



2016 Trafficking in Persons Report - The Gambia

Publisher [United States Department of State](#)

Publication Date 30 June 2016

Cite as United States Department of State, *2016 Trafficking in Persons Report - The Gambia*, 30 June 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/577f959913.html> [accessed 2 May 2017]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

THE GAMBIA: Tier 3

The Gambia is a source and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Within The Gambia, women, girls, and – to a lesser extent – boys are subjected to sex trafficking and domestic servitude. Women, girls, and boys from West African countries – mainly Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Benin – are recruited for commercial sexual exploitation in The Gambia. The majority of these victims are subjected to sexual exploitation by European child sex tourists. Observers believe organized sex trafficking networks use both European and Gambian travel agencies to promote child sex tourism. Many Gambian boys attend Koranic schools led by religious teachers, known as *marabouts*; some corrupt or unscrupulous *marabouts* force such boys into begging and street vending. Gambian children have been identified as victims of forced labor in neighboring West African countries, including Ghana and Senegal. Women and girls are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking in Middle Eastern countries, including United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Lebanon.

The Government of The Gambia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. During the reporting period, the government repatriated and provided services to nine victims subjected to trafficking abroad and continued to conduct sensitization campaigns in key border regions; however, the government did not complete any prosecutions, secure any convictions, or identify any victims within the country for the fourth consecutive year. Additionally, despite reports that government officials were complicit in trafficking offenses during the reporting period, the government did not investigate, prosecute, or convict any government officials complicit in trafficking offenses.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GAMBIA:

Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses and ensure adequate sentencing for convicted trafficking offenders, including complicit government officials; train law enforcement personnel to identify trafficking victims proactively among vulnerable populations, such as boys in street vending, unattended children in tourist resorts known to be sex tourism destinations, and women in prostitution, and refer them to protective services; improve data collection and public reporting on victim identification and law enforcement efforts; develop standard procedures for referring trafficking victims to NGO care services and inform government officials and the NGO community of such procedures; undertake cooperative efforts with anti-trafficking officials from governments in the region to enable joint law enforcement efforts, and the safe repatriation of victims to and from The Gambia; and provide adequate funding and resources to the national coordinating body to ensure its effective implementation of the anti-trafficking national action plan.

PROSECUTION

The government demonstrated minimal anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The Gambia's 2007 Trafficking in Persons Act prohibits all forms of trafficking and an October 2010 amendment increased the prescribed penalties to 50 years' to life imprisonment for all forms of trafficking. These penalties are

sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. The Gambia's 2005 Children's Act also prohibits child trafficking – though it does not include forced labor in its definition of trafficking – prescribing a penalty of life imprisonment. The 2003 Tourism Offenses Act prohibits child sex trafficking, prescribing a penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. The government initiated one investigation and one prosecution for labor trafficking during the reporting period; however, the government did not secure any convictions during the reporting period. Four prosecutions initiated in the previous reporting period remained pending; three of the suspects remained at large. Sixteen law enforcement officials attended a training provided by an international organization; however, law enforcement officials generally continued to lack adequate training to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses. Despite reports of official complicity, the government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking offenses; additionally, law enforcement officers acting with impunity and corruption was a serious problem throughout the reporting period.

PROTECTION

The government demonstrated minimal efforts to protect trafficking victims. The government did not identify or provide services to any trafficking victims within the country during the reporting period. The government acknowledged the identification of 20 Gambian women who had been subjected to domestic servitude in Kuwait; however, the government did not repatriate or provide services for these women. The government, in collaboration with an international organization, repatriated nine women who were identified as trafficking victims in Lebanon during the previous reporting period; the government provided initial screening and psychological counseling for all nine victims and was in the process of securing victims' assistance funds to support vocational training at the close of the reporting period. The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) operated a shelter for trafficking victims, abandoned children, and victims of domestic violence, as well as a drop-in center for street children; however, no trafficking victims were cared for in these facilities during the reporting period. The shelter offered 24-hour services to children and adults, but no victims in the shelter were allowed to leave the premises without a chaperone. The government maintained an electronic child protection database, which included information on trafficking cases, although no cases were identified in 2015. The 2007 anti-trafficking act allows foreign victims to obtain temporary residence visas for the duration of legal proceedings; the government offers no other legal alternatives to the removal of foreign trafficking victims to countries where they may face retribution or hardship. There were no reports of victims being penalized for unlawful acts committed as a result of being subjected to trafficking; however, the lack of formal identification procedures likely resulted in victims remaining unidentified in the law enforcement system.

PREVENTION

The government sustained modest prevention efforts. The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) – the coordinating body for government anti-trafficking efforts – continued to receive modest funding from the government. In consultation with NGOs, NAATIP updated the government's national action plan to apply through 2016 and began its implementation. Its officials traveled to key border posts to sensitize immigration, police, and customs officers, as well as the general public, on human trafficking and the need to report suspected cases directly to NAATIP. The government did not have effective policies to regulate foreign labor recruiters and hold them liable for fraudulent recruiting; however, the Governments of The Gambia and Lebanon began drafting a memorandum of understanding that focused on improving the regulation of labor recruiters and law enforcement cooperation; the draft was not finalized at the close of the reporting period. In collaboration with international NGOs, the Gambian tourism board continued to raise awareness about child sex trafficking within the tourism industry. Authorities continued to enforce the 2005 ban on unattended children in resort areas and the DSW continued to operate five neighborhood watch groups to monitor urban areas near tourist resorts for possible cases of child abuse or child sexual exploitation; however, none of these efforts led to the referral of any child trafficking victims to protective services or the apprehension of any suspected traffickers or child sex tourists. Additionally, the government did not make any efforts to decrease the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor during the reporting period. The government provided anti-trafficking training to Gambian troops before their deployment abroad on international peacekeeping missions. The government did not provide anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

Search Refworld

by keyword

and / or country

[Advanced Search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

Countries

- [Gambia](#)

Topics

- [Forced labour](#)
- [Prostitution / Commercial sex work](#)
- [Trafficking in persons](#)