Findings of the Expert Working Group on

OPIATES AND METHAMPHETAMINE

TRAFFICKING ON THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

10th to 11th October 2023

Afghan Opiate Trade Project
Findings of the Expert Working Group on

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AOTP values feedback on this publication. If you have comments or would like to contribute information that could be considered for future publications, please contact:

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Introduction

Understanding the changing dynamics of heroin and methamphetamine flows from Afghanistan, through southwest Asia to Eastern and Southern Africa, continues to be important, particularly in light of the Taliban’s drug ban in Afghanistan and the harmful effects drugs have on the populations along the route. In order to improve information sharing and to help build connections between countries and International Organisations and to strengthen regional co-operation, UNODC held an Expert Working Group in Maputo, Mozambique during 10th-11th October 2023. Topics discussed at the EWG included an update on the current drug situation in Afghanistan, the opiate and methamphetamine flows from southwest Asia to Eastern and Southern Africa, regional drug seizures, the nature of organized crime groups and a summary of the drug demand situation in the region. The findings of the EWG are published in this report.

This EWG report covers the flow and distribution of heroin along the Southern Route, highlighting key trends and vulnerabilities. Exploration of the routes utilized for drug trafficking sheds light on movements from Afghanistan into Eastern and Southern Africa, within Africa, and towards other destination countries. Moreover, an overview of the demand for illicit drugs in the region offers insights into the societal impact and challenges faced by communities. Insight into the fragmented groups and the critical role played by brokers, as well as the strong presence of criminal networks, provides valuable context on the organized crime landscape. Furthermore, the EWG discussed the regional cooperation efforts aimed at addressing drug trafficking challenges and promoting collective action underscores the importance of collaborative approaches in responding to the drug trade in the region.

An examination of the policy and law enforcement responses implemented by affected countries provides valuable insights into national efforts to address the supply and demand dynamics. Analysis of the various modus operandi and trafficking methods employed by organized crime groups, including poly drug trafficking and links to other crime types, enhances understanding of the operational tactics used in the region. Finally, recommendations for policy interventions and follow-up actions aim to enhance counter-trafficking efforts and promote regional security and stability. Through a comprehensive examination of these topics, this report seeks to provide valuable insights and inform stakeholders on the complexities of drug trafficking along the Southern Route, with the ultimate goal of fostering effective strategies and initiatives to combat illicit drug trade in the region.
Target 3.5 under this goal seeks to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotics drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol. Increasingly, narcotic drugs are becoming a prominent public health issue as drug use within Africa grows in prevalence, disproportionately affecting the youth in transit and destination countries on the continent. Countries covered by this assessment report perceived increases in drug demand, including heroin, cocaine and synthetic drugs. Quantifying the increase remains challenging given the lack of consistent and comprehensive data on drug demand and national prevalence studies in Africa.

By 2030 targets under SDG 16 include efforts to “significantly reduce...and combat all forms of organized crime and strengthen relevant national institutions...through international cooperation.” The findings of the Expert Working Group published here support this goal in several ways. By contributing to a better understanding of the changing dynamics of drug trafficking from Southwest Asia to Africa, African national institutions can become more effective and can develop more comprehensive approaches to creating policies to tackle drug supply and demand. Furthermore, bringing together a range of national institutions and international organisations to share data and best practices helps build capacity of these institutions to better prevent crime.

Targets under SDG goal 17 include measures to “Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge and expertise” and “Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.” The Expert Working Group on which this report is based brought together experts from nine countries and several international organisations to share information, experience and best practices for mutual benefit. The international trade in illicit drugs cannot be effectively overcome by individual Member States alone and such Working Groups are key in developing effective partnerships against organized crime.
Support to the UNODC’s Strategic Vision for Africa 2023

UNODC’s Strategic Vision for Africa 2030 outlines the organisation’s mission to provide more security to Africa’s people, government and institutions from drugs, crime, corruption, terrorism and illicit financial flows. The vision seeks to strengthen crime prevention, enhance justice, address organized crime, ensure a balanced response to drugs, improve the rule of law and bolster resilience. Building on decades of partnership and engagement with African countries, UNODC will work within its unique mandate towards these goals with a focus on whole-of-society approaches and inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations.

This report on the “Findings of the Expert Working Group on Heroin and Methamphetamine Trafficking along the Southern Route” directly supports the aims of the UNODC Strategic Vision for Africa 2030. Data indicates that drug trafficking in Africa continues to rise. Heroin is trafficked in increasing quantities to the East African coast, transiting through the continent along several routes to Europe, contributing to insurgency in East Africa and fueling urban crime and violence in the region. The World Bank identifies drug trafficking as one of the most significant risks to peacebuilding in post-conflict, conflict and fragile states. Subsequently there is a need for strengthened countermeasures in order to contribute to peace and security. In some regions, the proceeds of drug trafficking finances insurgent and extremist groups. Methamphetamine produced in Afghanistan also continues to be trafficked into the continent and although still low by global standards, there is growing concern around drug trafficking in Africa, both for domestic markets and for export.

However, a lack of available, reliable and comparative data on drug trafficking and consumption in Africa limits understanding of the extent of drug use, related trends and impacts on health, especially in light of population growth. With improved and accurate data and analysis Member States will be better positioned to deliver more effective responses at the policy and programming levels for people at risk of using drugs and those requiring treatment. The Expert Working Group, held in Maputo, Mozambique in 2023 brought together drug supply and demand experts from several African countries as well as international experts and international organisations, to share information and data on drug trafficking, drug use and the organised crime groups involved in the trade. The sharing of this data and the subsequent discussions around drug trafficking and drug use in Southern and Eastern Africa enhanced African Member States knowledge of the issues and challenges involved in tackling the trade in drugs originating in Afghanistan affecting the continent.

GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMF</td>
<td>Combined Maritime Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTF150</td>
<td>Combined Task Force 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMCDDA</td>
<td>European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction Combined Maritime Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCOC</td>
<td>Regional Cooperation Operations Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIFC</td>
<td>Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNIFC</td>
<td>Regional Narcotics interagency Fusion Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPC</td>
<td>Trilateral Planning Cell</td>
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Key Findings

- Heroin and methamphetamine is trafficked to Eastern and Southern Africa, mainly by maritime means. Although there are multiple maritime routes, which supply opiates and methamphetamine to different regions, a southwestern route from the Makran Coast supplies drugs to countries in Eastern Africa. Most of the drug interdictions along this route occur from dhows.

- There are judicial challenges to prosecuting cases stemming from drug seizures from dhows, with ship crews frequently being released without charge, and with the drugs disposed of at sea. As a result, disruption to the criminal networks involved in this trafficking is minimal. Attendees at the Expert Working Group highlighted a number of options that could help mitigate this issue.

- Once drugs make landfall in Africa they are trafficked by multiple land, air and sea routes throughout the continent, and to destination markets elsewhere. Routes are subject to change depending on law enforcement activity and changes in trafficking activity by organised crime groups.

- Attendees at the Working Group reported recent heroin and methamphetamine seizures both on land and those seized by international maritime forces. While continued heroin seizures were reported several countries also had started to seize small quantities of methamphetamine, where previously there had been none. This may have been a reflection of changing law enforcement priorities but could also be the beginning of increased methamphetamine supplies entering local drug markets.

- Participants at the Working Group held the view that the Taliban’s drug ban would not be sustainable in the long term, due to the economic pressures on opium farmers, particularly those without large opium inventories or landholdings. Further, participants held the view that there were sufficient stocks of opiates in the supply chain to mitigate a ban in the short term.

- The countries that attended the Working Group and covered by this assessment, report a perceived increase in drug demand, including heroin, cocaine and synthetic drugs that disproportionately affects the youth. This perceived increase remains challenging to quantify given the lack of consistent and comprehensive data on drug demand in the region and limited national prevalence studies.

- Most of the countries present at the Working Group mentioned limitations in their capacity to produce comprehensive criminal intelligence analysis. Despite this there was a strong will from countries present at the Working Group conduct more collaborative analysis regionally and beyond. Improved analytical capabilities and collaboration would help to build a clearer picture of the organized crime networks operating along the Southern Route. There is a challenge for most countries in the region to identify criminal networks and members of OCGs that are higher in the hierarchy, which are often not based in the country where the seizure was made.

- All the countries attending the Working Group reported increasing their efforts and strategies to tackle heroin and methamphetamine supply and demand. One the supply side these include efforts relating to improving inter-agency cooperation (for example establishing integrated border management processes), developing regional and international cooperation, and strengthening legal frameworks. On the demand side, most countries have put in place harm-reduction strategies, drug treatment and awareness-raising efforts to educate the public. This includes an effort to upgrade healthcare and rehabilitation service as well as information campaigns.

- A major finding from the Working Group was the need for improved regional co-operation both within Africa, but also between Africa, South-west Asia other regions and with international organizations. It was widely recognized at the Working Group that effective responses to the trafficking of Afghan opiates and methamphetamine to international markets required greater information sharing, joint operations and prosecution of trafficking networks operating across borders.

- Some steps have been made in this regard with the establishment of the Trilateral Planning Cell (TPC) by the governments of Tanzania, South Africa and Mozambique. The TPC has had some success in carrying out joint operations against drug trafficking organisations operating within the three countries. Further development of the TPC through expanding the numbers of countries who participate and strengthening cross border prosecutions of criminal networks was identified at the Working Group.
Findings of the Expert Working Group on
Opiates and Methamphetamine Trafficking on the Southern Route

Drug Trafficking routes From Afghanistan

MAP 1 Maritime trafficking routes

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

Source: Combined Maritime Force (CMF)

From Afghanistan into Eastern and Southern Africa

Maritime route (dhows)

Heroin and methamphetamine is produced in Afghanistan, then trafficked through Balochistan (a region split between Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan) to the Makran coast. In these coastal areas, heroin is stored in safe houses and prepared for onward transit, frequently trafficked by dhows. The maritime sub-routes identified at the Expert Working Group (EWG) are as follows and as depicted on map 1. Although these routes are used for the smuggling of heroin and methamphetamine, hashish is also trafficked via these routes. The sub-routes identified at the Expert Working Group included:

- The Mediterranean sub-route route via Dubai, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.
- The Eastern sub-route, towards Sri Lanka and onward to Southeast Asia.
- The Southwestern route from the Makran Coast onto Eastern and Southern Africa, historically used for heroin trafficking and increasingly for methamphetamine. Lately, most seems to be destined for Mozambique, some for Tanzania and recently, little for Kenya.

1 Combined Maritime Forces
2 Combined Maritime Forces
**Impact of weather on dhow smuggling.**

Unlike container shipping, dhow trafficking is more affected by weather changes on the India Ocean. From June to September, during the Southwest monsoon the activity of small boats, including dhows, is significantly reduced. Conditions during monsoon seasons are navigable for containerised merchant shipping, but smaller dhows cannot sail in high seas states. Smuggling activity using dhows is therefore generally reported to be quieter for a few months until the fall transition starts in October or November where smuggling activities begin to increase.  

### Challenges of Interdicting Dhows

Most interdictions of drug dhows along the Southern Route occur in international waters. Suspicious vessels that are boarded by national authorities or members of international maritime forces in international waters are generally released after the interdiction and the drugs are destroyed. Only minor testing of drugs on site takes place for the drug and the crews of the ships are not arrested or prosecuted, a process that is known colloquially as “catch-and-release”. There is frequently no legal finish to the interdiction activity. Disruption exists to trafficking networks in the sense that the goods are lost, however it is minimally disruptive to the criminal networks themselves, who can frequently replace the drugs and crews.  

Attendees at the Working Group highlighted three elements to consider that could improve the current situation:

- The first is to consider a framework in which prosecution could take place following interdictions and seizures of narcotics in international waters. Mechanisms do exist in the case of piracy, and have been put into practice over several years, but there is no equivalent for drug trafficking cases. There would be legal questions associated with the identification of a competent jurisdiction in such cases.

- The second is to improve the training and equipping of boarding officers in order to obtain the maximum information from the interdiction (through analysis of drugs, electronic devices and by debriefing the crews). This would enable more or better intelligence to be passed back to develop better interdictions and to focus law enforcement operations against land-based brokers and higher-level members of the trafficking networks to enhance disruption activity.

- Lastly, if a legal finish cannot be done for seizures in international waters, enhanced collaboration and intelligence sharing could take place to ensure that interdictions occur in territorial waters, or once the drugs reach land. This could include allowing dhows suspected of moving drugs to make landfall, which would enable arrests and prosecutions and further investigations, but it carries the risk of drugs failing to be seized and being trafficked on.

Attendees at the Working Group expressed interest in enhanced collaboration and intelligence exchanges between maritime forces and taskforces with land-based authorities of the countries where the drugs are likely to land.

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3 UNODC Assessment of the response to illicit weapons trafficking in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, 2024.
4 Combined Maritime Forces
5 National Authorities of Sri Lanka, presentation
6 Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)
7 National Authorities of Sri Lanka, presentation & Combined Maritime Forces, presentation
8 Combined Maritime Forces, presentation
Findings of the Expert Working Group on Opiates and Methamphetamine Trafficking on the Southern Route

MAP 2  Land and maritime routes of heroin and methamphetamine in Eastern and Southern Africa

A number of broad drug trafficking routes in Eastern and Southern Africa, were identified at the Working Group which included both maritime and land-based routes. Routes are subject to change depending on law enforcement activity and changes in trafficking activity by organised crime groups.

Trafficking routes within Africa

A number of broad drug trafficking routes in Eastern and Southern Africa, were identified at the Working Group which included both maritime and land-based routes. Routes are subject to change depending on law enforcement activity and changes in trafficking activity by organised crime groups.

Trafficking routes in the Indian Ocean Islands

At the Working Group, officials from the Seychelles reported that most of the drugs trafficked into the country are trafficked from continental Africa (mostly South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania) or from other Western Indian Ocean islands (such as Madagascar and Mauritius). Drugs are trafficked by sea or, to a lesser extent by air, with the Seychelles as their final destination; but can also transit through the country en route from the Makran Coast to Eastern Africa. This was exemplified by a major seizure that took place in Seychelles in April 2023 from an Iranian flagged vessel where 52 packages of crystal methamphetamine and heroin equivalent to 1 ton, were found aboard. The final destination was Mozambique.9

Elsewhere in the Indian Ocean Islands, officials from Mauritius reported that heroin is trafficked into the country from African countries, principally from major ports in continental Eastern Africa and from Madagascar, which appears to be a transit country for drugs trafficked to Mauritius. Furthermore, Mauritius also reported that synthetic drugs, other than methamphetamine, were trafficked into the country from China or Europe, although there were only limited seizures of these drug types.10

9 National Authorities of Seychelles, presentation
10 National Authorities of Mauritius, presentation
Other routes within Africa

Participants at the Working Group from countries in continental Africa reported multiple routes used to traffic heroin and methamphetamine within the continent. Officials from Mozambique informed that most the drugs trafficked into Mozambique enter by maritime means and are then transported from coastal areas onwards to South Africa via land. Mozambique does not seem to have a significant internal market for drugs trafficked from Afghanistan and Mozambican officials reported that the country is mainly a transit route for drugs. Mozambique and South Africa reported seizures, both jointly and independently, of heroin and methamphetamine on the road between the two countries and at the border crossing points between the two countries. Outside of this established Mozambique-South Africa road trafficking route, officials from South Africa highlighted that Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini and Botswana are also used as transit countries to traffic heroin and methamphetamine into South Africa, possibly in part to avoid detection along the more well-known Mozambique-South Africa route.

The trend of diversification of the routes on the continent was also confirmed by other countries at the Working Group including Zambia, where officials reported a significant increase in drug trafficking and drug use, especially in the case of heroin. Zambian officials highlighted the possibility of the country being used as a storage point and transit country for heroin being distributed to neighbouring countries, and to other parts of the world. Zambian officials gave the example of a seizure of 12 kg of heroin trafficked from South Africa to Ethiopia was made from a human courier, and consignments of heroin in transit from Tanzania to South Africa were also intercepted in Zambia. Additionally, the number of arrests related to heroin made in Zambia were reported to have increased, with 85 persons being arrested for heroin trafficking offenses in the first seven months of 2023. (see Organised Crime Group section below).

According to Tanzanian officials at the Working Group, Tanzania continues to seize sizable amounts of heroin and, since 2021, small quantities of methamphetamine as well. The drugs were seized either at sea in dhows, or on land in storage houses used by Organised Crime Groups for onward redistribution. Some of the broad destinations identified for these drugs by Tanzanian officials included Western Africa (Liberia was mentioned in one case), Asia, Europe and Oceania.
From Africa towards other destination countries

Known routes for redistribution of heroin and methamphetamine by courier mail

Of the participants at the Working Group, South Africa and Tanzania reported distribution of drugs to international destinations by air or courier mail methods. Tanzania reported seizures of heroin and methamphetamine concealed in parcels destined for a wide range of global destinations, including to countries in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Australia and Indonesia. South African officials reported a trend of using courier packages to distribute drugs is. Use of human couriers to traffic drugs are increasing but this modus operandi has not yet returned to the level it was pre-Covid. South Africa reported that, Canada is one of the top destination countries for heroin trafficked from South Africa by human courier, while crystal methamphetamine was trafficked by courier from South Africa to Western European nations, Australia and the United States. In one case, South African officials gave the example of a methamphetamine seizure, where the drug was purchased from an Iranian national who was later arrested and extradited from South Africa to the US for trial.

Drug trafficking via air routes in Africa

Participants at the Working Group also reported a trend of increased air trafficking of drugs to, within and from Africa. The participants identified several major airports in Africa...
including Kamuzu International Airport (Malawi), Cape Town and O.R. Tambo international airports (South Africa) and Addis Ababa Bole International airport (Ethiopia) as being particular transhipment points for drugs.

Networks in South Africa are suspected of trafficking drugs into Europe, Canada and Australia via South African airports. There is a possibility that airport personnel and crew smuggle drugs from the region to Europe. Data provided to the Working Group by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) covering the period 2018-2021 identified Ethiopia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa as countries of origin or transit for heroin seized in the EU. Participants at the EWG also noted air trafficking routes from Africa to countries in South Asia, mainly India. For example, in July 2023, a female citizen of Burundi, traveling from Nairobi, Kenya and transiting via the UAE was arrested at her destination of Hyderabad, India with approximately 3kg of heroin concealed in her baggage.

Working Group participants also identified the trafficking of heroin to smaller regional and local airports within Africa. Trafficking to these airports is in some ways easier than through the major international airports as they have a lower capacity to monitor baggage and persons transiting the airport.

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21 ‘Illicit goods trafficking via port and airport facilities in Africa’, INTERPOL, June 2020
22 Source: EMCDDA Non-EU countries identified as the ‘origin’ or ‘transit’ of heroin seized in EU, 2018-2021
Findings of the Expert Working Group on Opiates and Methamphetamine Trafficking on the Southern Route

Heroin and Methamphetamine Seizures

TABLE 1  Heroin seizures, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, in Kg, 2020-2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>27,895</td>
<td>9,638</td>
<td>11,982</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Countries represented at the Working Group provided opiate and heroin seizure statistics. Of note, while continued heroin seizures were reported several countries had also started to seize small quantities of methamphetamine, where previously there had been none. This may have been a reflection of changing law enforcement priorities, but could also be the beginning of increased methamphetamine supplies entering local drug markets.

Heroin seizures

Of the countries represented at the Working Group, Pakistan reported the highest quantities of heroin seized over the period 2020-2022. Seizures of the drug declined between 2020 and 2021 but then saw a modest increase from 2021 to 2022. Comparatively, heroin seizures reported by Sri Lanka over the same period were lower and did not describe a significant increase over time, but remained relatively stable until 2023 when a decline was recorded. Although seizure data for 2023 was not available for Pakistan, they did report continued large heroin seizures, particularly at the border of Afghanistan, to other members of the Working Group, during 2023, despite the introduction of the Taliban ban on opium cultivation and drug trafficking in 2022.

Four other countries presented seizure data to the Working Group. Mauritius reported 34 kg of heroin seized in 2023. Seychelles also reported a significant increase in the quantity of heroin seized in 2023, with 627 kg reported for that year. Both Mozambique and Tanzania seized large quantities of heroin in 2021, but reported declines in the following year. Although data for 2023 was not formally provided by Mozambique, separately the national authorities highlighted the seizure of over 400 kg of heroin in that year.
### HEROIN AND METHAMPHETAMINE SEIZURES

#### Heroin seizures 2020-2023, in kgs, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Republic of Tanzania</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1125</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Authorities of Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania.

**PIC. 1** Seizure of 472 kg of heroin in Nampula, Mozambique, 2023

![Image of a van and a bag of seized drugs]

Source: National Authorities of Mozambique

#### Methamphetamine seizures

As with heroin, Pakistan had seized the largest quantity of methamphetamine out of all of the participants at the Working Group. Seizures of the drug in Pakistan had more than doubled between 2021 and 2022. Conversely officials from Sri Lanka reported a decline in the quantity of methamphetamine seized.

Both Mauritius and Seychelles reported methamphetamine seizures in 2023. In the case of Mauritius, these small-scale street level seizures were the first time the drug had been seized in the country. In particular, officials from Mozambique reported a single large seizure of methamphetamine in September of 2022 which accounted for most of the country’s annual methamphetamine seizures for that year.
Findings of the Expert Working Group on Opiates and Methamphetamine Trafficking on the Southern Route

Methamphetamine seizures 2020-2023, in kgs, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2020</th>
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<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
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<td>NO DATA</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1579</td>
<td>1212</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Republic of Tanzania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>NO DATA</td>
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Source: National Authorities of Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania.

PIC. 2 Seizure of 819kg of methamphetamine, Mozambique, September 2022

In addition to the drug seizures presented by Member States at the EWG, the Combined Maritime Force (CMF) operating in the Indian Ocean reported the following drug seizures between US Financial years 2014 and 2024 (see Table 2).

The CMF first interdicted methamphetamine shipments in 2014 with 12 kgs seized, followed by a period of four years without further seizures of the drug. Sixty-four kg were interdicted in 2019 with seizures increasing to 10,394 kg in 2021. Up to 2022, larger quantities of heroin than methamphetamine was seized each year by vessels operating under CMF – as of 2023 this appears to have switched, with greater quantities of methamphetamine than heroin seized in FY 2023 and the first half of FY 2024.

Impact of the Taliban opium ban on drug flows along the southern route.

Several attendees at the Working Group raised the topic of the Taliban drug ban and its impact on drug flows along the southern route. In 2022 Taliban supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzade issued a decree banning the cultivation and trading of opium. The April ban was wide ranging and not just a ban on poppy cultivation, but on manufacture of drugs of all types, as well as the use and transportation of drugs. On 8 March 2023, the Taliban
term, due to the economic pressures on opium farmers, particularly those without large opium inventories or landholdings. Further, participants held the view that there were sufficient stocks of opiates in the supply chain to mitigate a ban in the short term. Continued large scale seizures reported at the Working Group support the view that the ban has not as yet had lasting impact further down the supply route along the Southern Route.

Participants at the Working Group held the view that the Taliban’s drug ban would not be sustainable in the long term, due to the economic pressures on opium farmers, particularly those without large opium inventories or landholdings. Further, participants held the view that there were sufficient stocks of opiates in the supply chain to mitigate a ban in the short term. Continued large scale seizures of opiates reported at the Working Group support the view that the ban has not as yet had lasting impact further down the supply route along the Southern Route.

---

**TABLE 2**

Heroin and methamphetamine seizures reported by CMF, in Kg, by US financial year, 2014-2024

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Heroin</th>
<th>Methamphetamine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4,112</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,601</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2017</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>3,045</td>
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<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>9,063</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>9,356</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>8,211</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024**</td>
<td>2,823.7</td>
<td>5,807.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Combined Maritime Force (CMF)

Note: The US financial year runs from 1st October to 31st September

** 2024 data covers the period 3rd October 2023 to 16 Jan 2024.

---

 issued a further decree expanding the ban to cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan, to complement the earlier edict of April 2022. At the time of the Working Group, the Taliban’s drug ban appeared to be holding for an unprecedented second year.
Snapshot of the drug demand situation in Africa

Increase of heroin consumption along the Southern Route

The countries that attended the Working Group and covered by this assessment, report a perceived increase in drug demand, including heroin, cocaine and synthetic drugs. This perceived increase remains challenging to quantify given the lack of consistent and comprehensive data on drug demand in the region and limited national prevalence studies. Indirect indicators however point to an increase in the supply, availability and use of drugs, and this trend disproportionately affects the youth.

Of the participants at the Working Group, Pakistan reported an increase in the number of people who use drugs, especially among the youth. In 2012-2013, a national survey on drug use estimated that about over 6 million people used drugs in the country. Although this survey represents the latest data available on drug use in the country, a new survey is currently underway to assess the changes in drug use within the country.

In addition, Mauritius indicated a perceived increase in the supply of drugs to the country and a related surge in the availability and demand for drugs. Young people in Mauritius are targeted by criminal networks and are used for retail sales on the island. Heroin and cocaine use was also reported to have increased among the youth in the Seychelles. In Zambia, heroin abuse and trafficking are becoming more common especially among the youth. Heroin is reportedly being sold in townships across the country and the target group are young people, including cases of heroin use among school pupils.

There is a lack of consistent data on drug and heroin purity and pricing in the region. Heroin purity can be used as an indicator for the availability of drugs in a given country with a reduction in supply usually linked to a decrease in purity. Limited information on heroin purity was provided by attendees at the Working Group, with only Seychelles reporting heroin purity data, at a relatively high level of between 50-70 per cent purity. According to the RNIFC, seizures of heroin in the Indian Ocean between 2014 and 2022, showed an extremely variable range of purities for heroin, from 14.1 per cent to 71.7 per cent depending on the seizure, but with an average purity of 45.3 per cent over the period 2014-2022.

Drug treatment is available in the countries that attended the Working Group, although access to it may be restricted due to the social stigma associated with accessing treatment programs or, the high cost of treatment. Some of the countries attending the Working Group have strategies in place to ensure that people who use drugs are not discriminated against while accessing health, legal, education, employment and other social protection services. Mauritius provides methadone treatment for heroin user and educates its population about the harm of drug use through public information campaigns. The Seychelles also has a methadone treatment programme and recorded 10,000 methadone clients as of April 2022. Zambia is in the process of constructing a National Drug Rehabilitation and Skills Development Centre which is expected to provide drug abusers with adequate treatment and support to overcome addiction, but encounters challenges related to the cost of constructing the facility.

Synthetic drugs consumption: an evolving situation

There is limited data on synthetic drug use in most of the countries who attended the Working Group. Some countries reported a perceived increase in methamphetamine consumption, including Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Other countries such as the Seychelles and Mauritius, had only begun to record street-level seizures of methamphetamine, starting in 2023, possibility indicating the start of a new trend of methamphetamine consumption. Mauritius also reported an issue with synthetic cannabinoids. Other countries such as Tanzania and Mozambique, did not share data on methamphetamine use but reported that methamphetamine use has likely not penetrated their domestic markets yet, although large quantities transit through their territories. Limited data on Methamphetamine purity was provided by participants at the Expert Working Group. However, data
provided by RNIFC on maritime seizures of methamphetamine, indicated that the purity of the seized drug in the Indian Ocean is very high, ranging from 94.7% to 99.5%, with an average purity of 98 per cent.\textsuperscript{38}

A trend of mixing drugs was reported by some countries present at the Expert Working Group. This included heroin and cocaine being mixed in cannabis rollups in the Seychelles and consumption of heroin mixed with cannabis in both Zambia and South Africa.\textsuperscript{39} South Africa has had long standing issue with ‘nyaope’\textsuperscript{40} which is heroin mixed with various substances. The composition varies, with small quantities of heroin mixed with red poison, HIV medications, dried ammonia, or a range of other possible products, then sprinkled into cannabis capsules to sell. It is extremely potent, and addictive and South African authorities report that it is very difficult to combat the demand from users. The price makes it very affordable for users in the country, with a nyaope capsule reportedly costing 1 USD, whereas 1g of heroin is reportedly 16 USD. If the capsule with heroin is mixed with cannabis the price reported is 2.50 USD.\textsuperscript{41}

### Poly drug trafficking and links to other crime types

The Southern Route and Eastern and Southern Africa have a varied crime picture and trafficking routes should not be looked at in isolation. Although not clearly mapped, there are links between different types of crimes that require a holistic approach to law enforcement strategies.

As an example, the Trilateral Planning Cell (TPC) was created together with Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania to fight initially heroin trafficking, but rapidly expanded to other drugs and precursors as it is challenging to build an understanding of the bigger picture of organized crime networks while focusing on one type of narcotics only. The TPC reported that joint operations between various agencies usually come across other issues like firearms and wildlife trafficking. Although there was no clear indication of links to drug trafficking, it remains a possibility. The suggestion was made to coordinate and address all other criminal threats and other crimes that impact the region including firearm and wildlife trafficking, illicit finance and money laundering as well as terrorism.

Links were also reported between drug trafficking and human trafficking, with cases of individuals used as guarantees by criminal networks sourcing drugs.\textsuperscript{42} In those cases, criminal networks in African countries place an order for drugs and send a person who will remain in the country until the payment is made. This method was reported in the Seychelles in relation to purchases of drugs in Iran (Islamic Republic of), with nine reports received by the authorities regarding such cases. If the payment is not made, the person does not return to the Seychelles.\textsuperscript{43}

Some synthetic drug producing laboratories were detected in Mozambique.\textsuperscript{44} In South Africa, liquid cocaine was detected, and it could be converted in a laboratory at some point along the route towards its final destination.\textsuperscript{45}

When it comes to poly drug trafficking, large quantities of hashish are trafficked from the Makran coast, including to Yemen. The trafficking of hashish is considered an easy source of money for OCGs.\textsuperscript{46} It is unclear if there are links between the trafficking of hashish and heroin in the Arabian Sea.

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\textsuperscript{38} Regional Narcotics Intelligence Fusion Centre (RNIFC), presentation.
\textsuperscript{39} National Authorities of Seychelles, presentation, National authorities if Zambia, presentation, National Authorities of South Africa, presentation.
\textsuperscript{40} National Authorities of South Africa; the composition of nyaope is reported by users, not analysis
\textsuperscript{41} National Authorities of South Africa
\textsuperscript{42} National Authorities of Seychelles, presentation
\textsuperscript{43} National Authorities of Seychelles, presentation
\textsuperscript{44} National Authorities of Mozambique, presentation
\textsuperscript{45} National Authorities of South Africa, presentation
\textsuperscript{46} International law enforcement presentation
Modus operandi, trafficking methods

Based on airport seizures, human couriers transporting narcotics on commercial flights are still seen as a common modus operandi. Concealment methods have remained the same over the years, including drugs hidden inside foil or metal object, or sewed into baggage. One modus operandi that has been observed recently only is the smuggling by air passenger of liquid cocaine concealed in a bottle of spirit. For other types of modus operandi, ingestion of capsules containing heroin have been observed by air couriers and couriers crossing land borders.

Officials from Tanzania reported that Nigerian networks make machinery spare parts in Uganda that are then transported by bus into Tanzania. Subsequently, individuals, especially women, use the spare parts to hide drugs before dispatching them using courier companies. The senders’ particulars are usually fake. While waiting to be hidden and sent out, the drugs are kept in the country in storage houses. It was noted that the work of stockpile keeper is usually done by Tanzanian women.

Land

On the African Continent, large quantities of heroin and methamphetamine have been seized traveling by road on motorbikes, cars, and trucks. This included a major seizure of 819kg of methamphetamine in Mozambique in September of 2022. Significant quantities of both heroin and methamphetamine have been regularly seized in past years en route between Mozambique and South Africa in trucks or cars. Tanzania also reported large quantities of heroin trafficked by road from Tanzania to Nairobi, Kenya. Tanzanian motorcycle drivers are given boxes of heroin which they then traffic through unofficial borders to Kenya. In one such case the drugs were destined for Liberia. Drugs seized along the Southern Route are often mixed loads (Heroin/amphetamine; heroin/methamphetamine) which raises the question of the extent to which Organised Crime Groups are involved in poly-drug trafficking.

Maritime

Most of the opiates and methamphetamine trafficked into Africa along the southern route is trafficked by maritime methods. Large quantities of heroin and methamphetamine are transported on dhows from the Makran Coast along a wide range of routes through the Indian Ocean and reach the East African coast. Based on interdictions, the most well-known modus operandi for trafficking drugs at sea is through the use of dhows. When fearing detection, it is common practice that the dhows drop the narcotics into the sea by using the anchor, mark the location and following the search of the boat, recover the narcotics again. Common observed concealment methods were as follows: drugs are concealed inside radar/fenders and winch, inside the water tank, inside gas cylinders. Maritime containers are also used to traffic large volumes of drugs along the route, although less is known on the modus operandi due to the lack of available data and seizures in Africa.

Air and Courier mail

Several countries attending the EWG mentioned use of mail parcels as the prevalent modus operandi to redistribute narcotics within continental Africa and from continental Africa to other destination markets. Heroin and methamphetamine are concealed in various merchandise, including machine parts, garments, even human hair, and then shipped to various destinations.
beside data on seizures/quantities. When interdictions happen in international waters, the drugs are seized and destroyed, and the crew released. Interrogation of the crew and inspection of the boats rarely helps trace the drugs to its owner.

Regional member states showed eagerness to go beyond 'catch and release' operations against low level couriers, as well as strengthen institutional mechanisms to ensure sufficient legal finish. The prosecution of members of criminal groups higher in the hierarchy is often hindered by the inability to link them to drug smuggling cases directly, as they can be far removed from the couriers who are arrested. It is sometimes, however, possible to prosecute known members of OCGs involved in drug smuggling for different crimes, as long as authorities cooperate across agencies, for example, within an integrated border management programme that involves all relevant agencies across the territory.

Organised Crime Groups

Most of the countries present at the Working Group mentioned limitations in their capacity to produce comprehensive criminal intelligence analysis. Despite this there was a strong will from countries present at the Working Group conduct more collaborative analysis regionally and beyond. Improved analytical capabilities and collaboration would help to build a clearer picture of the organized crime networks operating along the Southern Route. There is a challenge for most countries in the region to identify criminal networks and members of OCGs that are higher in the hierarchy, which are often not based in the country where the seizure was made. More often than not, after seizures of narcotics are made and couriers arrested, there is no subsequent investigation into the owners of the drugs or the groups that orchestrate the trafficking. Seizures that are made at sea by combined forces are also not bringing a lot of actionable intelligence beside data on seizures/quantities. When interdictions happen in international waters, the drugs are seized and destroyed, and the crew released. Interrogation of the crew and inspection of the boats rarely helps trace the drugs to its owner.

Regional member states showed eagerness to go beyond 'catch and release' operations against low level couriers, as well as strengthen institutional mechanisms to ensure sufficient legal finish. The prosecution of members of criminal groups higher in the hierarchy is often hindered by the inability to link them to drug smuggling cases directly, as they can be far removed from the couriers who are arrested. It is sometimes, however, possible to prosecute known members of OCGs involved in drug smuggling for different crimes, as long as authorities cooperate across agencies, for example, within an integrated border management programme that involves all relevant agencies across the territory.
Challenges were also mentioned in terms of analysts’ capabilities and how to improve the way countries in the region centralise the data in order to do further analysis.\(^6^1\) One of TPC’s purposes is to build the bigger organized crime picture in the region and understand who the ones in control of the network are. They raised the need for more support from the UNODC and international partners on analysis, as it is a known gap on capacity.\(^6^2\)

**Fragmented groups with a critical role played by brokers**

It is reported that criminal groups operating in Africa are very fragmented.\(^6^3\) When it comes to dhows smuggling, it is reported that traffickers do not own dhows. Dhow owners put different loads of drugs ordered by different groups. Then the drugs go to different groups in Africa, and onward distribution is organized by the brokers who consolidated the orders of narcotics from different groups.\(^6^4\)

Due to this structure, there is a critical role on the Southern Route played by brokers. Brokers based in Africa collects orders from customers and given orders for a quantity ranging from 50-200kg of drugs; they make contact with other brokers in Pakistan or in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Those have relationships with suppliers in Afghanistan and put together a shipment, contract a dhow, and hire a captain. The dhow comes down the Southern Route and is received by the broker, who then parcels it out to customers (buyers being responsible to ship the narcotics onward to their final destination). Brokers based in Africa tend to be from South Asian backgrounds. Families who have been in East Africa for generations and have cultural ties with South-West Asia or on the Makran coast generally are able to establish relationships.

**A strong presence of Nigerian crime groups**

Nigerian organized crime groups are involved in drug trafficking in most countries of the region. They manage trafficking within Africa and onward to Europe and other destination markets, including Asia. Heroin parcel distribution in Eastern Africa is mostly handled by Nigerian networks; the distribution of crystal methamphetamine to Europe as well. As to the onward distribution of methamphetamine to Australia and New Zealand, it is believed that criminal groups of Chinese nationality are involved.\(^6^5\) The involvement of Nigerian OCGs in organizing various shipment from Africa to destinations across the world was mentioned, especially the organization of mail carrier shipments.\(^6^6\) This included Nigerian networks reportedly involved in coordinating the fabrication of machine parts in Uganda, that are transported by bus to Tanzania. The Nigerian networks then coordinate shipments via courier companies to send the spare parts to Europe with hidden narcotics inside, especially heroin. It is reported that these Nigerian groups use Tanzanian women as store keepers for the heroin waiting to be shipped. The money generated is generally laundered via legitimate businesses (e.g. spare parts businesses) that are familiar with how to move money to Nigeria.\(^6^7\)

South Africa reported the involvement of Nigerian and Mexican crime group members in the manufacturing of methamphetamine in South Africa. This could be a potential indication that the Nigerian groups may want to manufacture better and cheaper methamphetamine in South Africa and are facing profit loss if continuing to distribute Afghan methamphetamine.\(^6^8\) It is not believed to be a strategy of the Mexican cartels, but more a strategy from Nigerian groups, appealing to subject matter experts from Mexico to build capability for methamphetamine fabrication.\(^6^9\)

Sri Lanka provided comprehensive drug related arrest data to the Working Group. This data provided some insights into the organised crime groups operating within Sri Lanka. By far the majority of those arrested for drug offenses came from south or south west Asia, predominantly India, Iran (Islamic Republic of,) and Pakistan. Smaller numbers of European, African and Asian citizens were reportedly arrested for narcotics offenses. While the details of these cases are not available, it is possible that these arrested persons were couriers acting on behalf of criminal networks in these regions.

Senior Organised Crime (OCG) members can be based outside of the African region; Dubai was mentioned by participants at the Working Group as one alleged destination for residence of senior Organised Crime Groups members, as well as transhipment location for trafficked drugs.\(^7^0\) It is also understood that there are buyers based in Europe and some are orchestrating the supply of heroin and methamphetamine to Europe via Africa. However, the involvement of European-based crime groups in the supply side from Africa, is a knowledge gap.

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61 Trilateral Planning Cell
62 Trilateral Planning Cell
63 Regional Narcotics Interagency Fusion Cell
64 Regional Narcotics Interagency Fusion Cell
65 National Authorities of Tanzania, presentation
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 National Authorities of South Africa presentation
69 International Law Enforcement
70 National Authorities of Sri Lanka, presentation & National Authorities of Tanzania, presentation.
### Number of Drug related arrests
(all narcotics offences)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Year</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<td>157</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data is up to 31 August 2023
** Data is up to 31 July 2023
Source: National Authorities of Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka. National Authorities of Mauritius and Zambia

### Zambia heroin related arrests (2023)

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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>February</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>July</td>
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</table>

Source: National Authorities of Zambia
### Sri Lanka Number of drug related arrests, by nationality (all narcotics offenses)

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<th>Country</th>
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<th>2019</th>
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<th>2021</th>
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National responses to cope with supply and demand

All the countries attending the Working Group reported increasing their efforts and strategies to tackle heroin and methamphetamine supply and demand. One the supply side these include efforts relating to improving inter-agency cooperation (for example establishing integrated border management processes), developing regional and international cooperation, and strengthening legal frameworks. On the demand side, most countries have put in place harm-reduction strategies, drug treatment and awareness-raising efforts to educate the public. This includes an effort to upgrade healthcare and rehabilitation service as well as information campaigns.

Pakistan updated its anti-narcotics strategy in 2019 with a national policy that covers three aspects: demand reduction, supply reduction and international cooperation. More penalties for drug trafficking offenses were introduced, as well as some changes to eliminate the discretion of sentencing for drug offenses by judges. On the demand side, the Education Ministry published a new policy in 2021 against the use and abuse of narcotics in education institutes. There were further developments relating to developing model addiction treatment and rehabilitation centres and a significant effort to educate the public via many different channels, including through use of an app. The Zindagi app was launched by the government of Pakistan in 2020 to halt penetration of drugs in society, but especially among the youth.

Mozambique reported that it has various strategies in place to prevent and fight drug trafficking, including strengthened cooperation with international agencies and within national agencies to strive to continue the work on a multisectoral approach and intelligence work. The existing legal framework on Mozambican maritime law was updated in 2019, with the development of a new law (the Law of the Sea No. 20/2019) establishing maritime courts in all provinces, that can deal with crimes happening at sea, including maritime drug trafficking.

Zambia reported increased drug awareness activities under the country’s national drug demand reduction programme. Counselling is offered to drug dependent persons in collaboration with government hospitals. A national drug rehabilitation and skills development centre is being constructed for adequate treatment and support to overcome addiction. Several training and awareness-raising programmes for the prevention of drug and substance abuse and a family parenting programme were developed that have reportedly proved efficient.

Tanzania has an integrated mechanism for early identification diagnostics as part of a harm reduction medically assisted therapy. There is a will from the national government to ensure that people who turn to health services for drug treatment are respected and not discriminated against.
Regional cooperation

A major finding from the Working Group was the need for improved regional co-operation both within Africa, but also between Africa, South-west Asia other regions and with international organizations. It was widely recognized at the Working Group that effective responses to the trafficking of Afghan opiates and methamphetamine to international markets required greater information sharing, joint operations and prosecution of trafficking networks operating across borders. Within Southern and Eastern Africa some work has already been done in this regard through the establishment of the Trilateral Planning Cell (TPC) between Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa. Other regional organisations including the Regional Cooperation Operations Centre (RCOC) and the Regional Narcotics Information Fusion Centre (RNIFC), also attended the Working Group.

The Trilateral Planning Cell (TPC)

The TPC has the potential to become best practice with a view to expand its reach in terms of countries that take part and activities beyond narcotic trafficking. The TPC has developed some key areas and lines of work around coordination, strengthening border security, intelligence sharing, strategic messaging and legal finishing. To function well, the TPC is getting visibility and buy-in at the ministerial level. The Ministers from the three countries endorsed the mechanism in 2019, and they renewed their commitment in July 2022. Getting commitment from the highest level was mentioned as best practice to ensure sufficient engagement from all the countries that take part in the TPC.

The TPC is currently striving to build capacity to train analysts and frontline officers, who will then be able to facilitate intelligence gathering and dissemination within the organisation. To facilitate this, a number of initiatives have been developed or proposed, to include:

- Feedback loop to partner countries after seizures:
  Seizures are not systematically reported between countries along the Southern Route, or even between different agencies within a given country. Creating a systematic feedback loop for partner agencies and countries on heroin and methamphetamine seizures would enable countries to develop a clearer intelligence picture on the networks involved in the drug trade. A standardised template was created to facilitate dissemination of information aimed at enabling further analysis. The goal is to disseminate this template and ensure broad use by frontline officers to ensure there is a common way to collect information and intelligence on the ground. It was mentioned by participants that further support was needed with regards to building analytical capabilities.

- Expand systematic information gathering and sharing beyond the region to get a fuller picture of organized crime networks. Once the initial core of the TPC has been strengthened, associate membership or liaison cells for countries outside the region could be envisaged, including for countries such as Pakistan. Cooperation frameworks for such countries should be developed.

- Leveraging liaison officers based in the region. The existing network of International Liaison Officers (ILOs) in the region would enable other countries, including European countries, to share information with the TPC. The process and procedures for information sharing between the TPC and national agencies

Background of the Trilateral Planning Cell

Significant quantities of heroin produced in Afghanistan travels along the Southern Route; Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa are very much affected. Authorities from these three countries in response to this challenge, supported by UNODC, established a mechanism called the Trilateral Planning Cell (TPC). The trilateral strategy was endorsed at a Ministerial meeting in March 2019 in Maputo. It was agreed to locate this mechanism in Mozambique and rotate directorship among the three countries every two years.

The TPC strives to focus on disrupting crime networks, with the objective of facilitating the exchange of information between intelligence officers, including targeting of criminal networks. A joint operational plan was developed, and the TPC encouraged as a best practice all participating countries to form a more integrated border management strategy. South Africa has recently established a Border Management Authority to this effect. The BMA was formally established as Schedule 3A Public Entity on 1 April 2023.

Success stories: The TPC countries led several joint operations as well as Operation Troika in 2022. Between April and November 2022, these joint activities led to the following seizures:

1. Heroin: 856.3kg
2. Precursor chemicals/methamphetamine: 11104kg
3. Mandrax: 20,000 tablets
4. Cannabis: 1597kg
5. Cocaine: 92.13kg

with ILOs would need to be discussed and developed for the effective sharing of information.

- **Explore cooperation with International Organisations.** The Regional Cooperation Operations Centre, (RCOC) and the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre, (RMIFC) are regional centres focusing on maritime security operations and information. Their knowledge and expertise can be part of the solution to support the countries on the Eastern and Southern Coast of Africa improve overall understanding of the crime picture. There is a possibility to explore frameworks for these two organizations to cooperate with the TPC.

The **Regional Cooperation Operations Centre (RCOC), Seychelles, Western Indian Ocean.**

This coordination centre is supported by the Indian Ocean Commission through the EU Programme to promote Maritime Security in the Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region (EU MASE Programme.) Its regional mission is to coordinate maritime operations around combating piracy, combating organised crime and illegal conduct at sea, protection of the marine environment against foreseeable threats, assistance in search and rescue activities at sea and participation in the restoration of safety and security of maritime navigation.

The Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) was established in Antananarivo, Madagascar in 2016 under the European Union’s Maritime Security Programme. The centre shares information on maritime security and safety matters within the Western Indian Ocean region, including violence at sea, illegal fishing, smuggling and contraband at sea, irregular migration at sea, and maritime safety incidents.

The RCOC, whose main function is to conduct joint actions at sea, works alongside the RMIFC, which is responsible for exchanging and sharing maritime information and alert the RCOC of any abnormal activity at sea.

Source: RCOC presentation, EU and Indian Ocean Commission

**PIC. 7 UNODC Global Programme on Criminal Network Disruption (GPCD) Training on Systems Analysis and Disruption Planning of Drug Trafficking Networks along the Southern Route 18-21 March 2024.**

Source: UNODC.

The data and information exchanged at the Expert Working Group provided a shared understanding of the current situation relating to the trafficking of heroin and methamphetamines from Afghanistan to Eastern and Southern Africa and beyond. Based on the information exchange, the Expert Working Group identified a series of policy and technical recommendations actions to ensure an actionable follow-up and impact of the discussions.

**Technical recommendations**

- **1/ Improving Intelligence analysis with the aim of understanding the bigger picture of organized crime networks.**

As a follow up, and to assess any further gaps and to support capacity building in the region, UNODC’s Global Programme on Criminal Network Disruption (GPCD) is planning additional work on the Systems Analysis and Disruption Planning of Drug Trafficking Networks along the Southern Route. Initial work on this area includes training for the TPC countries (Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania) which was held on 18-21 March 2024 in South Africa. The training was conducted in partnership with UNODC’s Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) and TPC. GPCD anticipates this training to progress into a “campaign planning”

76 UNODC CRIMJUST CRIMJUST on X “GPCD, @UNODC_MCP & Tri-lateral Planning Cell strengthened the capability of 🇿🇿, 🇽🇿 & 🇹🇿 to conduct business model analysis of drug trafficking networks (Southern Route) Achievements: Identify policy & capability gaps 🇽🇿 Provide analytical techniques & solutions 🇽🇿 @ukhomeoffice https://t.co/ORLsr2Z1AA / X (twitter.com)
been complemented by a programme to strengthen individual and collective improvements in performance. Training in technical skills has been reinforced with in situ technical support from experts to support intelligence collection and analysis, investigations, and prosecution, as well as capacity-building training in a range of core and specialist skills from the outset.

Considered the priorities of key national stakeholders and has been focused on building technical capability along the southern route. Participants at the Working Group held the view that most of the methamphetamine is produced from ephedra but it cannot be discounted that some may have over the counter medication (OTC) or bulk pharmaceuticals as the precursor agent. Some work is already being undertaken to forensically analyze samples of methamphetamine manufactured in Afghanistan to identify its composition and purity. However further work in this area is required. In particular there is a need to obtain sufficient samples of methamphetamine to build up a comprehensive body of evidence, and in part this would require improved sharing of samples. There remain multiple logistic and legal challenges with this which requires improved sample sharing mechanisms.

The UNODC CRIMJUST programme and potential proposal for way forward in the region with the TPC countries]

CRIMJUST – Disrupting Criminal Networks operating along Illicit Trafficking Routes is implemented as part of the Global Programme on Criminal Network Disruption (GPCD) of the Border Management Branch (BMB) of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in partnership with INTERPOL. Launched in 2016, CRIMJUST aims contribute to the reduction of the impact of organized crime and related corruption on the security and rule of law of countries/regions along illicit trafficking routes. The programme initially focused on building technical capability along the cocaine route before shifting its strategic focus to primarily facilitating criminal justice cooperation to promote post-seizure investigations in 2019. In January 2023, a new third phase of CRIMJUST was launched to strengthen transnational investigations, criminal justice actions and criminal justice cooperation along illicit trafficking routes in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, including specific actions to bolster capacity to identify and disrupt illicit financial flows. Both South Africa and Mozambique are already CRIMJUST beneficiaries. CRIMJUST III also aims to strengthen capacity the human rights and gender dimensions of criminal justice responses to transnational trafficking in illicit commodities, with Mozambique being one of four countries selected to pilot a more focused programme of support.

In West Africa, CRIMJUST is delivering projects which enhance the effectiveness of this ‘whole route’ approach with additional support at both national and sub-regional level which responds to specific barriers which prevent criminal justice actors from pushing ‘beyond the seizure’ to disrupt criminal networks through international cooperation. CRIMJUST is implementing two national level projects (Liberia and Senegal) and a sub-regional project, focused on the French-speaking countries along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea (Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, and Togo). The design of each project has considered the priorities of key national stakeholders and has been tailored to the specific operational context. Interventions include capacity-building training in a range of core and specialist skills from intelligence collection and analysis, investigations, and prosecution, reinforced with in situ technical support from experts to support beneficiaries in putting learning into practice and delivering sustainable improvements in performance. Training in technical skills has been complemented by a programme to strengthen individual and institutional standards of ethics and integrity.

CRIMJUST support in TPC countries would build on existing synergies with South Africa and Mozambique to develop programming that integrates lessons learned from its geographically diverse project portfolio while being tailored to the national and regional context. Specific interventions would be designed in a participative process to identify opportunities to strengthen criminal justice responses at both national, regional, and transregional level, through integrated, holistic, and sustainable solutions. This could include:

> Capacity building with in-situ technical support as a catalyst for sustainable change, including regional activities to support the development of strong relationships between criminal justice actors.

> Layered and vertically integrated interventions that also address senior leaders, improving their capacity to drive sustainable change and deliver more effective criminal justice responses to transnational illicit trafficking.

> Strengthening formal and informal regional and international cooperation mechanisms and bolstering existing networks of prosecutors and law enforcement personnel.

> Enabling cooperation on cross-border investigations (both regional and trans-regional) through the facilitation of investigative case forums to achieve maximum disruption of organized crime networks.

> Supporting the development of a coherent regional response to emergent issues in transnational illicit trafficking through regional thematic forums.

> Developing sustainable programmes to reinforce institutional integrity and mitigate human rights risk, in recognition that both are key enablers in development of relationships of trust with underpin informal mechanisms of international cooperation.
One of the challenges highlighted by the Working Group was the limited capacity amongst regional Member States to effectively exploit electronic devices for evidence. In many cases, the increasing use of smart phones and computers, often using sophisticated encryption, for drug related activity makes it challenging for law enforcement officers to effectively collect evidence and build cases. Participants at the Working Group called for further technical cooperation that would enable to build or improve capacity for the exploitation of technical evidence, not limited to drug trafficking but also including other crimes and terrorism.

4/ Developing further analysis on drug trafficking via containers.

Most of the drug seizures in the Indian Ocean occur from dhows, however the EWG assessed that drugs were also being trafficked by container ship. However, this method of trafficking is poorly understood and requires further analysis. In particular participants at the Working Group made calls for better understanding of the land-based co-ordinators of trafficking networks moving drugs via containers and for enhanced analysis of activity at ports to monitor suspicious vessels.

5/ Effective Judicial disposal of cases:

While the Working Group emphasised law enforcement activity against cross-border drug trafficking networks, there was an understanding that this activity and subsequent investigations, required a judicial outcome as the final result. This could include convictions, asset confiscation and administrative fines and penalties. The Expert Working Group participants raised the issue of cross border legal cooperation among states in the region that is still relatively slow and bureaucratic, and highlighted the importance of prosecuting and sharing information after seizures. Participants requested that UNODC provide training and mentoring in this area through establishing and supporting informal prosecutor networks or other non-traditional options.

Policy recommendations:

In addition to the capacity building and technical recommendations listed above, the Expert Working Group additionally identified several policy recommendations:

- **Enhance monitoring and risk analysis of precursor chemicals.** UNODC assesses that this aspect of the supply chain is not sufficiently understood to the extent that further analysis can contribute to disruption planning. An improved information picture and analysis of precursor supply, financing and use would allow countries, and the private sector, in the region to better understand the trends, criminal networks modus operandi and threats and combat the trafficking of precursors to and through the region.

- **Understand the nature and extent of cooperation between trafficking networks and unregistered fishing boats.** This will include activities to train and mentor national counterparts to develop an understanding of the networks, and the supply, value and transportation chains in the sector. Facilitate and develop mechanisms for cooperation on maritime crime issues with neighbouring countries and at regional level.

- **Support and mentor joint border operations between neighbouring countries.** This may involve establishing disruption plans focussing on key aspects of the supply chain, facilitating regular meetings of key counterparts from investigation teams, ensuring senior level buy in with briefings and mission-specific table-top exercises, and facilitate the conclusion of agreements, MoUs and similar formal processes to institutionalise informal cooperation networks, for example identifying good practices form other regional forums like the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) or the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC).

- **Build capacity in TPC countries, with a view to expand the reach of the TPC to collaborate with more countries once the core capabilities are built.** Expanding TPC’s mandate and reach could be considered as beneficial for the region. Once more capacity is built, the TPC’s expansion could be looked at by leveraging existing frameworks for instance via the Southern African Development Countries - SADC and work on cooperation frameworks (MOU, involvement of liaison officers, etc.). Opening this mechanism to more countries in the region would enable more actionable, real time intelligence exchange.

- **Beyond the region, look to create a framework of better information exchange between Pakistan and the region.** A recommendation was proposed to leverage the TPC and proposing the signature of an MOU between Pakistan and the TPC to enable this. As a starting point an intergovernmental meeting could be conducted to identify challenges and good practices in data availability, type, legal frameworks, procedures and technical requirements.

- **Review and enhance the use of controlled deliveries at a national and regional level**, including incorporating key takeaways from recent activities, which identified specific challenges around conducting controlled deliveries. For example, it was suggested that some controlled deliveries have been conducted
Knowledge gaps

Despite the sharing of a range of information and data at the Expert Working Group, there were several knowledge gaps identified, and which require further research and analysis to fill. The following are gaps in intelligence or in our current knowledge or understanding of the situation along the Southern Route that were highlighted during the Expert Working Group session and some of the recommendations in the previous section aim to bridge those gaps where possible.

- **Heroin supply from Afghanistan**: It is challenging to make accurate predictions on heroin supply from Afghanistan in the medium and long term. The production of heroin in the country will depend on whether the opium cultivation ban remains in place and can be enforced in the long term by the De facto Authorities. The current assessment from the Expert Working Group is that opium cultivation has significantly reduced for now, with a subsequent dramatic decline in heroin manufacture, however stocks of opiates built up in previous years continue to supply the market in the short-term. The location and extent of these stocks along the supply chain is unclear, and it is equally unclear as to when these will run out, or whether they will run out before there is a widespread return to opium cultivation.

- **The final destination, composition and production method of the methamphetamine from Afghanistan and final destination**: At time of writing, there is no certainty as to where all the methamphetamine from Afghanistan – of which a portion is seized at sea or at land in Eastern and Southern Africa – is trafficked to. Attendees at the Working Group reported that the quantities seized in the Indian Ocean, and which presumably originate in Afghanistan, are larger than the estimated demand in Africa and Europe. Equally unclear is the composition of methamphetamine trafficked from Afghanistan. The composition of methamphetamine produced in Afghanistan must continue to be monitored in order to understand if the product is produced from ephedra, over-the-counter (OTC) medicine or other methods. Ongoing work in Europe aims to determine the chemical signature of ephedra-based methamphetamine believed to be produced at scale in Afghanistan which may shed light on this topic. This analysis would confirm whether the methamphetamine seized in Europe originates from Afghanistan and is ephedra based and based on street seizures in Europe, as well as whether European markets are among its final destinations. More seizures and testing/analysis are needed at scale in Europe and in other markets along the Southern Route to determine this.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC)

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a Regional Economic Community comprising 16 Member States; Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The mission of SADC is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient, productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security; so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international relations and the world economy. The SADC Treaty was signed in 1992 to establish SADC as the successor to the Southern African Coordinating Conference (SADCC), its predecessor, established in 1980.

without the agreement or even knowledge of prosecutors. Training, mentoring and resourcing may be made available in relation to the execution of cross-border controlled delivery, with a focus on the involvement of prosecuting authorities.

- **Support the coordination of intelligence, disruption planning and interdiction operations between land based and maritime agencies and other partners.** If interdiction is not achieved at sea, the network could support with interdiction when it reaches land and figure out document classification and possibility of sharing this information (e.g. what frameworks would work, leveraging ILOs etc.). This would also allow judicial disposal of cases as interdictions in international waters do not necessarily proceed to arrests or prosecutions.

- **Follow up engagement in South Africa to leverage the presence of police attachés as well as the South African Development Community (SADC) infrastructure.** There was already a recommendation proposed by police chiefs of the region to have the TPC integrated into the structure of SADC. The participants mentioned the possibility to arrange a meeting in South Africa to discuss and move forward with the above-mentioned recommendations regarding real time information sharing and the leveraging of ILOs networks present in Africa as well as the SADC as a framework.
• **Methamphetamine demand in Africa**: Data on the internal consumption of methamphetamine in Africa is very limited at present. However, the large quantities seized on the Southern route both at sea and on land and street-level seizures reported in 2023 in a few African countries - such as Mauritius and Seychelles - could be an early warning of an emerging trend. As drug use is seemingly on the rise in most of the countries represented at the EWG, synthetic drugs and their easy availability, relative concealability and low price could become an increasing threat to public health.

• **Trafficking networks**: there are many knowledge gaps in getting a clear picture of the Organised Crime Groups and how they operate with regard to heroin and methamphetamine trafficking via the Southern Route. Although there is an understanding of the Organised Crime Groups involved in moving opiates from South West Asia to Africa, this still requires further analysis. However, the understanding of how drugs are trafficked from Africa to Europe, including the involvement of European based crime groups in the supply side from Africa, is a knowledge gap.

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**Methodology**

The report draws heavily on information shared by national stakeholders and international partners during the Expert Working Group meeting on opiate and methamphetamine trafficking along the Southern Route. The meeting was attended by representatives of the national authorities of the following countries: Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritius, Pakistan, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia. In addition, the report is also based on data shared by Member States with UNODC, and grey literature was used to provide context.