

2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Togo

TOGO (Tier 2)

The Government of Togo 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, Togo remained on Tier 2. These efforts included initiating more investigations and prosecutions of suspected traffickers, including coordinating with regional governments on investigations, and launching a joint program to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government did not convict any traffickers because its Assize Court system failed to convene, leaving all human trafficking cases unadjudicated. The government identified and referred to services fewer trafficking victims. The government offered few shelter options for adults, which adversely affected efforts to investigate cases involving potential adult trafficking victims. The government did not allocate funds to implement its NAP, nor did it provide the National Commission Against Trafficking in Persons (CNLTP) the budget and staff necessary to be fully operational in leading national anti-trafficking efforts.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Expedite adjudication of pending cases heard by the Assize Court system.
- Increase efforts to investigate and prosecute alleged traffickers, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Provide training to law enforcement and judicial officials to increase their ability to effectively investigate and prosecute trafficking cases.
- Train law enforcement and other public justice sector personnel on the SOPs for victim identification and referral to care.
- Partner with NGOs and international organizations to increase the availability of shelter and victim services to all trafficking victims, including adults.
- Implement a victim-witness assistance program to increase protective services for victims participating in the criminal justice system.
- Dedicate resources and implement the 2023-2024 NAP.
- Develop a data collection and information management system to organize law enforcement and victim referral data, in collaboration with NGOs and international organizations.

PROSECUTION

The government increased overall law enforcement efforts.

Articles 317 through 320 of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of 10 to 20 years' imprisonment and fines between 10 million and 50 million West African CFA francs (FCFA) (\$15,970 and \$79,870) for offenses involving an adult victim, and 20 to 30 years' imprisonment and fines between 20 million and 50 million FCFA (\$31,950 and \$79,870) for offenses involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent, and with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape.

The Ministry of Justice's anti-trafficking unit initiated investigations of 41 cases involving 68 suspects – 21 suspects for labor trafficking and 47 suspects for unspecified forms of trafficking – and continued investigations involving 49 suspects from the previous reporting period. This

compared with 34 investigations initiated during the previous reporting period. Officials prosecuted 49 defendants in 31 cases, compared with 36 defendants in the previous reporting period. The government did not report any trafficking convictions for the second consecutive year. The Assize Court system, which handles all trafficking cases for the country, among other types of cases, did not meet during the reporting period, leaving all human trafficking cases unadjudicated. Observers noted the Assize Court system had a substantial case backlog, which deterred victims from participating in judicial proceedings and resulted in some victims waiting years for their cases to be adjudicated. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes; however, corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action.

The government continued to provide written instructions on victim identification to its law enforcement and immigration officials. The government partnered with international organizations to provide anti-trafficking and child protection training to officials. Most government agencies responsible for combating human trafficking lacked sufficient resources, including funding, personnel, and equipment to be effective. Due to a state of emergency in the Savanes region, anti-trafficking officials were limited in their ability to combat trafficking crimes, provide victims with services, or gather data. The government reported cooperating with regional governments – including Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone – on trafficking investigations. The governments of Togo and Gabon launched a joint program to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling and began amending an anti-trafficking agreement with Nigeria.

PROTECTION

The government maintained protection efforts.

The government identified and referred to services 53 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking, compared with 107 trafficking victims identified in the previous reporting period. Of the 53 victims, 20 were children and 33 were adults; the victims included Togolese nationals as well as foreign nationals from Sierra Leone. The government assisted in the repatriation of Togolese nationals, including eight victims from Benin, 23 victims from Equatorial Guinea, 170 victims from Libya, and one victim from Nigeria. The government updated its national SOPs to identify and refer victims to services in coordination with NGOs. However, frontline officials lacked adequate training on the SOPs, and resource constraints limited their consistent use. The government did not report whether its screening procedures resulted in any victim identifications. The government also arrested and detained children using the streets as a source of livelihood without screening for indicators of forced begging.

The CNLTP referred trafficking victims to partner organizations for care as part of the government's national referral mechanism, although frontline officials sometimes implemented the procedures inconsistently. The government reported providing services to 53 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking, including job skills training to 36 victims, compared with providing services to 107 victims during the previous reporting period. The government could provide victims access to housing, medical services, and psychosocial care, but providers sometimes lacked the knowledge and skills to work with victims. NGOs and international organizations provided most services to trafficking victims. The government required trafficking victims to interact with law enforcement, including to access social services.

The government ran a shelter for vulnerable children, including child trafficking victims, providing legal aid, medical assistance, psychological care, and some job training; the government did not report how many children were served by this shelter during the reporting period. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) continued to operate the Reference Center for the Guidance and Care of Children in a Difficult Situation (CROPESDI), which received victims referred by the national child abuse hotline and provided shelter and some services before transferring children to care facilities managed by NGOs. There were no similar shelters available for adult trafficking victims, although the government could refer adults to a center for victims of natural and humanitarian

disasters. Observers reported the lack of shelter options for adult victims severely limited access to care and adversely impacted efforts to investigate potential cases; at times officers used their own resources to provide shelter and basic necessities. The government reportedly offered foreign trafficking victims the same access to shelters as domestic victims and performed a risk evaluation before repatriating potential victims. The government did not allow victims to leave shelters without authorization.

While the government struggled to provide shelter and services due to resource constraints, it allocated – for the sixth consecutive year – 18 million FCFA (\$28,750) to efforts combating child trafficking, of which it designated 11 million FCFA (\$17,570) for victim care. The government additionally committed to providing 600,000 FCFA (\$960) to each of the six NGO shelters it supported. The government provided assistance to support victim participation in investigations and prosecutions, including legal services. The government allowed victims to obtain restitution from traffickers, although officials did not award restitution during the reporting period.

PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts.

The CNLTP, chaired by the MSA and composed of 13 government agencies and two civil society organizations, continued to lead anti-trafficking efforts. Officials noted the CNLTP lacked the budget and staff necessary to be fully operational. Although the government previously adopted a NAP for 2023-2024, officials did not allocate funds to implement it. The National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking (CNARSEVT) coordinated information and statistics on child trafficking in Togo and led coordination with NGOs and international organizations on repatriation of Togolese child trafficking victims, although observers noted a lack of financial resources limited CNARSEVT's effectiveness. The government continued national awareness raising campaigns throughout the country, including materials for children and adolescents. The MSA continued to run a toll-free hotline for reporting child abuse, including trafficking crimes, which operated 16 hours per day, seven days a week; the government did not provide information on calls related to trafficking. The government continued efforts to reduce children's vulnerability to trafficking by collaborating with an NGO to make documentation services such as birth registrations and identity documents more available to the public.

Despite past allegations of fraudulent recruiters facilitating the exploitation of Togolese abroad, authorities did not report investigating any foreign labor recruiters for trafficking crimes. The government reported there were no employment agencies approved to recruit migrant workers in Togo on behalf of foreign employers. The government did not prohibit worker-paid recruitment fees. The Ministries of Labor and Social Affairs' weak information management systems hindered its ability to provide enforcement statistics. The Ministry of Labor carried out routine and unannounced labor inspections; however, the government did not report identifying any trafficking cases through these inspections. Financial constraints and security concerns in the north limited the reach and effectiveness of inspections, and inspections largely overlooked the informal sector despite it constituting most of the economy.

The government did not report efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The CNLTP continued to train diplomats in identifying trafficking indicators. Officials provided anti-trafficking training to Togolese troops prior to their deployment abroad on international peacekeeping missions. Although not explicitly reported as human trafficking, there was one open case of alleged sexual exploitation with trafficking indicators by a Togolese peacekeeper deployed to the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reported in 2024.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

Trafficking affects all communities. This section summarizes government and civil society reporting on the nature and scope of trafficking over the past five years. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Togo and traffickers exploit victims from Togo abroad. The government reports people who are homeless, undocumented migrants, and economically vulnerable groups face increased risk of forced labor and sex trafficking. Traffickers exploit men and boys in agriculture, sand and stone quarries, and carpentry and mechanical shops. Traffickers exploit women and girls in sex trafficking and forced labor in markets, domestic service, and bars and restaurants. Most trafficking victims are children from economically disadvantaged families in rural areas. Traffickers exploit cultural practices such as sending children to live with family or community members in cities to work as domestic servants, porters, and vendors. Traffickers also exploit Togolese children in the agricultural sector, particularly on coffee, cocoa, and cotton farms. Officials noted ongoing child forced begging by some corrupt Quranic teachers. The security crisis in northern Togo has increased the number of children at risk of forced labor, especially forced child begging. In addition, refugees and IDPs from northern Togo risk human trafficking while in search of opportunities in the south and elsewhere. Sex trafficking, including child sex trafficking and “survival sex,” remains widespread and driven by the security crisis in northern Togo and economic pressure. NGOs and government officials reported traffickers selling Togolese children for commercial sex acts in markets called *devissime* in Lomé and elsewhere in the country. Traffickers exploit social media and technology to recruit girls with false offers leading to sex trafficking.

Togo is increasingly a destination, transit, and departure point for migrants within West Africa due to security concerns in the Sahel. In past years, many Togolese adults and children migrated in search of economic opportunities across West Africa and the Middle East where criminal elements may exploit them in forced labor and sex trafficking. Observers noted the Abidjan-Lagos corridor remains a prominent route for cross-border trafficking – as well as the smuggling of illicit goods – with criminals using Togo as a transit country. Observers reported Togo’s rise as a regional economic and logistics hub has led to a corresponding increase in human trafficking as well as migrant smuggling. Most foreign trafficking victims in Togo are young boys from Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, and Niger exploited in forced labor. Traffickers also exploit Ghanaian girls in sex trafficking in Togo.