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TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

JULY 2022



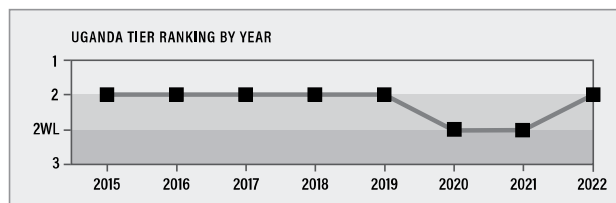
public spaces in advance of presidential visits and in unpaid support roles during government-sponsored parades and holiday celebrations. Authorities have also forced public servants and students to serve in uncompensated support roles during government-sponsored events, such as the 2018 World Weightlifting Championship and World Bicycle Day; similarly, financial hardships stemming from land expropriation, forcible evictions, and home demolition in advance of high-profile sporting events may have made some communities vulnerable to trafficking. Police reportedly conduct sweeps to remove individuals experiencing homelessness and subsequently place them in agricultural work or domestic servitude at the residences of law enforcement-connected families. Families living in poverty often compel children to serve as porters in local marketplaces and to harvest carrots in the fields. Children are reportedly forced to work in cotton and potato fields during summer educational camps. Workers in the construction sector and at small-scale sericulture operations are vulnerable to forced labor. Turkmenistan's small stateless population—primarily consisting of undocumented residents with expired Soviet nationality documentation—are vulnerable to trafficking. Criminalization of consensual sexual intercourse between men makes some members of Turkmenistan's LGBTQI+ communities vulnerable to police abuse, extortion, and coercion into informant roles; widespread social stigma and discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals also compound their vulnerability to family-brokered forced marriages that may result in corollary sex trafficking or forced labor indicators. Residents of rural areas in Turkmenistan are at highest risk of becoming trafficking victims, both within the country and abroad.

Turkmen men and women are subjected to forced labor after migrating abroad for employment in the textile, agricultural, construction, and domestic service sectors; Turkmen migrant men are also subjected to forced criminality in drug trafficking. Sex traffickers exploit Turkmen women abroad. Turkey, Russia, and India are the most frequent destinations of Turkmen victims, followed by other countries in the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and Europe. Enduring government restrictions on freedom of movement, preventing citizens from leaving the country, incentivize some citizens to pursue unofficial migration channels rife with trafficking vulnerabilities. Government austerity measures limiting certain foreign financial transactions, coupled with travel and entry restrictions, may increase the risk of sex or labor exploitation among Turkmen citizens stranded abroad during the pandemic.

UGANDA: TIER 2

The Government of Uganda 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, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Uganda was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included investigating and prosecuting more trafficking crimes; convicting the most traffickers ever reported in a single year; and developing robust standardized operating procedures (SOPs) for law enforcement and increasing trainings for investigators and prosecutors. Government officials increased use of the National Referral Guidelines for Management of Victims of Trafficking in Uganda (NRG), resulting in the government identifying more trafficking victims. For the first time in six years, the government reported directly assisting victims and referring victims to protection services. The government enacted new employment regulations to increase the ethical recruitment of Ugandan migrant workers; the government implemented these regulations by investigating and suspending more recruitment companies engaging in fraudulent and exploitative recruitment activities. The government allocated significantly more funds for anti-trafficking activities. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Access to adequate services for some victims, particularly adult males and individuals in rural areas, remained limited, and the lack of shelters in the country, both long-term and short-term, continued to adversely affect the government's ability to adequately protect trafficking victims. The absence of victim-witness protection policies hindered some investigations and prosecutions; additionally, some law

enforcement officials lacked a victim-centered approach when working with victims, potentially discouraging them from participating in criminal proceedings. Government efforts to protect Ugandan trafficking victims exploited abroad, particularly among migrant workers, remained minimal.



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Significantly increase the availability of shelter and specialized services for all trafficking victims—particularly adult males and victims identified in rural areas—including by partnering with and allocating sufficient funding to NGOs that provide victim care. • Strengthen the partnership between police and prosecutors to more efficiently and effectively complete the judicial proceedings of trafficking cases, including increased training on strong evidence gathering and victim-centered investigations. • Vigorously investigate and prosecute alleged traffickers, and sentence convicted traffickers, including complicit officials, to penalties as prescribed by the 2009 anti-trafficking law. • Using the NRG, systematically and proactively identify trafficking victims by screening vulnerable populations, such as refugees, asylum-seekers, individuals in commercial sex, children in the Karamoja region, and Cuban medical professionals, for trafficking indicators and refer all trafficking victims to appropriate services. • Enact witness protection legislation and implement a witness protection program for victims participating in criminal proceedings. • Increase protection for Ugandan trafficking victims exploited abroad, including by training Ugandan embassy staff to identify and assist victims, establishing and implementing additional bilateral labor agreements with destination countries, and assigning additional labor attachés to Ugandan embassies to monitor migrants abroad. • Consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, including eliminating recruitment fees charged to migrant workers and holding fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable. • Strengthen the capacity of labor inspectors to identify and report potential trafficking crimes and refer victims of labor trafficking to appropriate services. • Establish and institutionalize the use of a centralized national data collection and reporting tool to synthesize and analyze nationwide law enforcement and victim protection data related to trafficking crimes. • Accede to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

PROSECUTION

The government increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The Preventing Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009 criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed punishments of up to 15 years' imprisonment for offenses involving adult victims and up to life imprisonment for those involving child victims. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as kidnapping. The Children Amendment Act of 2016 conflicted with the 2009 anti-trafficking act in some respects—for example, it defined child sex trafficking to require force, fraud, or coercion, which was inconsistent with the definition of trafficking under international law, and prescribed substantially lower penalties for the crime.

The Coordination Office to Prevent Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP) remained responsible for compiling law enforcement data. COPTIP continued to report "incidents" related to human trafficking, which included simple inquiries up to full police investigations; the government did not provide a breakdown of the various categories that make up an incident or how many incidents resulted in full investigation. In 2021, the government reported investigating 421 incidents of human trafficking involving 501 suspects, a significant increase compared with 214 incidents involving 154 suspects in 2020. Of the 421 reported incidents of human trafficking, at least 278 involved exploitation in Uganda and at least 113 involved exploitation abroad; 30 incidents of trafficking were unknown.

The government reported initiating prosecutions against 537 alleged traffickers in 403 cases in 2021, a significant increase compared with prosecuting 283 individuals in 202 cases in 2020. Of the 403 cases filed, at least 256 involved sex trafficking, 103 involved forced labor, and 44 involved unknown exploitation; 357 involved exploitation in Uganda and 46 involved exploitation abroad. The government withdrew 11 cases due to lack of evidence, while 361 cases remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period. Courts convicted 30 traffickers under the 2009 anti-trafficking act—the most convictions ever reported in a single year—compared with 11 convictions in 2020. Of the 30 convictions, courts convicted 14 traffickers for sex trafficking and 16 for forced labor. Courts sentenced the majority of traffickers to significant prison terms, including the first reported life sentence for a trafficker convicted of child sex trafficking; the average sentence was approximately 10 years' imprisonment. Courts acquitted one trafficker for unspecified reasons. In response to the pandemic, courts nationwide closed or significantly scaled down operations from June 2021 to November 2021. During this time, some courts in urban areas utilized virtual options; however, the court closures exacerbated previous case backlogs. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) Department of Gender, Children, and Sexual Offenses held special court sessions to alleviate the case backlog related to sexual and gender-based violence, including potential trafficking crimes; ODPP did not systematically track trafficking cases tried during these special sessions.

Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action during the year. Observers reported police officers and immigration officials, particularly at airports and border crossings, accepted bribes to facilitate trafficking crimes or to warn traffickers of impending operations and investigations. Media and senior government officials reported high-level officials may have owned or been associated with some labor recruitment companies suspected of trafficking. In 2021, the government investigated six government officials—including police officers, local defense units, and immigration officials—involved in potential trafficking crimes; all six cases remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period. Courts convicted one army officer charged with child sex trafficking in 2020 and sentenced him to six years' imprisonment.

The Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) within the Ugandan Police Force (UPF) and ODPP maintained anti-trafficking units, which were responsible for responding to trafficking crimes and coordinating between law enforcement officers. In 2021, COPTIP, in partnership with other sections of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), established an anti-trafficking unit at major border crossings. In 2019, UPF announced the creation of an Anti-Trafficking Department within CID; however, the department remained awaiting final approval by the public service commission for the second consecutive year. While awaiting final approval and direct funding, the department relied on the UPF's Department of Sexual Offenses and Children Cases for resources. Officials continued to use an electronic application, set up by ODPP in response to pandemic-related movement restrictions in the previous year, to facilitate communication between police and prosecutors and to share best practices for human trafficking investigations and prosecutions across the country. In 2021, ODPP, in partnership with an NGO, developed and implemented a mobile phone app to collect and disseminate standardized data pertaining to human trafficking investigations and prosecutions, enabling government agencies to track suspected and convicted traffickers and nationwide trafficking trends.

The government, in partnership with NGOs and international organizations, trained police, border agents, immigration officials, and community elders on the anti-trafficking law, victim-centered investigation strategies, evidence gathering for successful prosecutions, and victim identification and referral procedures. During the reporting period, the UPF developed a best practices guide for anti-trafficking investigations and an anti-trafficking training manual for police training academies; the UPF also partnered with ODPP to create SOPs for investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases. ODPP also developed and disseminated new prosecution guidelines, which outlined best practices for prosecutors handling trafficking cases. The government allocated 50 million Ugandan shillings (UGX) (\$14,140) to assist with prosecution-led investigations of trafficking cases, including support for victim protection. Despite more trainings and new protocols, some Ugandan police and immigration

officers continued to lack an understanding of the anti-trafficking law and may have misclassified trafficking cases as other crimes or collected insufficient evidence for trafficking cases to proceed to prosecution. Due to the limited availability of shelters and other protections, the government often quickly repatriated foreign victims before obtaining their testimony, which continued to impede the completion of trials. The government collaborated with the Government of Kenya and INTERPOL on one case involving forced labor in Kenya; the cooperation with foreign counterparts led to the arrest of three traffickers in Uganda, who regularly exploited Ugandan girls in Kenya. The UPF also coordinated with the Government of Kenya to conduct cross-border trainings on identifying and investigating trafficking crimes.

PROTECTION

The government increased victim protection efforts. The government reported identifying 710 victims in 2021, compared with 257 victims in 2020. Additionally, the government also intercepted 305 potential victims using screening tools at sites known for transporting trafficking victims, including airports, border crossings, and internal highways; this compared with 378 potential victims intercepted in 2020. NGOs and international organizations reported identifying and assisting at least 826 potential victims, providing them with various services, including medical care, shelter, psycho-social counseling, family reunification, and repatriation assistance. Government officials continued to use the NRG to identify trafficking victims and refer them to services. The NRG provided victim referral guidelines for stakeholders—including police, prosecutors, immigration officials, and NGOs—and described resources and recommendations for victim protection. The government took significant steps to enhance implementation of the NRG, which was adopted in July 2020, including by distributing copies of the NRG to stakeholders and training them on its use. Several government agencies, including the MIA, developed unit-level guidance to further operationalize the NRG. In 2021, COPTIP, in partnership with an NGO, developed a national directory of trafficking victim service providers to complement the NRG. Additionally, the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD) partnered with a local NGO to develop trauma-informed standards of care for survivors of trafficking. The government continued to operate under the implementing regulations of the 2009 anti-trafficking act; these regulations outlined responsibilities for relevant stakeholders, including law enforcement, medical professionals, and civil society members, to combat trafficking.

For the first time in six years, the government reported directly assisting victims and referring victims to protection services using the NRG, the newly developed service provider directory, and the country's multi-sectoral victim support system. The UPF continued to operate a short-term shelter for trafficking victims in Kampala. The government provided temporary shelter and support to 334 victims at the center in 2021; in some cases, officials allowed victims to stay at the shelter for longer periods of time to participate in criminal proceedings against traffickers. The government, in partnership with civil society organizations, also provided an unreported number of victims with various protection services, including shelter, medical services, psycho-social counseling, vocational training, and community reintegration. The availability of victim care remained inadequate to meet the needs of victims, especially outside of the central and eastern parts of the country, and services were primarily for women and children, limiting the services available for male victims. Government officials and civil society reported the lack of shelters in the country, both long-term and short-term, continued to adversely affect the government's ability to adequately protect trafficking victims. In some cases, police reportedly returned child victims exploited by their guardians to their homes due to the limited availability of shelters or alternative forms of care. In response to the pandemic, some NGO shelters and government-run centers acted as quarantine or testing centers and operated under limited capacity due to social distancing measures, added steps for victim intake, or staffing gaps; the government reported this decreased its ability to refer all victims to care. The government also reported pandemic-related measures, such as travel restrictions, mandatory quarantine and testing, social distancing, and curfews, during the May 2021 to September 2021 lockdown decreased the ability for the government to provide in-person care or transport victims to NGO-run services. Due to the continued

demand for trafficking victims protection services, the government provided some NGOs with exemptions to continue operating at full capacity during strict lockdown periods.

To address the exploitation of Ugandan nationals abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with the MGLSD, continued to offer temporary shelter to vulnerable migrant workers, including potential trafficking victims, in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE); however, the government did not report the numbers of victims that received these services during the year. In September 2021, the Cabinet approved the establishment of shelters for vulnerable migrant workers, including potential trafficking victims, in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The government, in partnership with international organizations and local NGOs, continued to provide repatriation assistance to Ugandan victims exploited abroad.

The government remained without victim-witness legislation or a program to protect trafficking victims participating in criminal proceedings and prevent re-traumatization and generally relied on NGOs to provide these services; however, the government took some ad hoc steps to protect victims absent standardized procedures, including providing transportation, physical protection, shelter, interpretation services, and legal counsel. ODPP, in partnership with local NGOs, established child-friendly interviewing rooms in four regional offices where law enforcement, NGOs, and social workers could conduct forensic interviews with child trafficking victims. The absence of victim-witness protection policies hindered some investigations and prosecutions due to traffickers' access to victims, leading to threats to discourage their participation in trials; additionally, some law enforcement officials lacked a victim-centered approach when working with victims, potentially discouraging them from participating in criminal proceedings. The 2009 anti-trafficking law permitted foreign trafficking victims to remain in Uganda during the investigation of their cases and to apply for residence and work permits, but the government did not report providing these services. The law permitted victims to provide testimony via video or written statement or to anonymously provide information. ODPP reported increasing training for investigators to collect supporting evidence to ensure strong evidence gathering in cases where survivors opted not to testify. The law allowed victims to seek restitution and compensation in both criminal and civil suits; the government reported courts increasingly ordered restitution or compensation but did not provide specific case details.

PREVENTION

The government increased prevention efforts. The National Task Force, led by the MIA Permanent Secretary with COPTIP serving as its secretariat, met regularly to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts. The government allocated 360 million UGX (\$101,780) for coordination of anti-trafficking activities, a significant increase compared with 168 million UGX (\$47,500) in 2020. The government reported pandemic-related restrictions, such as limited capacity of social gatherings and social distancing, led to the cancellation of some planned meetings and activities by the National Task Force. In addition to pandemic-related restraints, observers noted that COPTIP did not have sufficient staffing or funding to fulfill its mandate, hindering progress on new anti-trafficking efforts. Similar to previous years, COPTIP published an annual report containing general information on human trafficking and a summary of its anti-trafficking efforts. The government continued to implement its 2019-2024 anti-trafficking national action plan, including by seeking input from NGOs and survivors on activities. The government, both independently and in partnership with NGOs and international organizations, held various awareness campaigns targeting government officials, civil society, community leaders, and the public to educate stakeholders on recognizing trafficking crimes, vulnerabilities to trafficking, and victim protection measures. The government did not operate a trafficking-specific hotline, but it continued to support, in partnership with an international organization, the Uganda Child Helpline (UCH) to receive calls related to crimes against children, including trafficking. COPTIP provided training to UCH staff on trafficking and data collection. UCH identified 108 potential child trafficking victims and referred all cases to law enforcement or services, compared with 81 potential victims identified through hotline calls in 2020.

The MGLSD continued to regulate labor migration and other labor-related matters, including labor trafficking, and increased efforts to improve ethical recruitment practices. In August 2021, the government enacted the Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers) Regulations of 2021, strengthening the previous 2005 Employment Regulations. The 2021 regulations increased the basic financial and personnel requirements for new and existing labor recruitment companies, prohibited the licensure of companies whose personnel had previous criminal records related to illegal recruitment or human trafficking, increased penalties for violations, and deemed companies' exploitation of workers in forced labor as grounds for suspension of a recruitment license. In 2021, MGLSD suspended 12 companies' recruitment licenses for engaging in fraudulent and exploitative recruitment activities, compared with no suspensions in 2020. Police reported arresting three individuals for illegally operating a recruitment company, compared with one in 2020. The government's external employment management system, which functioned as a "one stop" internet portal, where Ugandans could search and apply for all pre-vetted overseas employment opportunities through licensed recruitment companies, remained operational. MGLSD continued to contract private companies to conduct mandatory pre-departure training for Ugandans utilizing registered labor recruitment companies to travel to the Middle East for employment as domestic workers. The weeklong residential training, paid for by the recruitment company, trained 60-70 women each week, including on domestic work skills, contract appreciation, migrant worker rights, and resources for assistance.

Despite efforts to improve recruitment practices and enforce regulations, observers noted insufficient funding, staffing gaps, corruption, and the continued operation of illegal recruitment agencies may have limited MGLSD's overall anti-trafficking efforts. The 2021 regulations allowed recruiting agencies to charge migrant workers recruitment fees up to 20,000 UGX (\$6) for administrative costs and various costs for placement fees and travel preparations, such as pre-departure trainings, visa application, and medical examinations. The MGLSD continued to employ labor attachés in Uganda diplomatic missions in Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE; the government continued negotiations to place labor attachés in Bahrain, Israel, and Oman. Reportedly, the attachés advocated for Ugandan workers' rights with host governments, screened workers for trafficking indicators, resolved workplace disputes, provided identity documents, and partnered with licensed employment agencies to find legitimate work opportunities for Ugandans; however, the government did not report specific actions taken by the attachés during the reporting period. Labor inspectors overseeing working conditions in the country did not receive training on trafficking and did not report efforts to identify or report potential trafficking crimes to law enforcement. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. Uganda was not a party to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Uganda, and traffickers exploit victims from Uganda abroad. Traffickers exploit Ugandan adults and children in forced labor in various industries, including agriculture, fishing, mining, street vending, hospitality, and domestic work. Traffickers increasingly use local radio and social media to advertise fraudulent job opportunities in Kampala to lure children from rural areas into exploitative situations. Traffickers also exploit women, girls, and boys in sex trafficking throughout the country, particularly in Kampala and other urban areas, in brothels, bars, residential homes, and on the street. Children from the Karamoja region are particularly vulnerable to trafficking due to lack of economic and educational opportunities in the region; NGOs estimate the majority of child sex trafficking victims in Uganda are ethnically Karamojong. Traffickers, sometimes known as community "elders," also exploit children from the Karamoja region in forced begging and domestic servitude; in some cases, traffickers force children to meet them at international borders, where they organized markets to sell the children into domestic servitude or sex trafficking. In response to the pandemic, most schools closed from March 2020 to January 2022; during this time, traffickers increasingly exploited children in sex trafficking, including online commercial sexual exploitation, and forced labor in domestic work and begging. In some cases, parents exploit their children in forced

labor and sex trafficking to supplement family income lost as a result of pandemic-related job loss. Observers also report teachers who lost their jobs during school closures may be increasingly vulnerable to trafficking.

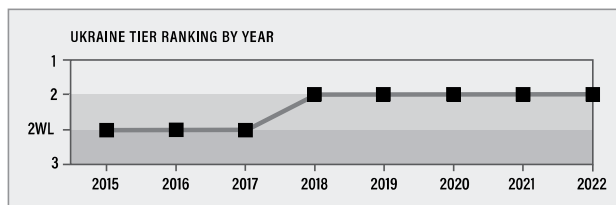
Employment agencies based in Uganda and abroad, both legal and fraudulent, recruit Ugandans to work in the Middle East—particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, the UAE, and Oman—where, at times, traffickers exploit them in forced labor in domestic work, hospitality, or construction; Ugandans who voluntarily migrate in search of employment opportunities are also vulnerable to exploitative conditions. In one research study, an NGO estimates 89 percent of Ugandans working in the Middle East experience conditions indicative of forced labor, including non-payment of wages, physical abuse, passport confiscation, and excessive working hours. To circumvent the 2016 government ban on migrant worker travel to Oman, some licensed and unlicensed agencies send Ugandans through Kenya and Tanzania, increasing their vulnerability to debt bondage due to higher recruitment and travel fees. Traffickers also exploit Ugandans in forced labor and sex trafficking in neighboring African countries, Asia, and North America. During the pandemic, many Ugandans abroad experienced loss of employment, leaving them trapped in the country due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, border closures, and economic scarcity; unable to find new work or a safe way home, these individuals are increasingly vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers are increasingly targeting university graduates with the promise of high-paying, skilled jobs abroad; however, upon arrival in the destination country, traffickers exploit these individuals in domestic servitude. Kenyan business owners and employers exploit Ugandan girls, particularly from the Karamoja region, in sex trafficking and forced labor in Nairobi's Eastleigh neighborhood. Criminals involved in terrorist networks may lure and recruit Ugandan adults and children to Somalia via Kenya to join non-state armed groups, primarily al-Shabaab, sometimes with fraudulent promises of lucrative employment.

Uganda hosts more than 1.6 million refugees, primarily from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Burundi. Observers report traffickers increasingly exploit refugees, both in village settlements and urban areas, in forced labor and sex trafficking. Uganda continues to serve as a transit point for migrants seeking work in the Middle East; traffickers exploit this transiting population in forced labor and sex trafficking. Increasingly, traffickers pose as recruitment agencies to facilitate the placement of former trafficking victims, primarily from Burundi, by falsely advertising employment in Middle East; instead, traffickers often exploit these women in Uganda before transporting them to Kenya for further exploitation. Traffickers exploit children from neighboring East African countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania, in forced labor, primarily in agriculture and domestic work, and sex trafficking in Uganda. Cuban medical professionals working in Uganda may have been forced to work by the Cuban government.

UKRAINE: TIER 2

The Government of Ukraine does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. Despite the documented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the government's anti-trafficking capacity, the government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Ukraine remained on Tier 2. These efforts included investigating more suspected traffickers, allocating significantly more money to the national budget for anti-trafficking measures, and improving access to identification documentation and official registration for vulnerable populations. The government also took steps to prevent child trafficking and reduce re-traumatization of child victims during the criminal justice process. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Authorities convicted fewer traffickers and most convicted traffickers avoided imprisonment, likely due to judges' underestimation of the severity of trafficking crimes, entrenched stereotypes about what constitutes trafficking in persons, and corruption. This lenient sentencing weakened deterrence, did not adequately reflect the nature of the crime, and undercut broader efforts to fight trafficking. Reports of officials complicit in human trafficking persisted. While the

government initiated an investigation into two allegedly complicit officials during the reporting period, for the fifth consecutive year it did not secure any convictions. The government officially identified far fewer victims in 2021 than in 2020, while international organizations continued to identify far more victims than the government, highlighting the government's inadequate identification efforts and a continuing lack of trust in authorities' ability to protect or assist victims. Observers highlighted the government's ineffective coordination and implementation of anti-trafficking policies, and NGOs continued to identify systemic shortcomings in implementation of the national referral mechanism (NRM) at the regional level.



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Identify and certify the official status of more victims to ensure they are afforded their rights under the trafficking law and modify the procedure for granting victim status to lessen the burden on victims to self-identify and divulge sensitive information. • Vigorously investigate and prosecute alleged trafficking crimes and punish convicted traffickers with significant prison terms. • Increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict officials allegedly complicit in trafficking crimes under the trafficking statute. • Establish and fill a dedicated National Coordinator position to lead national efforts to coordinate and implement anti-trafficking policies. • Provide additional, extensive training on the NRM to local officials and service providers throughout the decentralization process to minimize disruption in identification, referral, and assistance to trafficking victims. • Increase worker protections by eliminating recruitment fees charged to workers by labor recruiters and ensuring employers pay any recruitment fees. • Increase training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases (particularly on forced labor), using a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach, and on how to gather evidence outside of victims' testimony. • Increase victims' access to legal assistance throughout the criminal process and improve victims' ability to access court-ordered restitution in criminal cases and compensation through civil proceedings. • Increase government funding for anti-trafficking efforts, particularly funding for local communities. • Increase training for officials on victim identification, particularly in proactive screening for labor trafficking and of vulnerable populations, such as women in commercial sex, children exploited in sex trafficking, foreign migrant workers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). • Increase law enforcement investigations and prosecutions of labor recruitment firms engaged in fraudulent practices.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained law enforcement efforts. Article 149 of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of three to eight years' imprisonment, which were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Law enforcement investigated 222 trafficking cases in 2021, an increase from 203 in 2020. These included 85 new sex trafficking cases and 137 new labor trafficking cases, of which 54 were for forced involvement in criminal activity. An international organization stated pandemic-related travel restrictions changed traffickers' recruitment tactics and exploitation patterns, hampering law enforcement's detection capabilities. The government prosecuted 101 suspected traffickers in 2021, compared with the prosecution of 51 cases with an unknown number of defendants in 2020. The government convicted 24 traffickers in 2021, compared with 29 in 2020 and 35 in 2019. Of the 24 convicted traffickers sentenced in 2021, only five (21 percent) received prison sentences, all for a term of five to 10 years; nineteen traffickers received suspended sentences. This was similar to 2020 when courts sentenced only 17 percent of convicted traffickers to imprisonment. Observers reported many judges