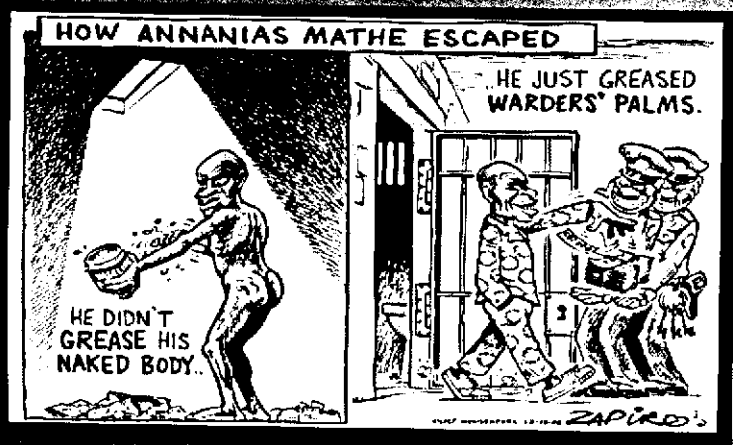


SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL

The Social Economy of Organised Crime in Mozambique

by
Jennifer Irish-Qhobosheane



The South African Institute of International Affairs

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See No Evil, Hear No Evil The Social Economy of Organised Crime in Mozambique

Jennifer Irish-Qhobosheane¹

Introduction

Rationale

The rapid growth of organised crime in Southern Africa over the last decade has become a serious concern for both governments and citizens living in the countries of the region. Organised criminal networks have been responsible for an increase in violent and other harmful forms of crime, such as trafficking in commodities and humans. In developing countries, these activities exact a high cost in terms of health and security; they also undermine investor confidence and hinder development. This impact on governance is amplified by corrupt collaboration between organised criminals and private or public officials, and has the potential to sabotage and derail the attempts of governments to fulfil their responsibilities, e.g. to address poverty and inequality in the region. High levels of organised crime can also lead to a loss of public confidence in the authorities, the creation of competing centres of political power and general public unruliness.

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Members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have signed various protocols combating corruption, drug trafficking and the illicit trade in firearms, and many have adopted international protocols dealing with different aspects of organised crime. However, despite successful prosecutions in a limited number of countries, organised crime continues to flourish. Generally, the trend has been few arrests and no prosecutions, and organised criminal networks appear to be operating with high levels of impunity. This situation is not necessarily unique to Southern Africa. Indeed, internationally there is a growing recognition that the flexibility and adaptability of crime networks pose severe challenges to law enforcement agencies.

It should be emphasised that the development of organised crime networks cannot be understood in a vacuum. There are a number of factors, both historical and current, that influence the social economy of different groups. These determine not only the composition of the criminal syndicates, but also their *modus operandi*, their perceptions of themselves, their financial operations and their relationships.

Little research has been done at a micro level on the causes of organised crime in the African context. In addressing this issue, it is important to look at both the causes of organised crime and the factors that contribute to its entrenchment and endurance, and to understand the relationships among organised crime groups, the state and society in general.

In this latter context it is necessary to examine the broader dimensions of the social economy of organised crime, to consider how it manifests itself in community life and co-exists in certain respects with the legitimate economy. This could provide useful insights into the types of economic, political and social interventions that ought to be made to curb the growth and activities of organised crime groups.

This monograph, which explores the context within which criminal enterprises operate in Mozambique, is part of a broader

research programme into the social economy of organised crime within the SADC region. Based on its survey of communities, it specifically advances the argument of developing alternative approaches towards combating organised crime and corruption, which could complement those traditional approaches already employed by Mozambican law enforcement agencies.

Research methodology and challenges

Methodologically, conducting research in a country such as Mozambique posed unique and considerable challenges. Unlike the South African case, the research team found very little statistical data on the nature and extent of organised crime. The only areas in which academic research had been carried out in a systematic fashion in Mozambique were in the incidences of bank fraud and the illicit trafficking in weapons. In fact, the violence associated with the activities of organised crime groups in the country and the assassinations of both public and private officials involved in investigations into this phenomenon have contributed to the hesitancy by local Mozambican academics and researchers to engage with the topic. The absence of a clear and generally accepted definition of organised crime in Mozambique and the lack of a common understanding of the nature and distribution of organised crime further added to the difficulty of examining this issue in the country.

The research process included collating the limited secondary material that was available; supplementing it with interviews with the police, business people, researchers and academics; and conducting focus group discussions with a range of community members and structures. However, the findings paint only a partial picture of the social economy of organised crime in Mozambique because of the difficulties of obtaining empirical evidence that could verify the research results.

This monograph is divided into four sections. Section one looks at the nature of organised crime in Mozambique by identifying the different types of organised crime groups operating there. This section also attempts to detail some of their activities.

Section two focuses on community attitudes towards organised crime and the influence exercised by organised crime groups on different sections of the community. This section highlights the complex and often contradictory relations that exist between communities and organised crime actors.

Section three analyses organised crime in Mozambique. It questions the attempt to fit organised crime into specific models and categories, which narrows the approach to what constitutes organised crime.

Section four focuses on the conclusions drawn from the research process. It points to similarities between the social economy of crime in Mozambique and that of its neighbour, South Africa, the lessons that can be applied to South Africa, and, finally, the possible areas that should be addressed in taking forward a study on the social economy of organised crime in Mozambique.

Overview of Organised Crime in Mozambique

Mozambique emerged in 1991 from a harrowing civil war that had lasted 16 years and caused widespread devastation in this already impoverished country. Despite experiencing dramatic economic growth since the end of the conflict, it remains one of the world's least developed countries (LDCs).

Mozambique's historical legacy had sapped the government's resources, with a particularly adverse effect on its ability to deliver domestic security and crime prevention capabilities. This was exacerbated by the redirection of government funds away from the Mozambican police towards the military, a practice common to most war situations.

In the post-war period, the Mozambican police found itself faced with a mammoth task and very limited capacity. The corps had the challenging task of re-establishing themselves in those parts of the country which they had been unable to previously police. To a large extent the historical colonial approach towards policing, with its emphasis on exerting political control rather than on crime prevention, has continued into the present. This inability to deal effectively with crime has been exacerbated by competing priorities of state restructuring and rebuilding with all its attendant functions.

It is no wonder, then, that Mozambique's small police force of approximately 20 000 members has limited capacity to fulfil its task of effectively policing eleven provinces populated by approximately 19.5 million people.

Given this background, Mozambican policymakers are faced with two key challenges:

- The first is the serious threat that organised crime poses to economic stability and democratic governance in a country with such severe resource and capacity constraints.

- The second is the realisation that the police cannot stem the rising tide of organised crime on their own.

The United Nations Southern African Drug Enforcement Office report on organised crime in Southern Africa, published in August 2003, singles out Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa as countries where there has been a marked increase in organised crime activities.²

Since the late 1990s, Mozambique has been considered one of the world's fastest growing economies. However, it is not only legitimate business that has made use of the opportunities its recovering economy provides. Since the mid-1990s there has been increasing evidence of organised criminal elements taking advantage of the transition that has occurred in Mozambique since 1992.

Mozambican policymakers have taken note of this phenomenon. This has led to the deployment of a special presidential police unit since July 2006 to all the country's airports to combat organised crime and terrorism activities. At the Frelimo³ Congress in 2006, crime and corruption featured prominently on the agenda as one of the nine discussion themes. In a recent ordinary session of the National Assembly, the minister of the interior formally recognised the rise in organised criminal activities when he announced that the development of Mozambique's first strategic crime prevention plan is underway and that it would be implemented before the end of 2007.

Public awareness of crime has also increased, and during a survey into small arms in Mozambique conducted during 2006, the majority of respondents expressed feelings of insecurity due to the availability of weapons and the high crime levels. This fear has been

² BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), 'Drug crime wracks Southern Africa', *BBC News*, 20 August 2003.

³ *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* or Mozambique Liberation Front, better known as Frelimo, the current ruling party in Mozambique.

fuelled by various assassination attempts on the lives of a number of prominent Mozambicans in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including the murders of Carlos Cardoso and Siba-Siba Macuacua (both of whom were involved in investigating bank fraud), and by an increase in violent forms of crime such as hijackings and armed robberies.

This section provides a brief overview of organised crime in Mozambique. It is intended to form a backdrop to the sections that follow, and addresses some of the social and economic factors that influence organised crime in that country. It also identifies some of the more visible forms of organised crime that exist in Mozambique and provides information on the extent of these criminal activities.

Understanding organised crime in Mozambique

Most Southern African states recognise organised crime as a problem and would acknowledge that during the last two decades their countries have experienced a growth in organised criminal activities. Gastrow, however, points to the predicament of no common definition of organised crime in the region. He refers to a survey conducted of SADC police agencies in 2000 where five of the nine participating agencies had not adopted a definition of organised crime, while the remaining four used definitions that differed from one another. Gastrow suggests that they often rely on a 'gut feel' or popular understanding when dealing with organised crime.⁴

There has been significant academic debate and discussion on defining organised crime. The research conducted into the social economy of organised crime in Mozambique for this monograph forms part of a broader research process that included South Africa.

⁴ Gastrow P (ed.), *Penetrating State and Business: Organised Crime in Southern Africa*, vol. 1. ISS Monograph Series No. 86. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, September 2003.

Whereas the South African study raised a series of questions about our understanding of organised crime, it also used a number of criteria to identify what constitutes organised crime.⁵ Therefore, for the purpose of consistency, the same criteria were used during the Mozambique research for this monograph. The criteria include the following:

- Three or more people are involved in the criminal activity.
- They commit serious criminal offences.
- They are involved in repeatedly committing these offences for a prolonged period.
- The motive for the crime is the pursuit of profit or power.
- The criminal group is structured like a business.
- There is a division of labour within the group.
- The leaders have disciplinary control over the other members of the group.
- The group uses violence, blackmail, extortion or intimidation and corruption in the course of its activity.
- The group launders money earned by criminal deeds.
- The group flouts national and international boundaries in pursuit of its criminal activities.

The first four of the above are considered necessary conditions for the categorisation of crimes as the work of organised groups, together with at least two of the remaining six criteria.⁶

However, even this definition is not sufficient to accurately determine the true extent of organised crime activities in Mozambique. An accurate assessment also requires the successful investigation and prosecution of criminal networks and detailed

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Wannenburg G, 'Overview of organised crime in South Africa', in SAIIA, *Gentlemen or Villains, Thugs or Heroes? The Social Economy of Organised Crime in South Africa*. Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2007.

analysis of cases at all levels in the Mozambican Police (*Policia de Republic de Mocambique, PRM*). Because of the general lack of information in this latter regard, the research team had to rely heavily on crime reporting in the media. But even this poses some problems, not only in Mozambique.

Internationally, certain forms of crime are under-reported, such as trade in illicit narcotics, largely because they are considered victimless crimes. However, the significant level of under-reporting in Mozambique is further complicated by fear among the community that reporting these crimes could endanger their lives. Nevertheless, the section below attempts to provide a broad overview of various manifestations of organised crime in Mozambique.

Drug trafficking

Prior to the 1990s, there was little evidence of Mozambicans being linked to significant drug trafficking cartels. The emergence of drug trafficking as a serious problem in the country in the 1990s correlates with large transnational drug trafficking networks exploring new international drug routes and markets. By 2003 the problem had grown to such an extent that the UN had listed Mozambique as the second largest drug trafficking hub in Southern Africa, after South Africa.⁷

Gastrow identifies Mozambique as offering a relatively low-risk transit area for networks involved in illicit drug trafficking.⁸ Mozambique is too poor to be a major market for the consumption of illicit drugs, but, as in most transit countries, the trafficking of illicit drugs has led to increased local consumption. In April 2001 the

⁷ UN, *op. cit.*

⁸ Gastrow P and M Mosse, 'Chapter Three: Mozambique', vol. 1. *Penetrating State and Business: Organised Crime in Southern Africa*, vol. 1. ISS Monograph Series No. 86. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, September 2003.

minister of the interior, speaking before the National Assembly, referred to areas known as 'little Colombias', where drugs are sold openly.⁹ The minister's concerns were echoed during interviews conducted by SAIIA during 2003. During these interviews with executive members of the *Organizacao de Juventude Mocambicaia (OJM)* (Mozambican Youth Organisation) it was stated that substance abuse, particularly the abuse of illicit drugs, was a growing problem among the youth living in major urban centres.¹⁰

Interviews conducted by a South African journalist during the same period with smaller drug dealers in Maputo reported that there is a group known as the 'Big Five' who supply most of the drugs to smaller dealers in Maputo.¹¹

Trade in mandrax

South Africa is the biggest market for mandrax in the region although it manufactures only about 50% of its total consumption. Most of the mandrax or methaqualone that passes through Mozambique is destined for the South African market.

In 1993, in one of the first major mandrax hauls linked to Mozambique, 14 000 kg of methaqualone were seized by the Indian police off a freight ship destined for Mozambique. Subsequently, there have been a number of other drug busts involving seizure of mandrax or methaqualone within Mozambique, including the seizure of 300 kg of methaqualone from a suspected mandrax factory in Maputo in February 2000 and in 2003 the seizure during a joint raid of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the PRM of another 300 kg of methaqualone at the Plaxmex factory in Maputo. In the latter raid, five people, two of whom were foreigners, were arrested.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Interview held with executive members of OJM, Maputo, 12 August 2003.

¹¹ SABCTV3, "Heroin Mainline", *Special Assignment* series, 23 September 2003.

The networks suspected of being involved in the mandrax trade include people of Asian origin, who are said to work closely with local Mozambicans.

Trade in cocaine

It was estimated that during 2001 more than one tonne of heroin and cocaine passed through Mozambique, and that the annual retail value of the cocaine alone was in the region of \$50 million.¹²

While most of this cocaine is destined for the European and Asian markets, some of it is also destined for the expanding market in South Africa. This cocaine is sourced largely from Colombia and then shipped via Brazil directly to Mozambique, or via another African country to Mozambique for shipment onwards. A small portion of this cocaine also ends up on the local market, where, according to one lawyer interviewed for the study, this is sold at known 'rock houses situated in various parts of Maputo'.

Research conducted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) into the networks involved in trafficking cocaine through Mozambique highlighted the involvement of people from Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Spain and Portugal, and local Mozambicans.¹³ However, the ISS research also cites the involvement of Nigerians and points to a wealthy Nigerian based in New York who is alleged to be a key role player.¹⁴ The United Nations Drug Enforcement Office supports the assertions made by the ISS and states that Nigerians are increasingly involved in cocaine trafficking in Mozambique.¹⁵

During interviews with Mozambicans in Maputo, a number of people stated that Mozambican residents, particularly women, are

¹² Hanlon J, 'Bank corruption becomes a site of struggle in Mozambique', *Review of African Political Economy*, 9153-72, 2002.

¹³ Gastrow P & M Mosse, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ UN Southern African Drug Office, *Trafficking and Transit*, Pretoria 2001.

used by Nigerians as drug mules (couriers who carry the cocaine on their persons) to transport cocaine into Mozambique.

Trade in heroin

The United Nations Southern African Drug Enforcement report on organised crime notes an increase in the abuse of heroin in Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia.¹⁶ While some of the heroin brought into Mozambique is destined for local markets or other markets in Southern Africa, particularly South Africa, Mozambique is also a trans-shipment area for heroin destined for the European and American markets. In 1995, 12 kg of heroin was seized at Lisbon airport on a flight from Mozambique.

According to the ISS, much of this heroin is shipped from Pakistan to Dubai before being transported to Mozambique via Tanzania.¹⁷ The use of Tanzania as a link in the heroin smuggling route was highlighted during interviews conducted by a South African journalist working in Mozambique when it was revealed that some of the heroin is brought into Dar es Salaam by mules. The mules swallow small packages of heroin known as ovos (eggs), which contain about 10 g of heroin. One small drug dealer told the journalist that an experienced mule can swallow about 60 ovos at a time.¹⁸

The ISS research found that indigenous Mozambicans together with people of Pakistani origin dominate most of the networks involved in heroin trafficking in Mozambique.¹⁹ However, according to the United Nations Southern African Drug Office, Nigerians are also involved.²⁰ In addition, there are indications that

¹⁶ BBC, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Gastrow P and M Mosse, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ SABCTV3, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Gastrow P and M Mosse, *op. cit.*

²⁰ UN Southern African Drug Office, *op. cit.*

Tanzanian citizens and an increasing number of Senegalese residing in Mozambique are also involved in both heroin and hashish trafficking.

Trade in hashish

In 1995, 40 tonnes of hashish were seized in northern Mozambique. The hashish had been offloaded from a ship with an Asian flag at a beach in the Mocoma district of Cabo Delgado Province.²¹ In 1997 the province of Cabo Delgado was again the site of a major hashish seizure, when 12 000 kg of hashish were confiscated and 19 people were arrested for illicit drug trafficking.

As with the mandrax and heroin trade, the trade in hashish is dominated largely by indigenous Mozambicans and people of Pakistani origin, and most of the goods enter Mozambique along its unpoliced northern coastline. According to the ISS the networks involving in this trade are highly sophisticated consisting of importers, exporters, transporters and field operators who supply the criminal networks with information.²²

While some of the consignments of illicit drugs are shipped into the ports, others are often hidden among licit goods such as televisions and refrigerators. Furthermore, not all of these drugs actually reach the ports themselves, and there are reports of drugs being offloaded in shallow waters. In such cases, small fishing boats and ferries are used to transport the drugs to land. In Pembe, according to the UN Southern African Drug Office, small islands in the area are used as warehouses and repackaging points, and local fishermen have witnessed drug shipments at Seahaven and helicopter flights between the small islands.²³ The ISS study states

²¹ Gastrow P and M Mosse, *op. cit.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ UN Southern African Drug Office, *op. cit.*

that some of the hashish arriving in Mozambique is re-exported in tea or cashew nut consignments.²⁴

The true extent of the illicit drug trade in Mozambique is difficult to quantify because of the absence of statistical data and a failure to report this type of crime. In addition there are wide-scale allegations that key individuals involved in this trade are able to operate with impunity. This is substantiated by the research conducted by the ISS. 'Most of the networks have a good knowledge of local and international trading practices and are well connected to the authorities. International traffickers also bribe immigration officials to receive residential permits known as DIREs.'²⁵

However, the Mozambican government has taken the increase in drug trafficking and increasing levels of drug abuse seriously. In 1997, the National Assembly passed new anti-narcotic legislation and established an Office for the Prevention and Combating of Drug Offences in the same year. This office began its work in 1998 when an inter-ministerial body, reporting directly to the prime minister, was established. The inter-ministerial office includes representatives from the following ministries:

- the interior;
- education;
- women and welfare;
- justice;
- planning and finance;
- health;
- transport and communication; and
- industry and trade.

The Customs Department also became part of this body and was given the task of drafting a national plan to combat drugs. In 2000

²⁴ Gastrow P & M Mosse, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Gastrow P and M Mosse, *op. cit.*

the *Policia de Republic de Mocambique* (PRM) also established a number of dedicated anti-drug units at the provincial level.

Although a number of Mozambican drug networks are controlled by foreigners, more recently, local Mozambicans have risen to positions of prominence. These cartels are highly organised and do not shrink from using violence to protect their interests. In 1997, while the deputy attorney-general was investigating a network involved in mandrax trafficking, he was shot three times outside his house in what appears to have been an assassination attempt.

Money laundering

The laundering of proceeds acquired through criminal activities is a typical component of organised crime networks internationally, and Mozambican organised crime networks are no exception. Money laundering in Mozambique takes a variety of forms, including using the proceeds of crime to purchase luxury items and investing these proceeds in legitimate businesses. The research conducted by the ISS in 2003 pointed to the tourism industry, casinos and the construction industry as being some of the most popular means of laundering money.²⁶

The tourism industry provides a perfect cover for money laundering, because criminals can claim to have more clients than they actually have, thereby accounting for large amounts held in cash. Internationally, casinos provide an ideal means for people to launder money. Mozambique's fast-growing economy and resultant considerable construction activity to rebuild the country after more than two decades of civil war, provide a convenient cover to launder the proceeds of crime. Exchange houses and banks are another preferred option to transfer illicitly gained funds abroad, according to the ISS.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

In November 2001, the Mozambique National Assembly unanimously passed the first reading of a Government Bill on Money Laundering which was enacted into legislation in 2004. The passing of this legislation, together with a strengthening of the banking system and a growing international concern with money laundering in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks in the US, have induced many organised crime networks to seek alternative means to launder money. According to interviews conducted by SAIIA with Crown Agency officials based in Mozambique in 2002, there has been a dramatic increase in money being physically taken in and out of the country by couriers. Some of the known incidents cited by Gail Wannenburg, include the following:

- On 29 April 2002 a Chinese national was arrested attempting to travel from Mozambique to South Africa with \$21,500 strapped to his thigh.
- On 26 March 2003 a Mozambican of Pakistani origin – who was linked to an exchange bureau in Maputo – was detained attempting to smuggle \$1 million on his person out of the country to the Arab Emirates.

Wannenburg also cites the falsification of import documents as a popular way of laundering money. For example, import companies would present the necessary import documents for \$2 million. While the money is legitimately authorised for transfer, the bank official does not stamp the original import document, thereby enabling the ‘importer’ to approach a second and even third bank to repeat the process.²⁷

White-collar crime

In November 2000 a prominent journalist¹ from Maputo, Carlos Cardosa, was assassinated in the streets of Maputo. Less than a year

²⁷ Wannenburg G, *op. cit.*

later the Central Bank of Mozambique (BCM)-appointed chair of *Banco Austral*, Antonio Siba-Siba Macuacua, met his untimely death when he was thrown down a stairwell in the bank. The two men had one thing in common: they had both been involved in bank fraud investigations in Mozambique.

Much of this bank fraud could be attributed to the weak banking system in place at the time of the transition in Mozambique from a centralised to a more market-driven economy, as well as the push to privatise the country's banking system. Between 1992 and 2002 more than \$400 million was siphoned off from just two banks operating in Mozambique. Hanlon states that during this period there were four broad types of bank fraud occurring in Mozambique:

- loans issued by the banks and never repaid;
- theft of money;
- money laundering; and
- illegal foreign exchange deals.²⁸

Hanlon describes some of the methods used to defraud banks in Mozambique as follows:

- Paper files made fraud easy; loans were guaranteed where after the original documents just disappeared.
- Fake bank accounts were created, and then all records of the account were deleted.
- Inactive bank accounts were drained.
- Money was withdrawn from government and project accounts that were not effectively monitored.
- Transfers were authorised from bank accounts with no balance and overdrafts were approved.²⁹

²⁸ Hanlon J, *op. cit.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Harlon also points to some of the documented cases of fraud that have taken place:

- In 1993 fraud involving \$1 million took place when Pedro Pinto and Julio Tandare were allowed to cash cheques without the necessary funds to cover these cheques.
- In 1995 \$13 million was stolen from the BCM by Abdul Satar Carimo. This theft involved cheques being issued without the knowledge of the account holder and deposited into Satar's account. The branch manager of the bank allowed Satar to draw money before the cheques were cleared and then destroyed the cheques. During this theft, at least \$7 million was taken out of the bank by Satar and deposited into a UK account.
- In 1997 Jorge Carreia Rijo, the managing director of private banking for BIM's parent company in Portugal, BCP, was dismissed and later charged with fraud after it was discovered that he had diverted millions of dollars out of Angolan and Mozambican accounts. A large trading company in Mozambique is reported to have lost \$5 million as a result.
- In 2000, a \$4 million fraud was committed at one of the branches of the *Banco Austral*.³⁰

Armed robberies

In April 2003, the Attorney-General highlighted in his address to the National Assembly that 179 cases of armed robbery had occurred in Mozambique in that year. In only 46% of these cases were the authorities able to identify the gunmen involved in these crimes.³¹

Armed robberies continue to pose a serious problem for both businesses and the authorities. In 2005 more than seven exchange houses were victims of armed attacks, and since the beginning of

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

2007, two more banks in Maputo have been attacked. Armed robbers appear to be targeting those businesses that deal in considerable amounts of money, and sometimes customers are attacked after withdrawing significant volumes of cash from exchange houses. Cellular phone shops and other stores have also been targeted.

The average age of armed robbers is between 20 and 30 years according to those interviewed in Mozambique. Despite the installation of closed-circuit television systems in many banks and exchange houses, the robbers seldom make an attempt to cover or disguise their faces. However, this cavalier approach should not be confused with a lack of sophistication. Robbers appear to have noteworthy information about the businesses they target. Even in cases where the businesses are frequented by a significant number of people at the time of the robbery, the perpetrators appear to know exactly whom to target, and the first person who is neutralised is usually the security guard on duty. The robbers also make extensive use of cellular phones in the lead-up to, and during, the crimes.

During the first of two bank robberies in 2007, the robbers targeted the bank a few minutes after the delivery of substantial supplies of cash. This would indicate that the robbers had obtained information either from sources inside the bank or from surveillance of bank activities. In the second robbery, the five suspects spent approximately 30 minutes in the bank before leaving with approximately \$150,000.

The robbers are well armed and the use of AK47s and pistols has been reported during these crimes. They also appear to have access to new supplies of weapons. For example, during a police raid on the home of a suspected armed robber in January 2007, police allegedly discovered a bag containing five brand new AK47s and four pistols.

The size of the groups involved in the robberies appears to vary from three to ten people, and during the robberies, most groups make use of getaway drivers. While these groups comprise mostly

men, during the second bank robbery in 2007, one woman was involved.

As is the case with criminals involved in money laundering, the investigators of armed robberies are sometimes targeted. In 2006 the commander of the Mamba Brigade (a special police unit established to address violent crime) was gunned down while frequenting a pub in Maputo. The killing was alleged to have been committed by members of a criminal group linked to a notorious armed robber.

While a formal link between armed robbers in Mozambique and their counterparts in South Africa has yet to be accurately established, there seems to be at least some preliminary evidence of ties between Mozambican and South African based criminals. In a raid on the home of a known armed robber in 2007, police seized two cellular phones belonging to the suspect. Shortly after the raid one of these cellular phone received several calls from a number originating in South Africa. This would suggest that the suspect had some links with people operating in South Africa.

Like their South African counterparts, those involved in armed robberies appear to spend a large amount of their criminal proceeds on luxury items. In late 2006, during a raid on a house allegedly rented by a well-known armed robber in the wealthy Maputo suburb of Bela O Resand, police not only found a new Mercedes Benz on the premises, but also large plasma televisions in almost every room of the house. This case also pointed to the extensive use of rented property, which is paid for in advance in cash. Armed robbers seem to seldom stay for any length of time at one particular location, although the police found that in this particular instance the suspect had paid three years' rent in advance.

In addition to armed robberies at businesses, a more recent phenomenon in Mozambique is armed robberies at key residential premises or 'house robberies'. The *modus operandi* of groups involved in these types of robberies is not dissimilar to that used by many of the groups involved in house robberies in South Africa. These armed robbers often operate in small groups of between three

and five people and normally target the homes for high-value goods and money. According to one Maputo resident interviewed, this form of armed robbery is causing considerable fear among the more wealthy residents of Maputo.³²

Illicit vehicle markets

Trade in illicit vehicles was identified as a highly lucrative form of crime in Mozambique during the SAIIA research. It involves not only the trafficking of vehicles illicitly acquired in South Africa into Mozambique for sale on the local market or export to a third country, but also theft and hijacking of vehicles in Mozambique. Maputo appears to be worst affected.³³ A considerable number of the vehicles hijacked or stolen in Maputo are moved to the north of Mozambique and sold there because of a marginal risk of detection as a result of low policing levels.

In April 2002 the then Attorney-General, Antonio Namburete, presented a report to the National Assembly in which he stated that during 1997 a total of 230 vehicles stolen in South Africa were seized in Mozambique in a joint SAPS-PRM operation.³⁴ This seems to indicate significant levels of cross-border movements of illicit vehicles stolen or hijacked in South Africa into Mozambique. The reverse is also true. During interviews conducted by SAIIA during 2002, the Deputy Attorney-General revealed that in a number of cases, vehicles stolen in Maputo have been taken to 'chop shops' in South Africa.³⁵

³² Interview with Maputo businessman, Johannesburg, July 2007.

³³ According to people interviewed during the research, the hijackers are often heavily armed young men. A significant number of these hijackings occur after dark or in the early hours of the morning. Some of the gangs involved in hijackings in Maputo specialise in particular brands of cars. One gang identified during this study is known as 'the Chinese Eye'.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Wannenburg G, *op. cit.*

The networks involved in moving these vehicles across borders have access to officials both in customs and in the Mozambican car licensing departments. They provide legitimate papers for the resale of the vehicles, which are sold to unsuspecting buyers. Many of these vehicles transit through Mozambique to be sold in neighbouring countries to the north. The Mozambique Deputy Attorney-General indicated that there were instances where cars stolen in Maputo or South Africa are being shipped into Tanzania, and some vehicles are even being shipped abroad.³⁶

The cross-border networks involved in the movement of stolen vehicles are relatively sophisticated, involving receivers of stolen vehicles on the South African side, jockeys who facilitate the transportation of vehicles into Mozambique, and receivers on the Mozambique side who are able to organise Mozambican papers for the cars and buyers for the vehicles. Members of the police from both Mozambique and South Africa seem to be involved in these networks and ensure safe passage for the stolen vehicles.

These networks are also linked to many of the drug syndicates operating in Mozambique. Some networks involved in taking stolen cars into Mozambique are paid in drugs, which are taken back into South Africa for sale on the domestic market.

Human trafficking

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the global trade in people trafficking is worth approximately \$7 billion per year and is one of the most profitable forms of organised crime.

In 2003 the IOM released a report on trafficking in women and children in Southern Africa, identifying South Africa as a major

³⁶ *Ibid.*

receiving country.³⁷ The report identifies the Maputo corridor in particular as a major trafficking route.³⁸ The victims are transported from Maputo through the Ponto do Ouro border on to Durban and Pietermaritzburg or from Maputo through the Rassino Garcia border to Gauteng. Transit houses are found at the Rassino Garcia border as well as in the South African townships of Soweto and Lenasia, where the women and children are kept until they are sold to brothels or mineworkers. They are transported by taxi and minibuses that are owned or hired by the traffickers from Mozambique. The taxis leave Maputo two or three times a week.

The IOM points out that a critical problem in addressing this issue in Southern Africa is the fact that law enforcement agencies do not distinguish between human smuggling and trafficking in humans.

Ms Bonventura from the NGO *Terres des Hommes* claims that approximately 1,000 Mozambican children are victims of human trafficking every year³⁹ The Mozambican NGO Child Network also claims that there is evidence of child trafficking in Mahubo, a district of Boane, as well as in the south of Maputo Province.⁴⁰ This claim was questioned by some Mozambican police officers during an interview conducted in 2004 by SAIIA as part of their research into war and organised crime. One senior police official told SAIIA researchers that they had heard the rumours about human trafficking and had attempted to follow up on this issue, but with

³⁷ Martens J, M Pieczjowski and B van Vuuren-Smyth, *Seduction, Sale and Slavery: Trafficking in Women and Children for Sexual Exploitation in Southern Africa*. Published by the IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa, May 2003.

³⁸ The IOM report identifies a market in Nampula where you can buy girls as young as 13 years of age.

³⁹ *Noticias*, 'Child trafficking', 5 August 2003.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

little success. This police official felt that the claims about human trafficking had been inflated⁴¹.

Community members' fear of and belief in the existence of this form of organised crime in Mozambique is highlighted by Wannenburg in her book. Wannenburg also points to the killing, by members of the community in Maputo, of at least 20 people suspected of being involved in child trafficking.⁴²

The IOM report on human trafficking highlights the organised nature of groups involved in human trafficking. These groups appear to engage a wide network of people within Mozambique as well as internationally.

Killers for hire

A key characteristic of many, if not all, organised crime groups is their use of violence and intimidation. In some cases the members of the group will themselves be involved in actual acts of violence and in others this violence and intimidation is contracted out to hitmen or assassins.

Research conducted by the ISS in 2002 refers to the existence of at least two groups who operate as killers for hire. The first group allegedly hires out their services to organised crime networks and/or individuals. This group comprises eight Mozambican citizens. The group members all have shaven heads and use the premises of a well-known café in Maputo as their main meeting point. These contract killers ensure that their activities are interpreted as either armed robberies or hijackings. They are led by

⁴¹ Interview with Maputo PRM official conducted by SAIIA senior researcher, Maputo, May 2004.

⁴² G Wannenburg, *Africa's Pablos and Political Entrepreneurs, War the State and Criminal Networks in West and Southern Africa*, The South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 2006.

a man known as Mr X. This group also extorts protection money from informal traders in Maputo.

The second group works closely with the drug networks and ensures that those individuals who threaten these networks are silenced. The second group comprises six men of Pakistani origin.

The ISS research also indicates that both these groups could also be involved in other forms of violent crime, such as armed robberies and hijackings.⁴³

Conclusion

As can be gleaned from the above, there has been a dramatic explosion of organised crime activities in Mozambique after the end of the civil war – as has been the experience in a number of other post-conflict societies. The Mozambican authorities have been caught off guard by the sophistication of the networks, many of which are transnational in nature, with access to considerable resources and contacts both within and outside the country.

To a large extent the general population only really began to express public concern about organised crime following the high-profile assassinations of Carlos Cardoso and Antonio Siba-Siba Macuacua linked to the banking fraud incidents mentioned earlier. However, the emergence of more visible forms of organised crime, such as armed robberies and hijackings, as well as human trafficking, which have a much more direct impact on communities, have resulted in greater public concern and awareness of organised crime.

Nevertheless, many forms of organised crime still remain in the shadows, and research into these forms of crime are considered not only very dangerous, but are also extremely difficult to conduct in a rigorous and scientific fashion. The focus of this monograph, unlike

⁴³ Gastrow P and M Mosse, *op. cit.*

the similar study conducted in South Africa, is less on understanding how these organised criminal groups operate and more on identifying community attitudes and views towards organised crime activities. However, it should be noted while the focus on community attitudes is an important aspect of understanding the social economy of organised crime, it provides only one side of the picture. There is clearly a need for further investigation of the criminal networks to gain a fuller understanding of the social economy of organised crime in Mozambique.

Community Attitudes towards Organised Crime

Crime levels in Mozambique, although significantly lower than those in countries like South Africa, have nevertheless become a serious issue for many Mozambicans, particularly for those residing in urban areas where the crime levels are highest. However, this does not necessarily mean that communities are automatically opposed to all forms of crime. Community perceptions on the issue are not homogeneous. Responses can be and often are determined by where individuals stay and by their status and standing in the community. Perceptions are also influenced by the extent to which crime has an adverse impact on their lives and livelihoods. So, for example, occurrences of bank fraud and drug trafficking often elicited very different community responses from the incidence of human trafficking. The latter was perceived to be wholly unacceptable, and groups known to be involved in this form of crime are generally not tolerated in communities.

This section describes community attitudes towards organised crime and the influence exercised by these crime groups on different sections of the community. This section also highlights the complex and often contradictory relations that exist between communities and organised crime actors.

Community perceptions and attitudes

Many of the people interviewed from more disadvantaged areas believed organised criminals were highly sophisticated and extremely dangerous. The term '*goias*' is used by some community members to refer to such criminals. Loosely translated, this word means 'wild cats', i.e. something that is dangerous and to be feared. However, their acknowledging the danger that these criminals pose

does not necessarily imply that the criminals are opposed, isolated or abhorred by community members.

Us versus other

A significant number of community members expressed a complete dislike of the criminals who target and victimise people living in their local community. However, the same was not necessarily true for people engaged in organised crime where the acts are committed outside the immediate geographical area. Thus, whereas some believe that organised criminals are extremely dangerous and should not be opposed, this is not the only explanation for what appears to be at least tacit acceptance of organised criminals in their midst.

Many of the community responses reflect their acceptance of organised criminals because the community did not experience the direct impact of their activities. As one old man put it:

Of course I know the difference between an organised criminal and local criminal. I don't really mind about the organised criminal even if he stays in my area. He does crime but it doesn't affect me or my neighbours: we are not his victims.⁴⁴

His views were echoed by other community members, young and old alike.

In Mozambique there are examples of people taking the law into their own hands when dealing with 'local criminals'. There are even instances of these types of criminals being burned alive by angry community members. However, people interviewed during the study appear to tolerate organised criminals and often turn a blind eye to their criminal activities.

⁴⁴ Comment made during focus group with senior male residents in Maputo, October 2006.

Clearly, a response to organised criminals at this level is in part determined by the extent to which people feel they are directly affected or potential victims of these crimes. One old woman stated: 'Yes there is a guy who hijacks cars, but many people in my area don't have cars, so people don't really worry about what he is doing.'⁴⁵

These views are not unique to communities in Mozambique, and a similar study conducted in South Africa yielded similar responses, particularly from people living in more disadvantaged areas.⁴⁶

In a number of countries in the region, xenophobia, racism and cultural differences have a direct influence on how community members perceive particular organised criminals. The South African study highlighted how community members were much more tolerant towards South Africans involved in organised crime than towards non-South Africans. These views are shaped significantly by the wave of xenophobia sweeping the country.⁴⁷

In Mozambique, the research found that community perceptions were less influenced by the personal, cultural, ethnic or foreign allegiances of organised crime members – although not completely absent, it was certainly not as widespread as in South Africa. In most instances it did not evoke the same measure of negative response towards non-Mozambican involvement in crime. While this is partly an expression of the magnitude of xenophobic attitudes prevalent in South Africa compared to Mozambique, the different responses in both countries also highlight the effect of the conflation of national identity and domestic hardship on community views and concerns.

⁴⁵ Comment made during a focus group with older women from Maputo, October 2006.

⁴⁶ Interview conducted by SAIIA during 2006 and findings published in Irish-Qhobosheane J, *Gentlemen or Villains, Thugs or Heroes: The social economy of organised crime in South Africa*, SAIIA, 2007.

⁴⁷ Irish-Qhobosheane, *op cit*.

Active versus passive support

In some instances, the organised criminals are not merely tolerated, but are also protected by people residing in the area. One Community Police Forum member cited an example where organised criminals had a system in place where some people in the community kept watch for them and would notify them of the movement of the police into the area.⁴⁸ Another example described how local community members would block the area with cars, and then, when the police arrived, alert the criminals, allowing them to escape undetected.⁴⁹

It is not only ordinary community members that at times offer support to organised criminal elements. Certain businesses also support or condone their activities. Examples were given during interviews of local *baracas* or taverns that make their facilities available to known organised criminal elements. One old man told of cases where some *baracas* agree to close their doors to the general public to allow the criminals to take over the facility for the day or evening.⁵⁰

For many struggling businesses, this makes good business sense. For them, these criminal elements have plenty of money to spend, so why not reap the benefits? However, it should also be noted that there were also examples where local businesses who refuse to condone these criminals activities are targeted. One example was given of a woman who ran a *baracas* in Maputo; she refused to cooperate with some organised criminal elements and they destroyed her business.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Interview conducted with member of CPF, Maputo January 2007.

⁴⁹ Interview conducted with member of CPF, Maputo January 2007.

⁵⁰ Interview conducted with member of CPF, Maputo January 2007.

⁵¹ Interview conducted with member of CPF, Maputo January 2007.

Cash counts

In part, the ability of organised criminals to co-exist with the ordinary community is influenced by a growing culture of silence and turning a blind eye to the obvious. As one woman explained:

People who are not working have unexplained wealth, but we don't ask why or how a young guy who is not employed can afford to be driving around in a fancy car. If this happened under [the rule of] Samora Machel, questions would be asked about where the money came from. Today, everything has changed and so we don't ask, we just accept.

However, in some instances the silence of the community is seemingly being bought. Organised criminals often flash their money around. A number of people interviewed referred to these criminals arriving at a *baracas* and buying drinks for everyone there or buying food for at least some of the customers. At face value, the actions of these criminals could be seen as buying off the community, and undoubtedly there is a strong element of this in their actions. However, a similar study in South Africa revealed that there were times when organised criminals who brazenly displayed their wealth to the community did so without any perceivable direct benefit to themselves. The study concluded that for these criminals, being seen to be able to throw money around has as much to do with improving their status and standing in the community as it did with protecting themselves.⁵²

While many people are attracted to the luxurious lifestyles that organised criminals are perceived to live, and join organised criminal groupings because of this, there are also instances where organised criminals recruit members in a targeted fashion. A frequent strategy that is employed is to befriend potential recruits in

⁵² Irish-Qhobosheane J, *Gentlemen or Villains, Thugs or Heroes: The social economy of organised crime In South Africa*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 2007.

the *baracas*. One youth member explained how criminals would prey on the weaknesses of potential recruits:

I had a friend [who] loved expensive drinks. The criminals got to know this and then used it to eventually recruit him... they find out what you are addicted to and then they use this addiction.⁵³

It appears that once caught up in the lifestyle, it becomes extremely difficult to extricate oneself. Deserters are viewed either as potential competitors or as informers; leaving an organised crime groups can result in either bodily harm or death. The threat of violence is sufficiently intimidating to assure adherence to the group code by its members. This is particularly the case in drug trafficking groups and among those linked to bank fraud.

However, in many cases the lifestyle of organised criminals is the key determinant of loyalty to the group. Many of the Mozambican criminals, similar to their South African counterparts, spend the largest share of their criminal proceeds on a flashy lifestyle.

The role of the youth: Women and men

Young women often have a direct stake in supporting organised criminal elements. For a significant number of young women, organised criminals are the ones who have disposable income, making them attractive partners. As one ex-combatant put it: 'Girls are vulnerable to these criminals because they want money. If you want a girl of quality, you have to have money and who has money? It's the criminals.'⁵⁴

His views were supported by a group of young women during one of the focus group discussions conducted by the researchers. All of the young women in the sample admitted that they would go out

⁵³ Interview with young man, Maputo, November 2006.

⁵⁴ Interview with ex-combatant, Maputo, March 2007.

with members of organised criminal groups because of the lifestyle that they offered.

Within organised criminal groups, women have not only a role to play as social partners of successful criminals, but they are also used by the groups to share the risk in their undertakings. One clear example of this is the dominance of women, particularly young women, who work as 'mules' to transport drugs on their persons either into or out of Mozambique. It appears to be quite easy for the criminal elite to recruit young women for these activities. Once again, young women who were part of the focus group confirmed this when the majority confirmed that they would be willing to take on the risk for a suitable compensation.

Organised criminal elements, particularly the more successful ones, also provide role models for many young men in Mozambique. These criminals live luxurious lifestyles that are often coveted by young men, particularly those coming from poorer backgrounds. Apart from wearing fancy clothes, they do not have to work from 'nine to five' and they have access to a string of young women. In fact, during a focus group discussion with young men, most confirmed that they found the lifestyle of criminals very attractive and that the only deterrent for them was the potential risks. In particular they feared being shot and killed as a result of their involvement. Participants in the group also complained about the lack of alternative opportunities available to them, although quite clearly their responses were less about the need to provide for their families and more about the trappings of the easy and lavish lifestyle represented by criminal groups.

Without a doubt, the allure of organised crime to those Mozambican youths who believe that they have limited alternative upward mobilisation options ought to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The role of parents

The role of parents in allowing organised crime to flourish was also raised during a number of the interviews. Parents know that their children cannot afford the cars and lifestyles that can be connected only to criminal activities, but they too display tacit acceptance. It could be argued that they are the indirect beneficiaries of the proceeds of crime or that they are trying to protect their children. However, according to some of the people interviewed, their response is also in part influenced by the growing culture of silent acceptance and compliance.

One woman who was interviewed said that often the response of parents went further than just compliance:

We as mothers often have a lot to say about the police not acting against criminals, but we are part of the problem. We know our sons are involved in crime and don't try to stop them. When they get arrested we rush off to the police station and demand their release. Then tomorrow we will sit and say, 'look, see that other criminal up the road has been released and it is because the police are corrupt'.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Community perceptions of and tolerance towards organised criminals is a complex issue. Community members' responses can be a mixture of fear, lack of concern because it is perceived not to have an effect on them, or seeing the presence of criminals as an asset. Nevertheless, whatever the reasons, this support and acceptance (by at least large sections of communities) pose a serious threat to the policing of organised crime and create a major challenge for the authorities.

⁵⁵ Interview with exchange house owner and mother, Maputo, November 2006.

Understanding Organised Crime in Mozambique

Organised crime is not a recent phenomenon, and has existed in various forms for centuries. Honwana and Lamb suggest its origins date as far back as the emergence of human trading in commodities.⁵⁶ As was stated in previous sections, there has been a more concerted international focus on organised crime by both *governments and inter-governmental structures since the 1980s*. This is linked largely to the increasing intensity of organised criminal activities and the recognition that organised crime poses a serious threat to the security and sovereignty of states. However, this increased focus has not always been accompanied by a clear definition and understanding of what constitutes organised crime.

This section analyses organised crime in Mozambique. It questions the attempt to fit organised crime into specific models and categories, which narrows the approach to what constitutes organised crime.

Use of definitions

One of the issues highlighted during this research was that, while people used the term organised crime when referring to certain criminal activities (particularly activities such as drug trafficking), their understanding of the term is often relatively general. Further interrogation of what constitutes organised crime results in contradictions or lack of clarity. For example, during the interviews, community members said that they knew what organised crime was, but then cited examples of small groups involved in petty

⁵⁶ Honwana J & G Lamb, *Small Arms Proliferation and Drug Trafficking in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Centre for Conflict Resolution, University of Cape Town, February 1998.

crimes as constituting organised criminal groups. This situation is not unique to Mozambique, and, internationally, attempts to reach consensus on both the term organised crime and what constitutes such crime have been the subject of extensive debate.

Standing refers to four broad models that have been used by academics and public officials to describe organised crime. The first is the hierarchy model, which describes a highly structured, almost bureaucratic type of structure with clear lines of command and control. The second is the network model, which operates more like an informal association with a flatter and more flexible structure. The third is the market model, where the structure is determined by economic factors and the markets in which the criminal group operates. Finally, there is the clan model, where the criminal group is held together by symbols, slogans and loyalties. (The most common example of this model is youth gangs, which are held together by symbols, allegiances and codes.)⁵⁷

Trying to pigeonhole organised criminal groups into any one of the four models not only fails to recognise that such groupings are becoming increasingly diverse and dynamically organised, but could also limit which organised criminal groups become the focus of interrogation and investigation. Indeed, it may be impossible to use a specific model to delineate what constitutes an organised criminal grouping; it may be more appropriate to look at different broad characteristics (rather than the structure) to identify a particular organised criminal group.

We have seen in section 2 the characteristics that a group needs to display before it can be seen as constituting an organised criminal grouping. Describing the characteristics rather than the structure of a group allows for the reality that groups involved in organised crime are highly adaptable and able to remodel themselves when and as the need arises. It is also important to recognise that

⁵⁷ Standing A, *The social contradictions of organised crime on the Cape Flats*, Pretoria, Institute of Security Studies, Occasional Paper No 74, June 2003.

organised criminal groupings are centred primarily on making money and most have a extremely well-developed sense of the environment in which they operate.

De Kock refers to the group using violence or intimidation as a crucial characteristic, and this use of violence is described by Jansen van Vuuren as an essential means of managing its risk.⁵⁸ So a group of armed robbers, such as those targeting exchange houses or cellular phone shops, will carry guns and threaten or even shoot business people, the police or members of the public. Such actions are an essential part not only of ensuring compliance, but also of minimising their risk of arrest and even death. Other groups, such as those involved in drug trafficking or bank fraud, may not use weapons during the actual criminal act, but will use violence or the threat of violence to minimise the risk of disruption of their activities, detection or arrest. Nowhere is this clearer than in the assassinations of key people involved in investigations into Mozambican banking fraud in the 1990s.

Jansen van Vuuren refers to other ways in which organised criminal groups seek to minimise their risk. One way is to transfer the 'hands-on' risk to lower-level criminals, e.g. the use made of local Mozambicans as 'mules' for Nigerian drug-trafficking groups. These mules not only help the group to avoid detection, but also if detection occurs, the Nigerian criminals can distance themselves from the crime by denying all knowledge of the person involved. The Mozambican is left to fend for him- or herself in prison in Mozambique or abroad.

In 2003, during an interview, representatives of the *Organizacao de Juventude Mocambicana* (OJM) pointed to the number of young people serving jail sentences for offences such as drug dealing, while the people for whom these young prisoners worked evaded

⁵⁸ Jansen van Vuuren J, *Targeting Organised Crime: A Systems Approach*, Monograph No. 1/2007, South African Banking Risk Information Centre (SABRIC), Johannesburg.

prosecution. According to OJM, many of these young people had no passports, could not have acquired the drugs themselves, and were most likely working for members of sophisticated transnational networks whose real identity they did not know.

Another way of mitigating this risk, according to Jansen van Vuuren, is to try to present the criminal group as faceless, with no single leader or multiple leaders. During interviews, a number of community members in Maputo referred to the invisibility of the criminal elite (bosses) of organised criminal networks.

The role of corruption

Organised criminal groupings rely heavily on corruption to survive. Minnaar refers to the symbiotic relationship between organised crime and corruption, stating that organised crime cannot, in the long term, succeed without corruption.⁵⁹ Jansen van Vuuren refers to the use of corrupt public officials and professionals, such as lawyers and accountants, by organised criminals not only to handle certain of their affairs, but also to provide fronts for illicit activities.

A significant number of community members highlighted corruption as a major factor contributing to high crime levels and providing fertile ground for both petty and organised criminal groupings.

Most of the criminal elite, unlike the 'hands-on' people to whom they transfer their risk, have access to enormous financial and other resources. These resources enable them to buy their way out of trouble. These resources also enable them to move around internationally.

⁵⁹ Minnaar A, 'A symbiotic relationship? Organised crime and corruption in South Africa', paper presented at the 9th Annual International Anti-Corruption Conference, 2000.

An issue that arose during all interviews and focus groups with non-state actors in Mozambique was the impunity with which the elite of organised criminal groupings were able to operate. It is not just corruption that protects them, but also their ability to manage their risk through all the means outlined above.

Cross-border links and flexibility

De Kock refers to organised criminal groupings' disregard for state or provincial, national or international borders (see above). In Mozambique, one public official gave the example of armed robbers who immediately after a robbery would head for the border and cross over into one of the neighbouring states to avoid detection.⁶⁰

It is not only the members of organised criminal networks who move across borders, but also illicit commodities. For example, a significant amount of the drugs brought into Mozambique are destined for the South African market. Similarly, a number of vehicles stolen in South Africa are moved into Mozambique by highly organised criminal groups. Mozambican and some South African officials also point to stolen Mozambican vehicles that are transported to South Africa.

One of the characteristics that De Kock states must exist for the group to be classified as an organised criminal group is that the group should collaborate for a prolonged period of time. This means essentially that the group should not engage in a once-off criminal act. *However, this does not necessarily mean that the group has to have regular meetings, and there could be a time lapse between its members' criminal activities.*

It also does not imply that they have to engage in exactly the same form of crime, in the same geographical area. Jansen van Vuuren refers to the fact that sometimes organised criminal groups

⁶⁰ Interview with Mozambican police officer, Maputo, November 2006.

disperse and then come together, only to disperse again. He also refers to some of these groupings targeting one environment and then moving on to another environment. In Mozambique, organised groupings involved in bank and other business robberies will not necessarily stay together in the aftermath of a robbery and may disperse, only to re-form when the next 'job' arises. Equally, a group may relocate its operations from one part of Mozambique to another, normally based on an assessment of the opportunities and risks. Organised criminal networks are seldom static and are constantly evolving and reinventing themselves. It is not uncommon for them to change their *modus operandi*, targets and even the types of crimes in which they are involved.

Most of the more successful organised criminal groups will make use of intelligence to form their plans, *modus operandi*, structure and behaviour. A number of community members interviewed referred to organised criminals having access to their own intelligence and often using people from their local communities to gather intelligence wittingly or unwittingly or act as early warning systems for them.

Lastly, De Kock emphasises the role of money laundering. Internationally the term money laundering is often taken to refer to sophisticated money and business transactions, often involving cash and banking transfers, complex business transactions and reinvestment in legitimate formal businesses. In Mozambique money laundering takes place on quite a large scale.

However, as in many other countries in Africa, there is also an extensive informal market that plays an essential part in the livelihood of many. This can also assist organised criminal groups to launder their criminal proceeds. Informal markets by their nature are impossible to regulate effectively, and thus provide a perfect cover for criminal elements who are able to exploit this situation and launder money without detection.

One area of concern in addressing organised criminal groupings, which is not unique to Mozambique, is the often false distinction

drawn between organised crime and white-collar crime. In Mozambique recently, the authorities established an initiative specifically to address organised white-collar crime. While this is an important step, one of the inherent problems that could arise (and, indeed, have arisen in other countries, such as South Africa) is that you could have separate investigations into white-collar crime and other organised criminal activities.

In Mozambique, the bank fraud that occurred in the 1990s highlighted a number of key issues. The first was that some of the individuals involved in this bank fraud were also engaged in other criminal activities that clearly fall within the scope of what is traditionally considered to be organised criminal activities, such as drug trafficking. The second is that some of the groups engaged in this form of crime clearly displayed many, if not all, of the characteristics identified by De Kock for a group to be considered as committing organised crime. Undoubtedly, it is important to ensure that white-collar crime is not compartmentalised into a category separate from organised crime.

Poverty, Communities and Organised Crime: Lessons from Mozambique

The intersection between poverty and crime is a controversial but important topic. Internationally, many crime prevention strategies focus on the need to address poverty, but most strategies tend to ignore the link between poverty and the growth of organised crime.

In Mozambique, there is no doubt that poverty and unemployment play some role in providing ready foot soldiers to swell the ranks of organised criminal groups. Groups that feel marginalised seem to be more susceptible to recruitment.

However, the argument fails to explain why a country like Mozambique, which is so much poorer than South Africa, has lower levels of organised crime. Also, during interviews, youth members pointed out that a number of the young people involved in organised crime did not start out poor. Some were even employed when they joined organised criminal groupings. In Mozambique, with a few exceptions, the majority of the criminal elite are not drawn from the ranks of those who had no other options available to them, and most come from more privileged environments.

More importantly, those that are drawn from very disadvantaged backgrounds are often employed as foot soldiers and reap the least returns for their role. Generally speaking, the criminal elite control the purse strings and the power, and neither wealth nor power is devolved to the lower ranks.

Thus, while some may wish to argue that organised crime in impoverished environments is a viable alternative to those with few other options, this is a narrow-minded assumption. It also fails to recognise adequately the adverse impact that organised crime has on communities. Far from uplifting such communities, organised crime can have a corrosive effect on community stability and social welfare. There are a number of reasons for this:

- The wealth accrued by organised criminal groups remains in the hands of a select few – the kingpins or the criminal elite. Only that which is necessary for the survival of the criminal enterprise support structure trickles down to the foot soldiers (the poorest of the poor).
- Most of the proceeds from organised crime are not spent on improving the living conditions of the community, but rather on luxury items, which are mainly purchased outside the borders of the impoverished community.
- Genuine development is inhibited in these areas, and organised crime can even create competing centres of power outside government. These criminal centres of power have no lines of accountability to anyone but themselves.

The impact of community attitudes on organised crime

The impact of community attitudes towards the social economy of organised crime cannot be underestimated. Many of those interviewed for this study were highly critical of the police. Corruption and an inability to deal with organised crime were flagged as the key reasons for this attitude.

However, only a handful of those co-existing with individuals known to be involved in organised crime expressed the same critical attitude towards organised crime. It is important to note that community attitudes are not homogenous. On the one hand, the high tolerance of communities towards organised crime is shaped by the very real fear that to oppose such groups can be very dangerous. On the other hand, it is clear that a significant number of community members not only tolerate, but also admire these criminals. This is because the crimes committed by these groups have no immediate impact on their livelihoods; they benefit in some way from the proceeds of crime; or the criminals present achievable role models of social upward mobility to disaffected youths.

The effect of such tolerance or support by the community on organised crime activity cannot be underestimated. Organised criminals can and do use this situation to their advantage.

- First, in those areas where they encounter an accepting environment, they also find the space and safe havens to launch their operations.
- Second, these settings are also conducive to recruiting members into their ranks.
- Third, organised criminals all over the world, whether in Colombia, the Cape Flats, Soweto, Maputo or Beira, thrive on both power and glory. Community acceptance and admiration are often critically important to them.

Conversely, unfriendly environments in which communities refuse to accept or tolerate criminal activities, consume considerable effort and resources of organised criminal groups to mitigate their risks. Operating in these communities not only increases crime group members' risks of being accosted or killed by an angry community member, it also increases the risk to those members of the community working with the authorities to curb the activities of organised criminals in their midst. Herein lies the dilemma and challenge to crime prevention authorities.

In Mozambique most if not all of the responsibility for addressing organised crime is seen to reside within the domain of role-players within the official criminal justice system (the police, the justice department and, to a lesser extent, the prisons). However, the research clearly highlights the importance of social and related conditions that provide an environment conducive to organised crime groups. It is important that these aspects are addressed in organised crime prevention strategies.

More effective service delivery by government departments can reduce tacit support for organised crime in marginalised communities. Governance structures that give community members a greater sense of their value can also become an important aspect in undermining the status of organised criminals. It is also important

to address the social fabric that influences the manner in which organised criminals are perceived by many community members. The responsibility for addressing these issues cannot reside only with the police and justice department, but requires a multi-agency approach.

Therefore, a number of areas must be addressed in Mozambique to win the war against organised crime. Some of these include:

- Development of a domestic research capacity to assist the Mozambican authorities and the country to understand fully the implications and scope of organised crime and enable them to develop a coherent approach towards the problem.
- Further debate and discussion on a clearer definition of organised crime.
- Broad-based engagement between various government departments to develop multi-agency approaches and strategies to address organised crime.
- Creation of effective partnership initiatives with community-based structures and businesses as part of the overall strategy to address organised crime in the country.

Conclusion

The rapid growth of organised crime in Mozambique is not unique and to a large extent reflects international trends from which the Southern African region has not been exempted – indeed the Mozambican case mirrors what is happening in many countries throughout the region.

Whereas the extent and nature of organised crime may vary from country to country, Gastrow points to the successful establishment of a common criminal market for illicit goods and activities that covers the entire Southern African region. The effects of the activities of organised crime groups have caused havoc in the region's small economies, and government circles are increasingly

recognising the serious threats to stability, good governance and economic growth in the region.⁶¹

In a country such as Mozambique, which has undergone a significant transformation since the end of the 16-year civil war, but which continues to face significant challenges in rebuilding its infrastructure and economy, the threats are all the more pressing. Gastrow argues convincingly that countries and the region should confront the problem head-on if the tide is to be stemmed.⁶² Given the regional dimension of organised crime, it is useful to look at the potential for synergistic co-operation between countries to address this challenge.

Despite the differences between Mozambique and South Africa, it is useful to look at their similarities, which might inform a potential common approach.

The shared border between both South Africa and Mozambique, coupled with the heavy flow of people to and from both countries, is a significant factor in the cross-border engagement strategies and operations of criminal networks. The research showed that criminals make active use of the extremely accessible (and diverse) markets of both countries, learning from each other and honing their skills. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the networks have established bases in both countries. Accordingly, the form and *modus operandi* of organised crime, with small differences related to the underlying conditions in each country, is therefore remarkably similar. There also appears to be a cross-pollination and exchange of ideas and actors engaged in these crimes.

Both South Africa and Mozambique, albeit with a slight delay in the case of the latter, began focusing on organised crime in the

⁶¹ Gastrow P (ed.), *Penetrating State and Business: Organised Crime in Southern Africa*, vol. 1. ISS Monograph Series No. 86, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, September 2003.

⁶² *Ibid.*

1990s. Clearly, there are significant differences in the resources that both countries are able to harness in addressing organised crime, but there are some problems that are common to both countries' approaches.

The Mozambican study highlights the conceptual problems related to understanding and defining organised crime activities. This is not only a theoretical argument, but goes to the heart of how crime prevention strategies are devised and to a broader understanding among communities and the public of the problem. South Africa for its part adopted a common definition in 1991. However, there is still a considerable debate about which activities ought to be considered within the framework of organised crime, particularly as it relates to white-collar crime. This is particularly relevant in Mozambique where there are clear links between people involved in banking fraud and other organised crime groups and activities.

One of the questions that the research attempted to address is the link between organised crime and poverty. The research in Mozambique highlights the role poverty can play in providing a pool of foot soldiers that are readily available to be recruited into the ranks of organised crime networks. The same is true for the South African case. However, it is also clear that poverty on its own is not a sufficient driver in the growth of organised crime. Poverty in Mozambique is far greater than in South Africa, and yet organised crime in South Africa far outstrips that of Mozambique. In addition, in both countries some of the key role-players in organised crime are people with access to considerable resources. Even where people without access to these resources engage in organised crime activities, this 'need' soon turns to 'greed'.

Clearly, while poverty can have an influence on organised crime and does swell the ranks of foot soldiers, poverty alone does not explain the dramatic explosion of organised crime in the two countries. Addressing poverty can play a role in undermining organised crime but this on its own will not eradicate it.

In Mozambique certain forms of organised crime sustains a sub-economy that benefits certain members of the community. Once again this is true for South Africa. However, the research in both countries also points to the danger that these so-called 'advantages' are seen in a positive light by communities. In the long term the co-operation of communities is essential to address the scourge of crime and to win the war against it.

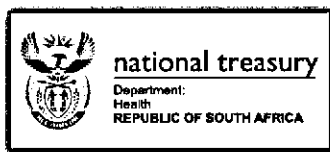
Thus, there are some areas that require attention not only in Mozambique, but also by the region, to combat organised crime successfully:

- **Co-ordination and co-operation:** The establishment of the Southern African Regional Police Commissioners Co-ordinating Committee (SARPCCO) presents an important forum for the co-ordination of police approaches in SADC. However, the activities of SARPCCO should be strengthened by establishing more co-ordinating mechanisms and structures to ensure a more effective response across the region to the threat of organised crime. These activities should be bolstered by setting up a regional knowledge centre linked to various national police services and be made up of collaborating research institutions from the SADC region.
- **Addressing illicit and criminal markets:** The drive towards market integration across the region provides an important opportunity for organised crime groups, especially with respect to underlying criminal markets. Southern African policing initiatives to address criminal markets, such as the V4 operation launched in a number of SADC countries aimed at stemming the trade in stolen vehicles, have achieved some success. However, there ought to be a much more concerted effort to ensure the dismantling and disruption of these markets.
- **Dealing with migration:** Migration is an issue that affects all countries in Southern African. The research in Mozambique and South Africa did find a link with organised crime. However, *narrow xenophobic responses to migration may do more harm*

than good in the fight against organised crime. Thus a practical regional approach is required to address the links between migration and organised crime. Once again, this is an area where a regional think tank could play a role in assisting with the development of this approach.

The rapid growth of organised crime in Southern Africa over the last decade has become a serious concern for both governments and citizens living in the region. In developing countries, organised crime activities exact a high cost in terms of health and security; they also undermine investor confidence and hinder development. High levels of organised crime can lead to a loss of public confidence in the authorities, the creation of competing centres of political power and general public unruliness. Moreover, the negative impact on governance is amplified by corrupt collaboration between organised criminals and private/public officials.

This study into the social economy of organised crime in Mozambique highlights many of the above concerns and looks specifically at the impact of organised crime on communities. This work is part of a broader research programme into the social economy of organised crime within the SADC region. Based on its survey of communities, it argues for the development of alternative approaches towards organised crime and corruption, that could complement traditional crime prevention strategies.



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