

Suriname

OFFICE TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

2014 Trafficking in Persons Report

Tier 2 Watch List

Suriname is a source and destination country for women, men, and children who are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. Women and girls from Suriname, Guyana, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic are subjected to sex trafficking within the country. Reported trafficking cases in Suriname's remote jungle interior—which constitutes approximately 80 percent of the country—increased during the reporting period. NGOs and government sources indicate that some women and girls are exploited in sex trafficking in Suriname's interior around mining camps; the remote and illegal nature of these camps and limited government presence in these areas renders the scope of the problem unknown. Migrant workers in agriculture and on fishing boats off Suriname's coast are highly vulnerable to forced labor, as are children working in informal urban sectors and gold mines. Media, NGOs, and past convictions indicate some Chinese immigrants are subjected to sex and labor trafficking in Suriname, including in the service and construction sectors. French officials indicate that women and girls from Suriname are sexually exploited in French Guiana. Surinamese women traveling to Guyana to engage in prostitution may be vulnerable to sex trafficking.

The Government of Suriname does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government has not shown evidence of increasing efforts to address human trafficking compared to the previous year; therefore, Suriname is placed on Tier 2 Watch List for a third consecutive year. Suriname was granted a waiver from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3 because its government has a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, and it has committed to devoting sufficient resources to implement that plan. During the year, the government sustained limited law enforcement efforts. It achieved an increased number of sex trafficking convictions, but decreased investigations and prosecutions of sex trafficking offenses. The government failed to make efforts to investigate, prosecute, or convict labor traffickers. The government identified significantly fewer sex trafficking victims compared to the previous year and no labor trafficking victims. It continued to provide inadequate victim protection services, but initiated plans to open a government-run shelter for child and women victims in 2014.

Recommendations for Suriname:

Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses, and convict and punish trafficking offenders, including officials complicit in human trafficking; increase efforts to identify trafficking victims, including victims of forced labor in the interior; provide shelter to male and female trafficking victims of all ages, and open the proposed government shelter for child and women victims; strengthen and sustain partnerships with NGOs to identify victims and provide protective services; fund and implement the national strategy to combat trafficking; establish additional mechanisms to prosecute traffickers that do not rely on victim testimony; provide additional training to law enforcement, immigration, health care, labor, and judicial officials and social workers to better identify and protect trafficking victims; and continue to raise awareness about all forms of trafficking.

Prosecution

The Government of Suriname sustained limited law enforcement efforts related to sex trafficking during the year, but made no efforts to investigate or prosecute labor trafficking offenses. Suriname prohibits all forms of human trafficking through a 2006 amendment to its criminal code, which prescribes sufficiently stringent penalties of five to 20 years' imprisonment—penalties that are commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Officials investigated five new cases of child sex trafficking in 2013, a decrease from eight in 2012. The government had insufficient resources to conduct investigations in the country's interior, and officials often did not investigate leads on potential trafficking cases amongst the Chinese migrant community. The police continued to operate a specialized 14-person anti-trafficking unit that investigated cases and conducted administrative checks of nightclubs in the capital where prostitution occurred. The unit held three training sessions during the year focused on identifying victims and effectively investigating trafficking crimes.

The government continued to face difficulty in holding trafficking offenders accountable, and local official complicity remained a concern. The government initiated two new prosecutions of seven defendants from the five investigated cases, representing a slight decrease from five prosecutions involving 19 alleged traffickers and their accomplices in 2012; the other three cases remained under investigation or were dismissed. One prosecution initiated in 2012 remained in progress. The government convicted eight individuals of human trafficking crimes, a significant increase from zero in 2012. Sentences for convicted traffickers ranged from six months' to three and a half years' imprisonment. In December 2013, the government convicted six traffickers in absentia for subjecting a 13-year-old to prostitution in the interior; the traffickers remained at large at the end of the reporting period. The government convicted two men for subjecting a 14-year-old girl to prostitution, sentencing them to 18 and 28 months' imprisonment; the prosecutor appealed the sentences seeking higher punishments. A government official charged with subjecting two Guyanese girls to prostitution was found guilty of human smuggling instead of human trafficking. The government did not report any new investigations or prosecutions of government employees for alleged complicity in trafficking-related offenses during the reporting period.

Protection

The Government of Suriname sustained limited efforts to protect sex trafficking victims, but made no efforts to protect labor trafficking victims. It identified four potential trafficking victims in 2013 compared to 20 potential trafficking victims in 2012. All four potential victims were girls, and three were from Guyana. Authorities did not employ formal procedures to proactively identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as women in prostitution or migrant workers. The government provided labor inspectors information on how to identify trafficking victims; however, they identified no instances of forced labor in 2013.

NGOs continued to provide shelter and services to child trafficking victims, and the government referred all four potential victims to these services. The government reported providing support to these shelters, but did not disclose specific funding amounts. No shelter existed for adult victims. The government could make arrangements for adult victim's housing on a case-by-case basis, though none were identified. In 2013, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a process to open a government-run shelter for child and women trafficking victims. This shelter remained unopened at the end of the reporting period, though government officials began training shelter staff. Overall victim protection services remained inadequate. The government sponsored no specific programs to facilitate victims'

reintegration into society, such as a witness protection program or long-term psychological counseling. The government had no specialized mechanism to provide foreign victims of trafficking with alternatives to their removal to countries where they face retribution or hardship. After a trafficking court case concludes, foreign victims can apply for the same work or residency permits available to other foreign citizens; however, no victims did so during the year. There were no reports of trafficking victims penalized for crimes committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking; however, only four trafficking victims were identified in 2013. The government had no formal policy to encourage victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers, but worked with NGOs to provide shelter to victims during their trial.

Prevention

The Government of Suriname sustained prevention efforts during the reporting period. It adopted a national strategy to combat human trafficking in April 2014. Its interagency anti-trafficking working group, active since 2003, consisted of representatives from six government agencies and one from the NGO community. The working group held a four-day workshop in October 2013 for government officials to enhance cooperation in combating trafficking in persons. The working group also drafted several documents codifying how to report instances of human trafficking to the police. These documents were pending Ministry of Justice and police approval at the end of the reporting period. The anti-trafficking police maintained a hotline, although it did not receive any calls during the year. The government made no discernible efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor.