

Fellowship will support journalists in exposing how West Africa's illicit economies intersect with conflict and instability

30 July 2024

West Africa faces escalating conflicts and instability, with recent years seeing a surge in coups and the growing influence of non-state armed groups (NSAGs), including criminal networks, violent extremists, and insurgents. In this context, the Resilience Fund invites journalists from the region to apply for support to produce in-depth investigative pieces exposing how illicit economies intersect with conflict and instability in their countries.

Applicants should be journalists based in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin and Nigeria, with a demonstrated understanding of criminal activity within a conflict ecosystem and knowledge of local socio-political landscapes. Preference may be given to those based in or reporting on the northern areas of these countries.

The fellowship will consist of a grant of €8,000, capacity-building through tailored mentorships, and networking and collaboration opportunities. Selected fellows are expected to publish their stories on media outlets by the second semester of 2025.

This Fellowship is part of a programme titled 'Support to the Mitigation of Destabilizing Effects of Transnational Organised Crime (M-TOC)', which combines traditional security responses with community-driven resilience measures, informed by cutting-edge research and investigative journalism on the intersection of illicit economies and instability. M-TOC is an ECOWAS project commissioned by the German Federal Foreign Office, implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC), from 2024 to 2025.

Extremist groups in West Africa are increasingly consolidating territorial control and expanding their operations, resourced to a significant extent through illicit economies. Illegal gold mining, cattle rustling, arms trafficking, and kidnapping are not just criminal activities; they are fueling conflicts, fostering grievances, and driving recruitment into NSAGs, thereby undermining peace efforts.

‘Journalists have a critical role to play in shedding light on these issues,’ said **Siria Gastélum Félix, former journalist and Director of Resilience at the GI-TOC**. ‘By reporting on the nexus between illicit economies and instability, they can help communities and policymakers understand and address the root causes of conflict.’

The fellowship seeks proposals that demonstrate a clear understanding of the illicit economy-conflict nexus and a feasible investigative plan. The full details of the call for applications can be checked [here](#). The deadline for submissions is August 13, 2024.

About the Resilience Fund

The Resilience Fellowship is part of the GI-TOC's flagship [Resilience Fund](#), which provides grants and support to civil society individuals and organizations working to counter the impacts of criminal governance and violence across the world. Established with a grant from the government of Norway, the Resilience Fund is also supported by the governments of Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand, and works in partnership with international organizations and NGOs worldwide.

About the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime

The [GI-TOC](#) is a non-profit international organization comprising a network of over 600 independent global and regional experts. The GI-TOC seeks to open new lines of analysis to provide creative solutions to the challenges of organized crime, and to serve as an exchange and collaboration platform among governments, civil society, scholars, the private sector and other actors. Founded in 2013 and headquartered in Geneva, the GI-TOC has representation on every continent.