Guidance for contributors

WHAT IS THE RISK BULLETIN?

Risk Bulletins provide a snapshot of the most important developments in the regional criminal economy, written in a succinct, readable style which aims to be informative and authoritative, and combine text and graphics. The target audience is a mixture of civil society actors, like journalists, NGOs, activists etc; government officials within the countries we are covering; officials at intergovernmental agencies; and political analysts, e.g. in diplomatic missions.

Characteristics of a risk bulletin story

- Stories in the ESA Obs risk bulletin report a **trend or development** in the criminal economy.
- Stories should be **original**, or add original information or new context to an existing news story. If you are highlighting a new development, the story should place that development in the context of existing trends.
- The stories must include an **element of data** – figures that can be *tabled, graphed* or information that can be *mapped* or combined in an *infographic*.
- The story should, without sensationalising anything, highlight the risks – to communities, to state responses, to local economies or livelihoods etc. – posed by the phenomenon.
- If it is relevant, draw out the **regional links** of the phenomenon (e.g. cross border routes, regional displacement, impacts felt in other countries).

Each bulletin has a **summary page**, one **lead story**, and three **regional stories**. Lead stories and regional stories will be agreed with contributors and the Risk Bulletin coordinators in advance. When pitching stories, provide an indication of how many words you think you will need. Lead stories are selected based on how original, data-based and regional they are, plus their relevance to prominent debates. If you have an angle which you think would be suitable for a lead story, please suggest this to us.

Word count (*guidelines*)

Cover summaries: max 400 words
Lead stories: 1 500–2 500 words
Regional stories: ±1 500 words

Coordination

Simone Haysom, Julian Rademeyer and Julia Stanyard will be coordinating the Risk Bulletin. While Julia will work on the Bulletin throughout the year, Simone and Julian will alternate leading on issues every two months.

Some analysts will write stories in most bulletins; others will work on stories for periods longer than a month and have more original material included, but less often. The GI-TOC will also select the stories so that there is regional diversity and balance (e.g between East and Southern Africa). The GI-TOC will also choose the titles and write summaries that give the bulletin overall coherence.

The consolidated draft bulletin will be sent to the GI-TOC Editorial and Publications team for final editing, layout and proofing. Julia and Simone will liaise with authors based on feedback from the Publications team.

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ORGANIZED CRIME

Timelines

Evolution: draft stories → consolidated draft → edited consolidated draft → laid out and formatted final document → in-house proofread → internal circulation → publication

ACTION	WHEN
Authors agree topics and schedule for stories with Geneva	Ongoing (see the spreadsheet which tracks topic and schedule **here**)
Authors submit draft stories and raw data for graphics	End of 1st week of the month
Geneva sends revised draft for author checking. **Authors respond** preferably same or next day (if there will be a delay to this for any reason, e.g. if you are travelling or on fieldwork at the time you are expecting to receive the consolidated draft, please let us know)	End of 2nd week
Geneva sends graphics to design team for first mock-up	End of 2nd week.
Geneva compiles author responses and submits consolidated draft to editor.	Third week of the month
Geneva sends editor queries to authors (if necessary) and **authors respond**	Third week of the month
Editor reviews changes, sends draft for layout	Last week of the month
Publication (subject to change)	End of the month / 1st week of the following month
Distribution via social media, the GI-TOC website, and through email distribution list	

Tone

Writing for a global audience

As with any piece of writing, Risk Bulletin stories should aim to be written in a direct, concise and engaging style. Analytically, the stories need to balance presenting context with supporting information and maintaining a clear argument.

The bulletins also, importantly, need to be comprehensible to people who might only be familiar with one of the many countries that they cover, or who might know very little about the region. They may also be read by people who might know a lot about the region but are unfamiliar with organised crime or trafficking terms. This audience might also have English as a second or third language. The writing must be accessible to a varied audience, and consistent in tone and language.

The consolidation and editing process will smooth out some of the variations between authors' styles, but please pay attention to creating a clear argument in the first drafts, and when you might need to contextualise information or terms.

E.g. Please contextualise any place names – e.g. both of cities and towns, and within them.

> For example, 'In **Dar es Salaam**, the largest and most economically important city in **Tanzania** ...'

> or '**Wynberg** is a suburb that borders the Cape Flats on the southern fringes of **Cape Town,** and the catchment area of the district magistrates' court includes both Wynberg Main Road, a notorious hub of criminal activity ...'

> When writing about commodities, keep in mind that people might not recognise e.g. street names for drugs, particular animals, rare minerals or timber.

> Criminal justice and political systems vary across the region. Provide the GI-TOC team with contextual information in footnotes or comments about the role and limits of responsibilities of important office holders (e.g Auditor Generals, Public Prosecutors, Presidents, the hierarchy or remit of particular courts).

Generally, be specific and explicit in the writing. Ask yourself: will it all make sense to a reader who is not as close to the subject as the researcher?

Referencing

Use footnotes, as described in the Global Initiative Writing and Editing Guidelines (which we share with all network members/analysts and is also available **here**).

In general terms, the references should be thorough and consistent so that it is clear where the information is drawn from, and readers could check back in the original sources and find that information.

Referencing information varies according to the type of document, but you must provide the following basic information:

- Name of **author** (or authoring organisation if there is no author by-line).
- **Title** of publication or report
- Name of **publisher** or publishing entity
- **Date** of publication
- **Hyperlink** to publication – if it is an online document/article. Please double check that links work. A hyperlink alone is not sufficient as a reference.

Below are examples of the style of the most likely sources that will be referenced in Risk Bulletin articles, but if there is any doubt please check the style guide or a previous issue of the Bulletin and use it as a model.

Referencing news reports

Note: We use minimum punctuation – no quote marks around titles:

- Chris Morris, Moazu Kromah and the case of the West African ivory cartel, International Policy Digest, 24 August 2019, https://intpolicydigest.org/2019/08/24/moazu- kromah-and-the-case-of-the-west-african-ivory-cartel/.
- A $2bn loan scandal sank Mozambique's economy, *The Economist*, 22 August 2019, www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/08/22/a-2bn-loan-scandal-sank- mozambiques-economy.

Note: We use *minimal capitals* and *no inverted commas* around titles; italics used only for titles of newspapers, magazines and journals.

Referencing government reports

Again, minimum punctuation:

- US Department of State, 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Uganda, www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/Uganda/2019.

Referencing interviews

If you are going to refer to a source in the text, give us their 'title/reason they know what they know':

- Interview with a senior police officer, Kampala, 14 November 2019.

You may directly cite interviews in the text as you would a news article, for example: 'According to John Smith, a senior state prosecutor / long term drug user, the situation has become much worse …' [In the footnote reference: Interview with John Smith, senior state prosecutor, Cape Town, May 2019.]

But in general, it is often better to make a claim and reference the source in a footnote.

- 'Since 2011 the situation has become much worse, as seen in the rising rate of arrests and deaths by overdose'. [Reference: Interview with John Smith, senior state prosecutor, Cape Town, May 2019; Interview with Janet Blogs, Director of Drugline, an organization that advocates for drug users' rights, Cape Town, May 2019]

If you are anonymizing a source please do this in the footnotes rather than referring to them by an acronym/pseudonym/initials.

Citing research conducted for the Risk Bulletins

On the issue of 'our research', 'our findings' etc, we've decided to opt for an opening phrase, such as, **'research or investigations conducted for this Risk Bulletin found … '** (or similar), citing the research as specifically linked to this publication and conducted by non-named researchers in the ESA Observatory. Thereafter, we can simplify to 'our research' or 'our investigations' or 'our interviews' etc.

Other editorial style notes

We cannot stress this enough: please read the Global Initiative style guide. It is both a riveting read and a very useful resource. In particular, sections 'In brief'; 'Capitalisation' and 'Notes and references' capture most of the most common issues. Here are some key points from our editor:

- Keep sentences short and pithy.
- Run the spell check before sending.
- We spell words with the -z spelling ('analyze' etc) – otherwise English spelling.
- Please note the following British English spellings apply:
  - Licences, not licenses (but 'licensed' – verb)
  - Focused, not focussed
  - Programme, not program
  - Labour, not labor
- We do not use capital letters for any common nouns.
- Do not use an acronym if that term appears only once; if you use acronyms for repeat uses of a term, spell it out in full at first mention. E.g. 'UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), but *only* if you are using 'UNODC' as an acronym later in the text.
- Try to find other words for 'impact', 'important' and other overused terms.
- Use % (not per cent)
- We hyphenate attributive clauses, so: human-rights abuses; human-trafficking operations; civil-society group; organized-crime landscape; organized-criminal network etc. (Although this convention is increasingly ignored, it's important to maintain it in formal writing.)
- Avoid excessive use of capitals (e.g., when referring to the Oil and Gas Crisis Committee after first mention, use 'the crisis committee' or 'the committee' where you might use 'the Crisis Committee' or 'the Committee')
- Use a space (and not a comma) to separate thousands: 1 000; 900 000

Data angle

Having the data angle is important for the Risk Bulletin stories for two main reasons. First, visuals and graphics make the bulletin much more engaging for the reader. Second, while the bulletin does stand alone as a monthly publication, it is part of the larger 'Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa' which aims to collect new data on illicit markets across the region, and the Risk Bulletin is part of this process. Cumulatively, through the issues, we are aiming to build a picture of emerging trends and developments across the region. The broader the array of evidence this picture draws on, the more credible it will be to a wide range of people.

Data angles can be our original data (for example reporting on the primary findings of the illicit commodity pricing surveys, or see the Mozambique story, Bulletin Issue 2, which reports a list of assassinations we have compiled and updated specifically for the Risk Bulletin).

If there is no original data angle in your story, investigate whether there is existing data from another organisation which you can draw on. (Your story should add more depth or insight to this data).

Please also keep an eye out for new publications and articles which cover similar topics and use data well: there may be a way of integrating some of the information into a future Risk Bulletin or it may be a useful example for something which we could do in future.

As general rules on data use:

Be proactive about securing **permission** from organisations to reprint and re-use this data.
- Also **check how to reference** official data and what disclaimers such statistics need (e.g. if the state records 'hard drug use', find out what they define as a 'hard drug';
- Find out what may be excluded or erroneously included by the **definitions** used by states or NGOs) .
- Always state the **time period** that statistics cover.

Consider, when writing the risk bulletin text to accompany you data, what information the reader would need to understand and interpret the data.

Before you send your data, check:

- **Are you comparing like with like?** Are all the data you are citing in a particular series consistent? If comparing two variables/trends, are they directly comparable?

  E.g. Uganda Police Force reporting the number of transnational trafficking incidents from Uganda in 2018, vs. the number of victims returned to Uganda. These two variables are *not* directly comparable because 'number of trafficking incidents' may include multiple victims at once.

- **Have you looked at the original source of the data and included information about the methodology?**

  E.g. If it comes from a government source, what does the reader need to understand about the methodology used to collect that data and how it could influence the results?

  E.g. Uganda Police Force reports on the number of incidents of human trafficking in 2018. This is a useful resource and may help showing trends. But the contextualising information needed is that many of our interviewees (and other sources, which we have referenced) said that the vast majority of trafficking goes undetected by police.

- **Are there other sources which look at the same phenomenon and are they different?**

  E.g. Data from civil society can be compared with government sources. Are they different and, if so, why?

When reporting on criminal economies there are always unknowns, and always difficulties in trying to quantify criminal activity, however reliable the method used in collecting the data. We need to be upfront about these limitations. For example, in the November issue we reported some results from the Assassinations Witness database. As a caption where the figure was presented, we described the methodology (the database looks at assassinations reported in print and online media) and the potential shortcomings (more information may come to light over time which causes an incident to be re-categorised, e.g. from a personal dispute to an organised-crime related killing). This is not pointing out weaknesses in the data, but instead contextualising it.

Graphics and design

Images: Try to send original high-res photos to accompany stories. We do not subscribe to a stock photo database. These images could either be your own or with permissions to reproduce from the owner/organisation.

Graphs and maps: Please provide the raw data files for the graphics to go with your stories, with the appropriate source, and instructions for any maps. They will be formatted by our design team. As a general rule, please make all data and descriptions of graphics as clear as possible to help the design team work quickly and smoothly.

- **Graphs and pie charts:** Please supply all 'make-up' files (e.g. Excel sheets).
- **General diagrams:** Please supply any initial 'make-up' files for these too (Excel, Powerpoint, Adobe Illustrator etc.). Allows us to 'capture' the text and labelling easily, and to obtain a visual of proposed requirements. Alternatively, a detailed brief will do.
- **Infographics:** Provide a detailed brief of what the infographic requires based on understanding of editorial content. Any rudimentary diagrams or sketches are welcome.
- **Maps:** Provide a detailed brief. Brief should include place name labelling requirements, information on specific content requirements, suggested level of overall detail etc. Again, rough sketches or annotations on an existing map for more complex requirements can help.

Please note that a jpeg 'image' pasted in an MS Word document is insufficient (for various reasons) for publishing requirements.

Please also note that the graphic content creation takes more time than the final edit of the text and the layout of the publication itself. With this in mind, a design brief for any finalised visuals should be passed on to the design team as early as possible. Maps and infographics take a lot longer to produce than the graphs and diagrams.

If anything in this guidance note is unclear, please feel free to ask. More generally, please come to us with any suggestions for how we can make the process better or how we can improve the Bulletin.