
Mauritius – Tier 2 Watch List

Mauritius is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Secondary school-aged girls and, in fewer numbers, younger girls from all areas of the country, including from Rodrigues Island, are induced or sold into prostitution, often by their peers, family members, or by businessmen offering other forms of employment. Taxi drivers provide transportation and allegedly introduce girls and clients. Girls and boys whose mothers engage in prostitution reportedly are vulnerable to exploitation in prostitution at a young age. Some women addicted to drugs are forced into prostitution. Women from Rodrigues Island are subjected to forced labor in domestic service in Mauritius. In recent years, small numbers of Mauritian adults have been identified as labor trafficking victims in the UK, Belgium, and Canada. Malagasy women transit Mauritius en route to employment as domestic workers in the Middle East, where they often are subsequently subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. In previous reporting periods, Cambodian fishermen were subjected to forced labor on foreign fishing boats in Mauritius' territorial waters. Mauritius' manufacturing and construction sectors employ approximately 37,000 foreign migrant workers from India, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Madagascar, some of whom are subjected to forced labor.

The Government of Mauritius does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. During the reporting period, the government made modest efforts to identify and provide protective services to child victims of sex trafficking and continued to conduct extensive public awareness campaigns to prevent child sex trafficking and reduce the demand for commercial sex acts involving children. Despite these measures, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing anti-trafficking efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore, Mauritius is placed on Tier 2 Watch List. The government did not prosecute or convict any trafficking offenders during the reporting period. Additionally, there remained a general lack of understanding among law enforcement of trafficking crimes outside the realm of child sex trafficking, despite increasing evidence that other forms of trafficking exist in Mauritius, including the forced labor of adults. The government failed to identify or provide any protective services to adult labor trafficking victims and did not make any tangible efforts to prevent the trafficking of adults during the reporting period. For example, despite the presence of approximately 37,000 migrant workers in Mauritius, the government maintained a severely inadequate number of inspectors in its Special Migrant Worker Unit tasked with monitoring

employment sites, and failed to proactively identify trafficking victims among workers protesting employment abuses. Instead, the government deported 20 such workers during the reporting period.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAURITIUS:

Use anti-trafficking legislation to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses and convict and punish trafficking offenders, including in cases involving labor trafficking or forced prostitution of adults; provide law enforcement officials, magistrates, prosecutors, social workers, and labor inspectors with specific anti-trafficking training so officials can effectively identify victims, investigate cases, and refer victims to appropriate care; increase coordination between law enforcement entities, NGOs, and international organizations on cases involving foreign trafficking victims; establish procedures to guide officials in proactive victim identification among at-risk populations, including women in prostitution and migrant workers; create an inter-ministerial committee to increase coordination among relevant government entities; develop a national action plan to combat trafficking and allocate sufficient funding to implement the plan; increase the number of labor inspectors responsible for monitoring the employment of migrant workers; and conduct a national awareness campaign on all forms of trafficking.

PROSECUTION

The government sustained modest anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts relating to child sex trafficking, but failed to make any tangible law enforcement efforts to address adult forced labor during the reporting period. The Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009 prohibits all forms of trafficking of adults and children and prescribes penalties of up to 15 years' imprisonment for convicted offenders. In addition, the Child Protection Act of 2005 prohibits all forms of child trafficking and prescribes punishment of up to 15 years' imprisonment; the Judicial Provisions Act of 2008 increased the maximum prescribed punishment for child trafficking offenses to 30 years' imprisonment. These penalties are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. During the reporting period, the government reported nine trafficking investigations, but no prosecutions or convictions. This is a decrease from the previous reporting period, when the government initiated five prosecutions but failed to convict trafficking offenders. Eight of the investigations involved child sex trafficking offenses and one involved the forced prostitution of an adult; all the investigations remained pending at the close of the reporting period.

The government has never reported any prosecutions involving adult victims of sex trafficking. It has never taken any law enforcement action against labor trafficking

offenses, including forced labor on foreign fishing boats illegally operating in Mauritius' territorial waters and forced labor of migrant workers in the construction and manufacturing industries. The Minor's Brigade of the Mauritian Police Force referred 14 cases of child labor to the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment (MOL), but no additional law enforcement action was taken; some of these cases might have involved child labor trafficking. Although the police included training on trafficking to approximately 330 new police recruits as part of their basic training requirements, with the exception of cases involving child sexual exploitation, there remained a lack of understanding of trafficking among law enforcement and Mauritian officials generally. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking during the reporting period.

PROTECTION

The government sustained efforts to protect child sex trafficking victims, but failed to identify or provide adequate protective services to other trafficking victims, including adults. The government identified two child sex trafficking victims during the reporting period, a decrease from seven victims identified in 2013. The Minors Brigade systematically referred all cases of identified children in prostitution to the Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development, and Family Welfare for assistance. CDU officials referred one victim to a multipurpose NGO shelter for care. The government paid the NGO approximately 7,565 rupees (\$239) per month to care for the child. The other victim was returned to her family. The government provided the two victims with medical and psychological assistance in public clinics and child welfare officers accompanied them to these clinics; police worked in conjunction with these officers to obtain statements from the children. The government, partially in collaboration with a local NGO, provided two trainings on child sexual exploitation offenses to 83 government officials; these trainings focus on victim protection measures. The MOL does not proactively identify child labor trafficking victims and does not have a formal referral mechanism to ensure such victims receive care.

The government failed to identify or provide any services to adult victims of labor trafficking. The government identified one adult sex trafficking victim; however, it is unclear whether the government provided any services to this victim. Due to the lack of understanding of human trafficking among law enforcement, some adult victims of forced prostitution and forced labor may have been penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficking. For example, law enforcement officers and prosecutors generally did not investigate whether adult

women were involuntarily engaging in prostitution. During the reporting period, immigration officials regularly turned back single Malagasy women, traveling on their own, with less than 4,200 rupees (\$132) who attempted to enter the country on tourist visas on the grounds that they might be coming to Mauritius to engage in prostitution; some of these women might have been trafficking victims. Additionally, under Mauritian law, migrant workers who strike are considered to be in breach of their employment contracts and can be deported at the will of their employers. Some migrant workers who gathered to protest abuses relating to their employment were deported during the reporting period; these deportations took place without conducting comprehensive investigations or screenings to identify if the individuals were victims of forced labor. The 2009 anti-trafficking law specifically provides legal alternatives, such as temporary residency, to removal to countries in which the trafficking victims would face retribution or hardship.

PREVENTION

The government sustained strong efforts to prevent the sex trafficking of children and reduce the demand for commercial sex acts, but demonstrated weak efforts to prevent other forms of trafficking. The Police Family Protection Unit and the Minors Brigade continued extensive public awareness campaigns on child abuse and child rights at schools and community centers that included information on the dangers and consequences of engaging in or facilitating child prostitution. The Ministry of Tourism and Leisure also distributed pamphlets warning tourism industry operators of the consequences of engaging in or facilitating child prostitution. However, the government does not have an inter-ministerial coordinating body or a national action plan dedicated to combating all forms of trafficking. The government did not conduct any awareness campaigns relating to other forms of trafficking and did not make any discernible efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor during the reporting period. The MOL did not investigate child labor cases during the reporting period, despite receiving information on such cases from the police. The MOL is required to approve all employment contracts before migrant laborers enter the country. However, reports indicate many migrant laborers enter the country with incomplete contracts or contracts that have not been translated into languages that the workers understand. Additionally, the MOL's Special Migrant Workers Unit, which is responsible for directly monitoring and protecting all migrant workers and conducting routine inspections of their employment sites, was staffed by only four inspectors; this number of inspectors is severely inadequate, as there are approximately 37,000 migrant workers currently employed in Mauritius. The government provided anti-trafficking training or guidance for its diplomatic personnel.