

Burkina Faso – Tier 2

Burkina Faso is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Burkinabe children are subjected to forced labor as farm hands, gold panners and washers, street vendors, domestic servants, and beggars recruited as pupils by unscrupulous Koranic school teachers. Girls are exploited in the commercial sex trade. Burkinabe children are transported to Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger for forced labor or sex trafficking. To a lesser extent, traffickers recruit women for ostensibly legitimate employment in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and various countries in Europe, and subsequently subject them to forced prostitution. Burkina Faso is a transit country for traffickers transporting children from Mali to Cote d'Ivoire, and is a destination for children trafficked from other countries in the region, including Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Nigeria. Women from other West African countries, including Nigeria, Togo, Benin, and Niger, are fraudulently recruited for employment in Burkina Faso and subsequently subjected to forced prostitution, forced labor in restaurants, or domestic servitude in private homes. During the reporting period, two Tibetan women were subjected to forced prostitution in Burkina Faso by Nepalese traffickers.

The Government of Burkina Faso does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government increased law enforcement efforts by securing 18 convictions of traffickers in 2013, a significant increase from zero convictions in 2012. It also continued to identify and provide services to a large number of child trafficking victims and conducted several national awareness-raising efforts throughout the country. However, the government did not take steps to address unscrupulous Koranic school teachers subjecting children to forced begging and failed to take proactive measures to identify adult victims of trafficking among vulnerable populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BURKINA FASO:

Continue efforts to prosecute and convict trafficking offenders, and apply appropriate penalties as prescribed by the May 2008 anti-trafficking law; strengthen the system for collecting anti-trafficking law enforcement and victim identification data, and ensure that authorities responsible for data collection are supplied with adequate means for accessing and compiling this information; train law enforcement officials to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as women in prostitution and children working in agriculture and

mining, and refer them to protective services; strengthen efforts to identify traffickers posing as Koranic school teachers and pursue criminal prosecution of such individuals; improve coordination between the national and regional committees that combat trafficking in persons, including by increasing funding to regional bodies; and, while continuing to fund transit centers and vocational training programs, develop a formal referral mechanism to provide victims with long-term care in coordination with NGOs.

PROSECUTION

The government increased law enforcement efforts. The country's May 2008 anti-trafficking law prohibits all forms of trafficking and prescribes maximum penalties of 10 years' imprisonment; these penalties are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with prescribed penalties for other serious offenses, such as rape. The government struggled to compile complete data on its law enforcement efforts. The government reported investigating 73 suspected trafficking cases, initiating 22 prosecutions, and convicting 18 traffickers in 2013; this represents a significant increase in convictions compared to the lack of any convictions reported in 2012. All 18 convictions were secured using the 2008 anti-trafficking law and the traffickers received sentences ranging from six months' to five years' imprisonment. However, there were no prosecutions or convictions involving forced begging by unscrupulous Koranic school teachers, despite the prevalence of this form of trafficking in the country.

The government provided anti-trafficking training to police officers, social workers, judges, teachers, labor inspectors, and traditional and religious leaders, which included information on trafficking victim identification, victim assistance, investigation procedures, and prosecution of trafficking crimes. The government, with financial support from UNICEF and ECOWAS, trained approximately 700 participants. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking during the reporting period; however, law enforcement efforts remained hindered by limited human and financial resources, and general corruption in the judiciary.

PROTECTION

The government sustained efforts to identify and provide protective services to a large number of child trafficking victims. In 2013, the Ministry of Social Action

(MSA) reported identifying 1,146 child victims of trafficking; 949 were victims of internal trafficking and 197 were victims of transnational trafficking. The majority of these children were intercepted while being transported, sometimes in large numbers on trucks or buses, and were rescued prior to reaching destinations where they would face exploitation, typically in gold mines or in city centers as domestic servants or street beggars; it is unclear whether these children were victims or potential victims of trafficking. Due to severe data collection constraints, the government was unable to determine how many of these children were identified by the government versus NGOs and how many were referred to protective services. The government also identified 16 adult Burkinabe women who were subjected to labor trafficking within the country; all 16 victims were provided protective services by the MSA. Additionally, international organizations identified two Tibetan women who were subjected to forced prostitution in Burkina Faso; these women were not identified or provided care by the government, but were supported by local NGOs.

The government, in collaboration with a variety of local NGOs and international organizations, continued to operate 23 multi-purpose transit centers, which provided limited food, medical care, and counseling before reuniting victims with their families. The shelters were open and victims were free to leave at any time. To complement funding from other donors, the government allocated the equivalent of approximately \$20,000 to support protection activities, including funding for these transit centers; this is an increase from 2012, when the government allocated the equivalent of approximately \$14,000. The law provides that foreign citizens may apply for asylum if they fear they will face hardship or retribution if returned to their country of origin; during the reporting period, two Tibetan victims were granted asylum. The government did not encourage victims to cooperate in investigations or prosecutions during the reporting period. There were no reports that trafficking victims were penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.

PREVENTION

The Burkinabe government sustained moderate efforts to prevent trafficking in persons. The MSA conducted a number of awareness-raising activities, including theater forums, workshops, radio programs, and open-forum discussions for the general public. The National Committee for Vigilance and Surveillance Against the Trafficking in Persons and Assimilated Practices, the government's coordinating body responsible for assessing the current trafficking situation,

providing guidance, and making recommendations, met once during the year. In addition to this meeting, 13 regional bodies brought together police, social workers, transit companies, NGOs, and other groups engaged in combating trafficking on a regional level to coordinate activities to identify and assist victims and potential victims of trafficking, as well as support law enforcement efforts. Regional bodies remained severely underfunded and lacked sufficient resources.

In response to previous cases involving Burkinabe women subjected to forced labor and forced prostitution in Lebanon, the government offered counseling on the potential risks of trafficking to all women who applied for work visas to travel to Lebanon. The Governments of Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso entered into a bilateral cooperative agreement against cross-border child trafficking in October 2013. The municipal police in the capital city of Ouagadougou conducted an awareness-raising campaign in an effort to reduce brothel activity. However, the government did not make any discernible efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor during the reporting period. The Government of Burkina Faso continued to fail to address the issue of traffickers posing as Koranic school teachers who force children to beg in the streets, citing sensitivities involved in engaging on the issue within the Muslim community. The government provided Burkinabe troops with anti-trafficking and human rights training prior to their deployment abroad on international peacekeeping missions.