africa does not currently have a gang problem, but its youth display many of the risk factors once associated with gang formation and criminal involvement in Latin America: exposure to traumatic experience, breakdown of family structure, lack of education, lack of livelihood alternatives, and so on (Stearns Lawson, 2014; Cunningham et al., 2008). In order to proactively address this risk, it may be a worthy investment.

Channel 3—Leading to alternate governance systems. Traffickers can become an integral part of the local governance, providing services and goods to the local population. To effectively root out trafficking and criminal violence from captured communities, development projects must support the state in outcompeting these actors. This approach has been tried in Latin America and the Caribbean over the last decade, with satisfactory results. By combining infrastructure projects, social service delivery, and crime prevention through environmental designs (CPTED), development agencies have effectively supported national governments in rolling back crime in deprived urban areas. The World Bank’s *Inner City Basic Service for the Poor* (Project ID: P091299) project in Jamaica is a good example of this holistic approach (World Bank and UNODC, 2007). At the core of the project was a balance struck between the provision of infrastructure and services (clean water, sanitation, waste management, electricity, and roads) and community-based social engagement (microfinance, mediation services, land tenure regularization). The project was complemented by a very rigorous effort to build data on local violence and crime (notably through the use of a geographical information system (GIS) on the police criminal statistics) and evaluating the intervention’s impact.

Channel 4—Shifting the incentives of policy makers and military leaders. Looking at trafficking from a political economy perspective is perhaps the most critical area for intervention. In order to prevent state capture and reinforce sources of opposition against trafficking, actions must be taken to help insulate political and judicial processes from organized crime (Kavanagh, 2013).

Parliamentary politics and electoral processes are two natural areas for interventions. The establishment of multi-party policy platforms on organized crime can help build the trust necessary to investigate the use of criminal money into politics. Similarly, supporting the drafting and implementation of regulation on asset disclosure can help build safeguards against capture at a central and local level. Mexico recently showed how such approaches can yield results. In 2013, after years of partisan gridlock, the major Mexican parties agreed on a common platform made up of 95 policy proposals: the Pact for Mexico. Though the platform did not target crime or trafficking in particular, it included several provisions to improve transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption and crime. Over the month following its adoption, the Pact led to a series of related reforms, such as a

¹³ See, for instance, the UNDP’s “Niger Delta Youth Empowerment” or LMA’s “Reintegrating and Employing High-Risk Youth in Liberia” programs.

¹⁴ For instance, no institution in Nigeria is currently tracking the progress and results of the amnesty program.

reduction in the regime of immunities enjoyed by public officials when faced with prosecution, or the creation of a mobile armed force capable of confronting cartels throughout the country (*Economist*, 2012; Mones, 2013).

Strengthening the criminal justice system is the other component necessary to end the culture of impunity prevalent among drug traffickers. Trafficking cases tend to be exceedingly complicated for local courts and law enforcement units, as they often involve transnational investigations, complex financial inquiries, and interference from the executive. Potential interventions to remedy this would include support for the establishment of specialized crime units with dedicated safeguards, incentives, and assets. For instance, since 2010 the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has cooperated with Ghanaian authorities to create the Ghana Vetted Unit, which is an elite force of upstanding law enforcers guided by a DEA counter narcotics advisor (US Department of State, 2013; US Department of Justice, 2012). Another complementary intervention would be to support the creation of independent legal commissions tasked with devising legal reforms to project judicial integrity. With the support of the UN Department of Political Affairs, Guatemala has pioneered this approach with the creation of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and achieved substantial results (see Box 1).

Box 1—The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)

Guatemala is recognized as a major drug transit country for cocaine and heroin en route to the U.S. (US Department of State, 2006) and has been plagued by one of the highest violent crime rates in Latin America. This criminality has long been enabled by the criminal networks and illegal security groups that run alongside the state (United Nations and State of Guatemala, 2006).

In the mid-2000s, the government decided to take resolute steps to roll back these networks and crack down on the impunity they enjoyed from their political connections. To do this, Guatemala partnered with the United Nations to create the CICIG. The CICIG was tasked with identifying illegal networks, investigating them in collaboration with national authorities, prosecuting those who partake in it, and advising the government on public policies aimed at fighting criminal corruption. Funded externally by donors and headed by a foreign commissioner named by the UN, the commission enjoyed a unique level of independence. Even more novel was the idea of combining classic capacity-building and advisory activities with investigation and prosecution powers. In effect, the CICIG performed three functions:

1. Collect and analyze information to investigate cases of corruption, abuse of power, and criminality. To do so, the CICIG was given unlimited access to any documents, reports, or testimony from public officials. In addition, it had its own team of investigators that were chosen by the commissioner. This allowed the commission to crack down on trafficking, notably by exposing illegal adoption rings or the complicity of national police officers with the drug trafficking cartel Los Zetas (International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, 2012). It also made use of its information to pressure the government to take action. In 2012, it released a report clearly identifying 18 judges who had systematically ruled in the interest of criminal networks. The report prompted Guatemala's public prosecutor to open investigations into 13 of them in 2013 (Cawley, 2013).

2. Prosecute criminals in national courts. In order to take legal actions on its own, the CICIG was given capacity to file complaints with the relevant bodies or to join the proceedings as a private prosecutor. Between 2011 and 2013, the CICIG took part in 39 cases—including some high-profile ones such as the trial of former dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt (for genocide and crimes against humanity) and former President Alfonso Portillo (for

corruption) (Bargent, 2013).

3. Provide technical advice and training. To strengthen local capacity, the CICIG cooperated closely with both the government and the Office of the Public Prosecutor (PM). For instance, it was instrumental in restructuring the PM's Directorate of Criminal Analysis into a Financial Analysis Department, which quintupled its staff between 2011 and 2013. At a government level, it supported the creation of a General Directorate of Criminal Investigation by vetting its senior management and offering operational support.

Channel 5—Causing conflicts between competing groups. The risk of political conflicts fueled by trafficking can be addressed by adopting an approach similar to the one developed for the fourth channel, but with a focus on the electoral process instead. If institutions could prevent corrupt officials from turning ill-acquired income into influence during the run up to elections, trafficking would hold less sway over local politics. Supporting the drafting of campaign legislation and the establishment and training of electoral management bodies (for example, electoral commissions, electoral courts, watchdog networks) would be a first step in that direction.

Dealing with conflict between traffickers requires a response from law enforcement and security forces rather than development actors. However, targeted support to build up local enforcement units complemented with community-based approaches could help improve citizen security. Working directly with the security sector is a daunting task, as local enforcement can be much politicized and sometimes directly involved in trafficking. But much like reestablishing service delivery in marginalized areas, it is a first step to rolling back criminal networks, and may help invigorate the rule of law and strengthen citizen security.

Conclusion

Trafficking is a growing concern in West Africa, where this paper has identified five channels through which it exacerbates institutional weaknesses and furthers fragility. The five channels can be summarized as (i) providing financing and weapons for criminals and rebel groups, (ii) rewarding and promoting skills related to violence, (iii) creating armed groups that challenge state authority, (iv) adversely influencing politicians' behavior, and (v) leading to violent competition for trafficking rents. However, a detailed review of these channels and analysis on how similar challenges have been addressed both within and outside of the region, suggests that it may be possible to limit the impact of trafficking on fragility.

This paper makes several specific recommendations of programmatic and policy responses that could be considered in the region for each channel. For example, in response to the first channel, finding ways to make trafficking more difficult and expensive may help limit its growth in the region. For channel 2, thinking carefully about attractive economic opportunities for youth, who may otherwise become involved in trafficking and its associated violence, would be useful. Similarly for channel 3 supporting stronger development outcomes in areas most exposed to trafficking networks can help out compete the trafficking underworld economy. For channels 4 and 5 finding ways to strengthen the electoral processes and criminal justice systems could help insulate the state from the ill-effects of trafficking.

Overall it would be extremely beneficial for all development partners working in the region to have a deeper understanding of the dynamics between the state and civilians with regards to trafficking, so that projects can be designed to address this source of fragility, rather than inadvertently ignoring, or at worse exacerbating it.

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Appendix

Table A1. Aggregated reported drug seizures in Ghana (2004–2011)

Good trafficked	Year	Detail
Cannabis	2004	0.8 tons
	2005	14 tons
	2006	n/a
	2007	4.2 tons
	2008	33.5 tons
	2009	n/a
Cocaine	2004	617 kilos
	2005	661 kilos
	2006	n/a
	2007	283 kilos
	2008	841 kilos
	2009	n/a
	2010	125 kilos ^a
	2011	317 kilos ^a
Heroin	2004	71 kilos
	2005	8.2 kilos
	2006	n/a
	2007	0.6 kilos
	2008	0.2 kilos
	2009	n/a
	2010	a
	2011	11 kilos

Source: UNODC drug seizures tables (IDS database), 2011.

^a Needs to be supplemented with IDS most recent data.

Table A2. Major seizures of firearms to or from Niger (2008–2011)

Date	Close border	Weapons trafficked
March 20, 2008	Algeria	Assault rifles, light machine guns, heavy machine guns, rocket launchers, mines
29 October 29, 2009	Algeria, Libya	Assault rifles
June 12, 2011	Algeria	Explosives
September, 15 2011	n/a	Assault rifles, light machine guns, rocket launchers
October, 2 2011	Algeria, Libya	Rocket launchers
November, 6 2011	Libya	Assault rifles, rocket launchers
November, 6 2011	Algeria	Assault rifles, light machine guns, heavy machine guns, rocket launchers, grenades

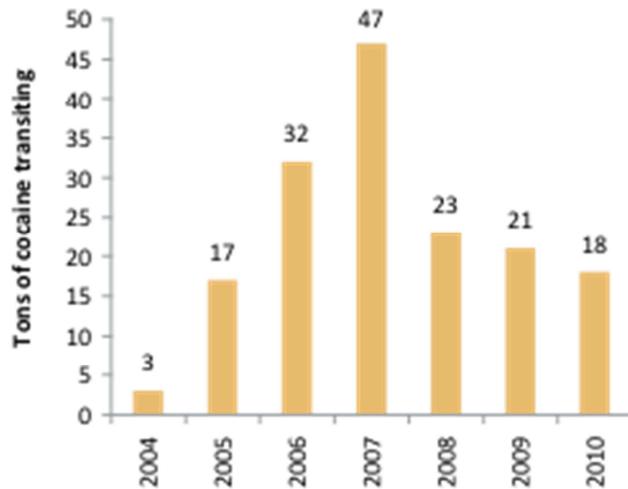
Source: UNODC, 2013a, p. 60.

Table A3. Cocaine trafficking profits and West African military budgets

Item	Year	Value (US\$ millions)	Size of military budget relative to West African cocaine mark-up
Profits from cocaine trafficking in West Africa	2009	1,176	
Gambia	2007	4.6	0%
Cape Verde	2009	9	1%
Liberia	2009	7.9	1%
Guinea-Bissau	2005	16.9	1%
Sierra Leone	2009	28.8	2%
Niger	2008	55.1	5%
Togo	2008	58.2	5%
Benin	2008	65.9	6%
Guinea	2004	103	9%
Burkina Faso	2009	112	10%
Mauritania	2009	120	10%
Ghana	2009	127	11%
Mali	2009	150	13%
Senegal	2009	218	19%
Côte d'Ivoire	2009	448	38%
Nigeria	2009	1825	155%
Regional total without Nigeria	(2005–2009)	1524.4	130%
Regional total	(2005–2009)	3349.4	285%

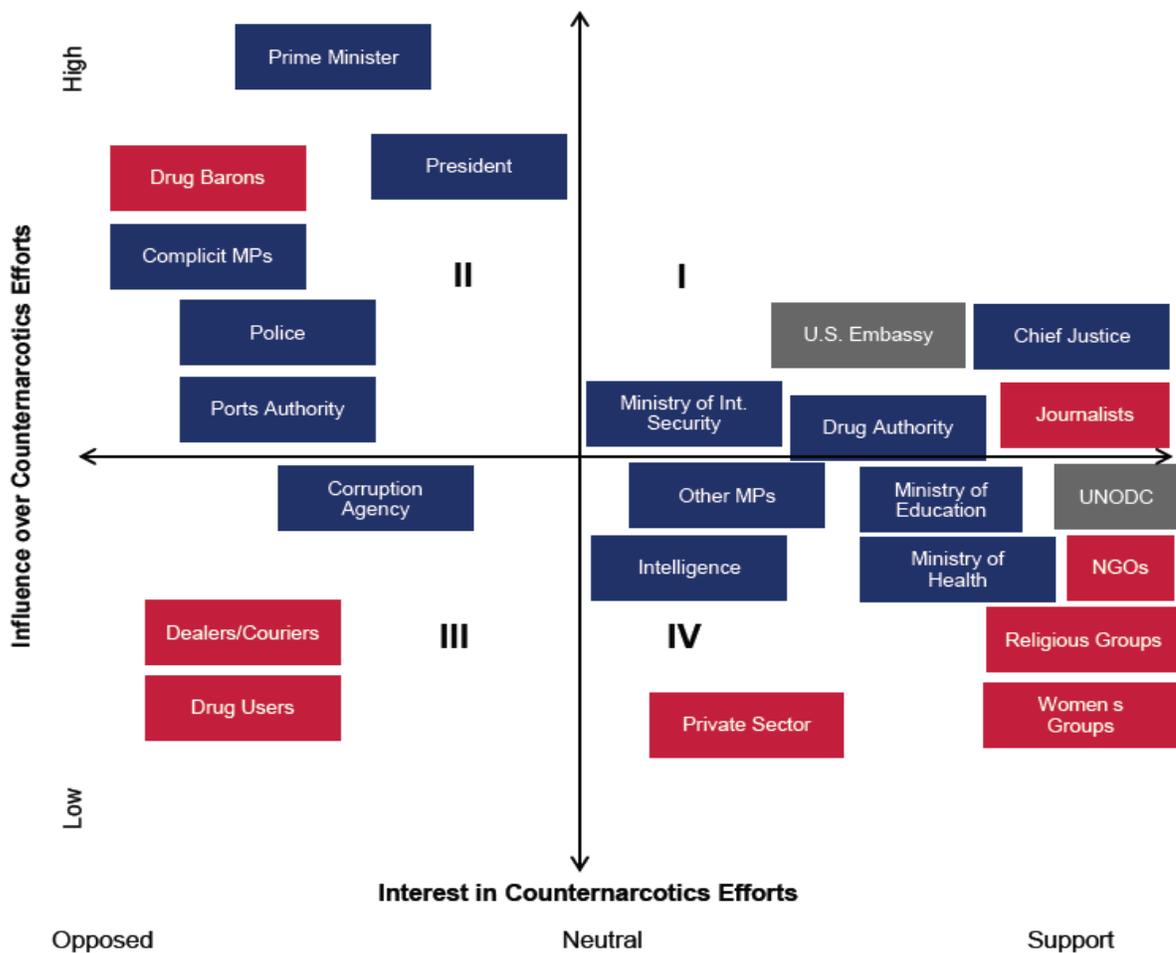
Source: UNODC (2011a), SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, World Bank.

Figure A1. UNODC estimates of cocaine transiting through West Africa on its way to Europe (tons)



Source: UNODC, 2013a.

Figure A2. USAID’s illustrative map of stakeholders’ influence and interest in counternarcotics efforts



Map 1. Trafficking flows in West Africa

