

Burkina Faso – Tier 2 Watch List

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, Qatar, 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 subjected to trafficking from neighboring countries, including Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Nigeria. Women from other West African countries are fraudulently recruited for employment in Burkina Faso and subsequently subjected to forced prostitution, forced labor in restaurants, or domestic servitude in private homes. In 2014, 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. In November 2014, a transitional government was formed following the resignation of the former president and the dissolution of the government. The government continued to identify and provide services to a large number of child trafficking victims, as well as two Nigerian women subjected to forced prostitution. The government also continued to provide anti-trafficking training and conducted several national awareness-raising efforts throughout the country. Despite these measures, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing anti-trafficking efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Burkina Faso is placed on Tier 2 Watch List. The government reported two prosecutions and no convictions during the reporting period—a significant decrease from the 22 prosecutions and 18 convictions reported in the previous year. Additionally, the national anti-trafficking committee did not meet, and the government did not take steps to address unscrupulous Koranic school teachers subjecting children to forced begging.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BURKINA FASO:

Reinvigorate efforts to prosecute and convict trafficking offenders, and apply appropriate penalties as prescribed by the 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; continue to 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 decreased law enforcement efforts. The country's 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. In April 2014, the government passed law No. 11-2014/AN, which criminalizes the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography and prescribes a penalty of five to 10 years' imprisonment or fines between 1,500,000 West African CFA francs (CFA) (\$2,780) and CFA 3,000,000 (\$5,570), or both. A provision allowing offenders to pay a fine in lieu of serving prison time is disproportionate to the gravity of the crime and inadequate as a potential deterrent. In January 2015, the government arrested a Burkinabe woman for allegedly subjecting more than 30 women to trafficking in Lebanon, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia; the investigation was ongoing at the end of the reporting period. The government reported two prosecutions and no convictions for 2014; this is a significant decrease compared with the 22 prosecutions and 18 convictions reported in 2013. 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 200 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 did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking offenses; however, law enforcement efforts remained hindered by 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 2014, the Ministry of Social Action (MSA) reported identifying 280 child victims of trafficking; 211 were victims of internal trafficking, and 69 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 two Nigerian women subjected to forced prostitution in Burkina Faso; the government provided basic services to the victims and worked with Nigerian officials to facilitate their safe repatriation. It is unclear what steps the government took to assist the 30 women subjected to forced labor in the Middle East.

The government, in collaboration with a variety of local NGOs and international organizations, continued to operate 23 multipurpose transit centers, which provided limited food, medical care, and counseling before reuniting victims with their families. To complement funding from other donors, the government allocated CFA 6,000,000 (\$11,100) to support protection activities, including funding for these transit centers; this is a decrease from 2013, when the government allocated the equivalent of approximately \$20,000. During the reporting period, the MSA also contributed CFA 15,210,000 (\$28,200) to provide nine-month employment training scholarships for 130 vulnerable children, some of whom were trafficking victims. 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. There were no reports trafficking victims were penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.

PREVENTION

The government sustained moderate efforts to prevent trafficking. The MSA conducted a number of nationwide awareness-raising activities, including lectures, counseling sessions, trainings, and open-forum discussions for the general public. The national anti-trafficking committee did not meet during the reporting period; however, 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. However, the government did not make any discernible efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor during the reporting period. The government continued its failure to address the issue of traffickers posing as Koranic school teachers who force children to beg in the streets. The government, in partnership with foreign donors, provided Burkinabe troops with anti-trafficking training prior to their deployment abroad on international peacekeeping missions. The government did not provide anti-trafficking training or guidance for its diplomatic personnel.