

2024 Trafficking in Persons Report:

Mozambique

MOZAMBIQUE (Tier 2)

The Government of Mozambique does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period; therefore Mozambique was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included adopting a new NAP to combat human trafficking for the first time since 2012 and identifying more victims. The government conducted awareness campaigns and convened a conference among its national and local anti-trafficking reference groups. It also reported providing support for three victims who participated in investigations and prosecutions and increased coordination with foreign governments on trafficking cases. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government initiated fewer investigations and prosecuted fewer alleged traffickers. The government lacked adequate procedures to identify trafficking victims and screen vulnerable populations for trafficking, and for the eighth consecutive year, did not adopt its draft NRM and SOPs for care and referral of trafficking victims. Victim services remained woefully inadequate, especially for adult victims, and the government relied on NGOs and international organizations to provide the majority of services to trafficking victims with limited financial or in-kind support.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS: ✓

Finalize, approve, and implement the NRM and SOPs for referral and care of trafficking victims, and train officials on their use. * Integrate victim identification and screening tools into victim care SOPs to enable front-line officials to systematically and proactively identify trafficking victims by screening vulnerable populations for trafficking indicators and referring them to appropriate services – including persons with disabilities and their children, victims of extremist groups including women and child soldiers, IDPs, individuals in commercial sex, migrants, and government-affiliated Cuban overseas workers, including medical professionals. * Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, including complicit officials, which should involve significant prison terms. * Increase the availability of protection services – including short-term shelter, long-term housing, medical care, and counseling – to all trafficking victims, including adults, males, and foreign nationals, and allocate sufficient funding or in-kind support to civil society service providers. * Amend the anti-trafficking law to bring the definition of trafficking in line with the definition of trafficking under international law. * Finalize implementing regulations for the protection of trafficking victim-witnesses. * Empower the National Reference Group (NRG) for Child Protection, Trafficking in Persons, and Irregular Migration to lead the government's anti-trafficking efforts, including by implementing and allocating dedicated funding for its NAP, and continue to increase coordination among district, provincial, and national stakeholders. * Build the capacity of the labor inspectorate and the Family and Child Assistance Units to identify potential trafficking victims, investigate trafficking cases, and refer victims to care. * Implement and consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, including by eliminating recruitment fees charged to migrant workers and holding fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable.

PROSECUTION ✓

The government maintained minimal law enforcement efforts. The 2008 Law on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking of People criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and

prescribed penalties of 16 to 20 years' imprisonment. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. Inconsistent with international law, the law did not establish the use of force, fraud, or coercion as an essential element of the crime. The government continued to work with an international organization to review draft amendments to bring the 2008 anti-trafficking law in line with international standards; however, draft amendments remained awaiting approval by various stakeholders for the fifth consecutive reporting period.

The government initiated investigations of six potential trafficking cases, compared with nine investigations in 2023, and continued investigating two cases from the previous reporting period. The government initiated prosecutions of two alleged traffickers, compared with six alleged traffickers in 2022, and continued three prosecutions from the previous reporting period. The government convicted two labor traffickers, compared with convicting three traffickers the previous year; sentencing remained pending at the end of the reporting period. Due to conflation between migrant smuggling and human trafficking, the government may have prosecuted migrant smuggling crimes under its anti-trafficking law. The resurgence of COVID-19 cases, in addition to outbreaks of cholera and polio in some remote areas, may have hindered law enforcement efforts to investigate human trafficking crimes.

The government did not report any new investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes; however, corruption and official complicity in human trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action. In 2021, the government opened a criminal investigation into human trafficking at Ndavela Women's Prison, where prison guards allegedly forced inmates to engage in commercial sex both inside and outside the prison; the government closed the investigation and did not refer it for prosecution, citing lack of evidence. Traffickers allegedly continued to bribe police and immigration officials to facilitate trafficking domestically and transnationally, especially to South Africa.

The government, in partnership with international organizations, trained law enforcement officials, protection officers, and other frontline officials on human trafficking, child protection, and victim assistance. The government had a universal manual for criminal justice practitioners on human trafficking investigations. The government included anti-trafficking training in its curriculum for new police recruits. The government did not report contributing information on trafficking case investigations to a national centralized anti-trafficking data collection and reporting tool, as it had done in previous years.

Police stations throughout the country had specialists, trained by the Mozambique Republic Police's Family and Child Assistance Units, available to respond and provide support to victims of crime, including trafficking. Support for such victims was available in more than 215 police stations and 22 "Victims of Violence" centers throughout the country, which offered temporary shelter, food, and limited counseling. Observers reported these centers lacked sufficient resources to assist victims. The government reported collaborating with the Governments of Zambia, Tanzania, and Eswatini on investigations of cross-border trafficking cases; it also worked with counterparts in South Africa, Eswatini, and Zimbabwe to strengthen coordination on trafficking cases. Law enforcement participated in operation "FLASH-WEKA," a joint operation against trafficking led by INTERPOL and the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL).

PROTECTION ✓

The government slightly increased protection efforts. The government reported identifying 16 trafficking victims, compared with identifying two trafficking victims and 21 potential victims in the previous reporting period. The government did not report referring any of the 16 victims to services, compared with referring six potential victims in the previous reporting period. An NGO, which provided services to IDPs in northern Mozambique, reported it worked with the government to screen vulnerable populations for trafficking indicators and refer potential victims to services. An NGO reported collaborating with the government to provide services to 33 potential child trafficking victims. The government reported it coordinated with the Government of Eswatini to

repatriate six trafficking victims to Mozambique and coordinated with NGOs to provide them services.

The government lacked formal procedures to identify trafficking victims and screen vulnerable populations for trafficking. The government did not finalize and fully implement the draft NRM and SOPs for referral and care of trafficking victims for the eighth consecutive year. Observers reported the lack of formal NRM, SOPs, and screening mechanisms limited front-line and community-level officials' efforts to identify and refer victims to reference groups for assistance and left many trafficking victims unidentified. In the absence of a fully approved NRM and SOPs, the government continued to use a draft handbook for referral and care of trafficking victims, which included a draft NRM and SOPs for referral and care of trafficking victims and intake forms for each agency represented in the reference groups. This draft handbook guided reference groups' establishment and operation, as well as intake and referral of victims once identified; however, it did not contain procedures or screening tools for front-line officials to identify trafficking victims. Additionally, front-line officials lacked a general understanding of trafficking, which further hampered victim identification efforts. The government also had a handbook for referral and care specifically focused on vulnerable migrants, including trafficking victims, directing reference group members to screen vulnerable migrants for trafficking indicators.

The government generally relied on civil society, international organizations, or foreign governments to identify trafficking victims and refer and provide them with care. The government did not report providing financial or in-kind support to civil society organizations providing trafficking victim services. Observers reported victims had limited shelter options, and shelters operated with minimal resources, impacting living conditions within shelters, including for vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Action operated one center offering short-term shelter, medical and psychological care, and legal assistance to child trafficking victims. Observers reported the complexity of the application process to house victims at government shelters precluded some victims from admittance. The government did not have short-term shelters available for adult trafficking victims nor long-term shelters or transitional housing for any trafficking victims. The government reported adult victims could be placed in shelters dedicated for the elderly but did not report doing so in the reporting period.

Access to victim services was not dependent on cooperation with law enforcement proceedings. The government reported three victims participated in investigations and prosecutions and received some victim-witness assistance. The anti-trafficking law required police protection for victims who participated as witnesses in criminal proceedings against traffickers, and victims could provide written statements during criminal proceedings. The law allowed victims to obtain restitution, but the government did not report pursuing it in any cases. Mozambican law provided for temporary residency status or legal alternatives to the removal of foreign victims to countries where they might face hardship or retribution, but the government did not report granting status to foreign victims during the reporting period. Due to a lack of formal identification procedures, authorities likely detained and deported unidentified trafficking victims. International organizations indicated women and children exploited by extremist groups in Cabo Delgado province may not be appropriately screened by the government for trafficking indicators and, therefore, may not have received necessary services. During the previous reporting period, media reported the government deported at least 80 Malawian migrants, some of whom were trafficking victims.

PREVENTION ✓

The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. The NRG for Child Protection, Trafficking in Persons, and Irregular Migration, chaired by the attorney general's office, reported convening regularly to coordinate national anti-trafficking efforts with support of international organizations, and members met regularly in technical working groups to address specific trafficking cases. For the first time since 2012, the government adopted and began implementing a new NAP. The plan included specific responsibilities for various government agencies; however, the government did not report allocating funding to implement the plan. The government did not report a dedicated

budget to combat trafficking; however, some activities, such as workshops, were implemented with existing resources. With support from international organizations, national and district human trafficking reference groups, responsible for coordinating local anti-trafficking responses in Cabo Delgado, Manica, Maputo and Tete provinces provided training for their members on child protection, irregular migration, and victim identification and assistance. Reference groups, composed of multiple government ministries, civil society representatives, and the association of traditional healers implemented aspects of the NAP. Additionally, district reference groups implemented strategic plans to combat trafficking and conducted advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns. The government also convened a conference between its national and local anti-trafficking reference groups to increase coordination and information sharing on experiences, statistics, and case studies. The government operated hotlines for crime victims, including trafficking; it did not report any trafficking-related calls. The government also supported an NGO-operated child protection hotline but did not report any information on trafficking calls, compared with 11 reports of child trafficking in the prior reporting period. Observers reported the government lacked sufficient resources to adequately respond to hotline calls.

The government reported conducting human trafficking awareness campaigns in Niassa, Manica, and Gaza provinces. The government raised awareness of the risks of fraudulent online recruitment and human trafficking in schools and universities. The government also reported distributing anti-trafficking posters and other awareness materials to government and community sites around the country which utilized picture illustrations to prevent linguistic barriers. With support from an international organization, the government delivered thousands of birth certificates and identity cards to undocumented persons in Northern Mozambique, including internally displaced persons, reducing their vulnerability to trafficking. The government continued to partner with civil society and a foreign government on a program to strengthen the capacity of Mozambican security forces to protect children in armed conflict and prevent gender-based violence, including sexual abuse and exploitation. The government did not report any updates on efforts to implement procedures previously developed for assisting children in armed conflict; however, an international organization reported working with the government to register and reunify children separated from their families due to conflict.

Mozambican officials remained without effective policies or laws to regulate labor recruitment, including by eliminating recruitment fees, and hold fraudulent recruiters civilly and criminally liable. The government signed an agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on labor recruitment. Prior to departing for the UAE, workers are informed of their rights in both countries and relevant labor laws and regulations. The government reported providing mandatory training for new labor inspectors to screen for forced child labor during inspections; however, inspectors did not report identifying any trafficking cases. The government is working with an international organization on the development of a National Labor Migration Policy, which would include labor recruitment. Labor inspectors did not have a mandate to inspect informal sectors, increasing vulnerabilities to trafficking. An estimated 85 percent of the workforce was in the informal sector, primarily in agriculture, domestic service, mining, and commerce. Observers reported labor inspectors lacked sufficient resources, hindering overall efforts. The government did not report providing anti-trafficking training to its diplomats. The government made some efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts through a public awareness campaign against soliciting commercial sex.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE: ✓

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Mozambique, and traffickers exploit victims from Mozambique abroad. Forced child labor occurs in agriculture, pastoralism, service industries, brickmaking, forestry, fishing, and artisanal mining. Traffickers lure voluntary migrants, especially women and girls from rural areas, from neighboring countries, such as Malawi, to cities in Mozambique, Eswatini, or South Africa with promises of employment or education, and then they exploit those victims in domestic servitude and sex trafficking. Some traditional healers target individuals with albinism, who may be vulnerable to both sex and labor trafficking. Traffickers exploit Mozambican girls in bars, roadside clubs,

overnight stopping points, and restaurants along the southern transport corridor that links Maputo with Eswatini and South Africa. Traffickers in and around mining worksites in Cabo Delgado province exploit girls in sex trafficking. Increasingly, traffickers recruit women and girls via the internet with promises of employment using fake business profiles on social media, then subsequently exploit them in sex trafficking or forced labor. An international organization reported organized crime networks recruit potential victims online by posting fraudulent job advertisements. The government reported the COVID-19 pandemic increased vulnerability to trafficking, especially for children targeted through social media. Children from vulnerable families, particularly with parents who are elderly or have a disability, were vulnerable to trafficking. Children from Gaza province, who migrate to Maputo and work in informal street vending, may be vulnerable to trafficking. Child sex trafficking is prevalent in the cities of Maputo, Beira, Chimoio, Tete, and Nacala, which have highly mobile populations and large numbers of long-distance truck drivers. Poverty is a contributing factor that leads some families to send their children to work in high risk environments, where they may be vulnerable to trafficking. Girls as young as 11 that work as nannies are vulnerable to trafficking when their employment ends.

An international organization reported there were approximately 850,000 people displaced as a result of violent extremism and instability as well as climate change, including extreme weather events such as cyclones. Non-state armed groups exploited women and children in forced labor and sex trafficking. In addition, non-state armed groups recruited or used child soldiers. Extremists lure youth to Cabo Delgado with promises of employment in the fishing sector, and then force them to fight with non-state armed groups. Sources report that non-state armed groups abducted and used children as soldiers, cooks, and laborers, and sexually exploited girls.

Traffickers exploit Mozambican men and boys in forced labor on South African farms and mines, where victims often work for months without pay under coercive conditions before being handed over to police for deportation as undocumented migrants. Mozambican boys migrate to Eswatini to wash cars, herd livestock, and sell goods; some subsequently become victims of forced labor. Traffickers exploit Mozambican adults and girls in forced labor and sex trafficking abroad, including in Angola, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Cyprus, and Hungary. Reports allege traffickers bribe officials to move victims within the country and across national borders to South Africa and Eswatini. Government-affiliated Cuban medical professionals working in Mozambique may have been forced to work by the Cuban government.