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in violation of the local labor law—thereby rendering them vulnerable to trafficking. Although some reforms are underway, Bahrain’s sponsorship-based employment system continues to put some workers at risk of trafficking by restricting their ability to change employers or leave the country, and by giving employers the unilateral power to control the status of residency permits.

BANGLADESH: TIER 2 WATCH LIST

The Government of Bangladesh does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included adopting a national action plan to combat trafficking, convicting traffickers, initiating an investigation into a police officer accused of child sex trafficking, and continuing to investigate some potential trafficking crimes against Rohingya refugees. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. The government identified significantly fewer trafficking victims and did not consistently refer victims to care, and reports of it doing so were far fewer than the number of victims it identified. Victim care remained insufficient; Rohingya and foreign trafficking victims could not access protective services, and the government did not have shelter for adult male victims. The government acknowledged investigations, prosecutions, and convictions for trafficking remained inadequate compared to the scale of the problem. Despite at least 100 credible reports of forced labor and sex trafficking of Rohingya within Bangladesh, the government did not report investigating or prosecuting these potential crimes, and the Bangladesh High Court did not entertain anti-trafficking cases filed by Rohingya. However, the government allowed significant humanitarian access to the Rohingya camps and cooperated closely with UN and NGOs in counter-trafficking efforts. Official complicity in trafficking crimes remained a serious problem, and the government did not report taking any action against some high-profile allegations. The government continued to allow employers to charge high recruitment fees to migrant workers and did not consistently address illegally operating recruitment sub-agents, which left workers vulnerable to trafficking. Because the government has devoted significant resources to a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute significant efforts to meet the minimum standards, Bangladesh was granted a waiver per the Trafficking Victims Protection Act from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3. Therefore Bangladesh remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the third consecutive year.



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Significantly increase prosecutions and convictions for trafficking offenses, particularly of labor traffickers and complicit government officials, while strictly respecting due process. •

Take steps to eliminate recruitment fees charged to workers by licensed labor recruiters and ensure recruitment fees are paid by employers. • Increase investigations and prosecutions of credible allegations of trafficking of Rohingya, including cases that do not involve movement. • Establish guidelines for provision of adequate victim care and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the referral of victims to such services. • Expand services for trafficking victims, including adult male victims, foreign victims, and victims exploited abroad. • Allow Rohingya freedom of movement and access to education and employment to reduce their risk of trafficking. • Enhance training for officials, including law enforcement, labor inspectors, and immigration officers, on identification of trafficking cases and victim referrals to services. • Expand the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment’s (MEWOE) mandate to include the regulation of sub-agents. • Improve quality of pre-departure trainings, including sessions on labor rights, labor laws, and access to justice and assistance. • Establish clear procedures for Rohingya to file complaints in the legal system, and train law enforcement and camp management on the procedures. • Improve collaboration with NGOs and civil society for more effective partnership on anti-trafficking efforts, including allowing service providers increased access to assist victims. • Resource and implement the 2018-2022 National Plan of Action. • Accede to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained minimal anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts and took some steps to address one case of official complicity in trafficking, which remained pervasive and serious. The 2012 Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (PSHTA) criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of five years to life imprisonment and a fine of not less than 50,000 Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) (\$595). Bonded labor was treated as a separate offense and prescribed lesser penalties of five to 12 years’ imprisonment and a fine of not less than 50,000 BDT (\$595). These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. The government continued to train police officers through an anti-trafficking module at the police academy. The government also provided in-kind support to international organization- and NGO-run trainings for police and immigration officials. While the government reported training 23,890 police officers on human trafficking in 2018, it did not report if police and other relevant officials received training on the PSHTA implementing rules, which it disseminated in 2017. Many law enforcement officers did not understand human trafficking and, at times, conflated it with migrant smuggling.

The government recorded 592 cases involving 1,324 suspects under the PSHTA during the reporting period, a decrease from 778 cases the previous reporting period. The vast majority of cases involved the smuggling of Rohingya and Bangladeshis, and it is unclear how many of those cases also contained crimes of trafficking in persons. Courts did not report how many trafficking prosecutions they initiated or continued from previous reporting periods. Courts reported conviction of eight traffickers in five potential trafficking cases, all involving the transportation of women abroad for sex trafficking or forced labor. Six convicted traffickers received life imprisonment and a 50,000 BDT (\$595) fine, one received life imprisonment, and one received 15 years’ imprisonment. This is compared to one conviction in the previous reporting period, in which the trafficker received life imprisonment. The government

acknowledged investigations, prosecutions, and convictions for trafficking remained inadequate compared to the scale of the problem. According to media analysis of police data, the government's conviction rate for trafficking crimes under the PSHTA from 2013-2019 was 0.4 percent. The government continued to allow mobile courts, established under the executive branch, to adjudicate smuggling cases, some of which might have contained elements of human trafficking.

Mobile courts could only prescribe penalties of up to three years' imprisonment—less than the minimum penalty of five years' imprisonment for trafficking offenses under the PSHTA. In addition to the cases under the PSHTA, mobile courts convicted 11 individuals in two cases for "human trafficking" during the reporting period and sentenced them to between two and six months' imprisonment. However, case information indicated the individuals had likely committed migrant smuggling crimes without evidence of exploitation in forced labor or sex trafficking. Despite more than 100 reports from NGOs of Rohingya subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking within Bangladesh, the only Rohingya-related cases reported by law enforcement involved movement via boat—cases that might have been migrant smuggling without elements of trafficking. An NGO expressed concern that some village courts, five-person panels of local government officials and villagers, adjudicated trafficking cases but could only administer financial penalties, and the courts may have subjected victims to intimidation, fraud, and corruption. The government had not established the anti-trafficking tribunal, stipulated in the PSHTA to specialize in human trafficking cases. The Women and Children Violence Protection Tribunal continued to hear trafficking cases in the interim; however, observers commented the prosecutors lacked expertise in trafficking. Observers stated the government generally did not dedicate sufficient resources to pre-trial investigations and prosecutors persisted with trials to meet the statutorily required timeline of 180 working days for the disposal of cases, even if inadequately prepared.

The government deployed the Rapid Action Battalion and the Bangladesh Army to bolster security around Rohingya refugee camps, including to stem human trafficking and migrant smuggling. The Bangladeshi High Court did not entertain anti-trafficking cases filed by Rohingya, despite the law allowing Rohingya to file trafficking cases in Bangladeshi courts. The government did not establish clear legal reporting mechanisms within the camps, which impeded Rohingya trafficking victims' access to justice and increased impunity for offenders. In an effort to remedy these deficiencies, police and international donors established one help desk in one refugee camp to provide legal assistance to Rohingya female and child victims of crime, and an international organization trained 55 female police on victim-centered investigations and interviews for cases of sexual- and gender-based violence. Public distrust of police and security services deterred many victims of crime, including trafficking, from approaching law enforcement for assistance.

Official complicity in human trafficking and impunity for offenders remained serious concerns. Observers reported some police took bribes and sexual favors to ignore potential trafficking crimes at brothels, and some labor attachés, local politicians, judges, and police requested bribes from victims and their families to pursue cases. Observers alleged some officials from district employment and manpower offices allegedly facilitated human trafficking, and some traffickers in rural areas had political connections that enabled them to operate with impunity. According to NGOs, some local politicians convinced victims to accept payment from recruitment sub-agents to not

report fraudulent or exploitative labor recruitment actions to police. International organizations alleged some Bangladeshi border guard, military, and police officials facilitated trafficking of Rohingya women and children, ranging from accepting bribes to provide traffickers access to refugee camps, to direct involvement in facilitating their exploitation. Other observers reported some police conducted slow and flawed investigations to allow traffickers to evade punishment, including when suspects included fellow officers. During the reporting period, police arrested a law enforcement officer for allegedly recruiting two 12-year-old girls for employment and exploiting them in sex trafficking and forced criminality; he remained in police custody while the investigation continued. In a second case, two Bangladeshi border guards propositioned two girls for commercial sex and raped them. The commanding officer referred to the allegations as "rumors" and did not report law enforcement action against the suspects; police prevented NGO personnel from visiting the girls in the hospital. Media reported that from 2015-2018, Malaysian employment agencies and 10 Bangladeshi recruitment agencies formed a monopoly on recruitment of Bangladeshi workers to charge higher recruitment fees—which increased Bangladeshi migrant workers' vulnerability to debt-related coercion—and reportedly bribed politicians and officials in both countries to facilitate the monopoly. In October 2018, the Dhaka High Court directed the Bangladesh government to form a committee to investigate the alleged monopoly and submit a report within six months; the government did not report if it created this committee, investigated any officials in connection with the case, or received the six-month report. In September 2016, a federal court in New York entered a default judgment against a former Bangladeshi consular officer and his wife and ordered them to pay approximately \$920,000 to a Bangladeshi citizen in a civil suit in which the plaintiff alleged violations of the TVPA as well as federal and state labor laws. The consular officer left the United States and remained in the Bangladesh foreign service as an ambassador. The default judgment remained unpaid while the case was on appeal. The plaintiff had alleged experiencing retaliatory actions by the Bangladesh Consulate in New York. In another case, in June 2017, a Bangladeshi consular officer was indicted in a New York court on charges of labor trafficking and assault for allegedly forcing a Bangladeshi citizen to work without pay through threats and intimidation. In January 2018, the consular officer pled guilty to the charge of failure to pay a minimum wage and paid \$10,000 in restitution to the victim. The government did not report taking any action during the reporting period to hold either consular officer accountable.

PROTECTION

The government decreased victim identification and protection efforts. Through its 592 cases recorded under the PSHTA, the government identified 419 potential trafficking victims, including 155 adult males, 172 adult females, and 92 children. The government did not provide a breakdown of the type of trafficking or nationality of victims. This is a significant decrease from the identification of 770 potential victims in 2017. The government reported identification of an additional 1,472 individuals, including many Rohingya, intercepted during alleged smuggling operations; it was unclear how many were also victims of forced labor or sex trafficking. Two organizations reported identifying 969 additional potential trafficking victims. Among the 969, one organization identified 99 Rohingya that traffickers removed from refugee camps and exploited in sex trafficking (nine females) and labor trafficking (90 males and females) within Bangladesh between October 2017 and October 2018. The second organization identified hundreds of Rohingya

and Bangladeshi smuggling victims, but it did not report if they also endured forced labor or sex trafficking. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the government's lead agency for combating trafficking, had SOPs for proactive trafficking victim identification; however, the government did not report how widely officials disseminated or used these SOPs. Some police officers used a checklist to proactively identify victims when they came into contact with commercial sex establishments; however, the government did not formally adopt or disseminate the checklist, and its use was inconsistent.

The government did not report referring any trafficking victims to government or NGO-run services in 2018, compared to referring one victim to care in 2017. One NGO, however, reported receipt of 25 trafficking victim referrals from the government. While the government did not provide services specifically designed for trafficking victims, the Bangladesh police operated centers for women and child victims of violence, including trafficking, in each of Bangladesh's eight divisions, and these centers assisted some trafficking victims during the reporting period. The centers provided temporary shelter for up to five days and medical and psychological counseling. With partial funding from a foreign government, the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) operated one-stop crisis centers at medical facilities for women and child victims of violence to provide shelter, medical care, counseling, and referral to other services, including legal assistance; these shelters could assist trafficking victims. Neither the government nor NGOs provided shelter or rehabilitation for adult male victims; they could each provide some basic services for males, including repatriation and job placement. The government did not have a standard, adopted policy to refer victims to services, although it retained a court-order mechanism to do so and some officials followed an NGO's written guidelines for referral to and provision of care. The government did not allow foreign victims to access government services. NGOs could provide some care for foreign trafficking victims, but it was inadequate to prevent re-trafficking. NGOs could provide two or three days of temporary care to Rohingya trafficking victims in "safe homes" but then were required to return Rohingya trafficking victims to refugee camps, where they remained vulnerable to trafficking. NGOs continued to state government services did not meet minimum standards of care, and the insufficient rehabilitation resources contributed to re-trafficking of victims. In addition, the government's NGO Affairs Bureau sometimes withheld its approval for foreign funding to NGOs working in areas the bureau deemed sensitive, such as human rights or humanitarian assistance, which hampered the provision of services to some trafficking victims. Government shelters did not allow victims to leave without a court order, and the government also required NGOs and international organizations to obtain a court order to contact victims in government shelters to provide further rehabilitation services.

The government made minimal efforts to assist Bangladeshis exploited abroad. It continued to implement its 2015 memorandum of understanding with the Government of India on human trafficking, which included coordination on the identification and repatriation of Bangladeshi victims. In practice, NGOs reported the Bangladesh government sometimes provided only the necessary travel documents for repatriation; NGOs or the victim's family frequently paid the cost of repatriation from India and other countries, and at times this resulted in family members incurring burdensome debt. In a few cases, Bangladeshi embassies provided short-term shelter or funded repatriation of a trafficking victim. The government provided some compensation to migrant workers upon return to Bangladesh, although it was unclear if any were

trafficking victims. One NGO reported repatriation of 355 Bangladeshi trafficking victims exploited abroad, but it did not report what the government contributed to these repatriations. The government continued to operate five safe houses at embassies abroad for female Bangladeshi workers fleeing abusive employers, and these shelters housed 169 females during the reporting period. The government maintained 29 labor offices in embassies and consulates overseas to provide welfare services to Bangladeshi migrant workers, including legal and interpretation services. During the reporting period, Vanuatu authorities reported identification of 101 Bangladeshi male forced labor victims. Despite repeated requests for information from the Government of Bangladesh, Vanuatu authorities reportedly did not share information or coordinate on repatriation options. Overseas Bangladeshi workers who secured their employment through MEWOE could lodge complaints with MEWOE to seek restitution for labor and recruitment violations, including allegations of forced labor, through an arbitration process, although observers stated the process often yielded minimal awards. The government did not report how many sought or achieved restitution. MEWOE reported settlement of 660 complaints from 2017-2018 and the recovery of 25.7 million BDT (\$305,950) from recruiting agencies; it did not report if any complaints involved forced labor. Victims could also file civil suits seeking compensation.

The PSHTA entitled victims to protection during judicial proceedings, including police security. The government and NGOs noted insufficient implementation of this provision, however, resulted in the vast majority of trafficking victims choosing not to pursue cases against their traffickers. In some cases this was a result of traffickers intimidating victims. Because law enforcement did not uniformly employ SOPs to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, including women in prostitution, law enforcement may have penalized sex trafficking victims for unlawful acts their traffickers compelled them to commit. For example, law enforcement raided brothels and arrested foreign women in prostitution for violation of their visas without efforts to screen for trafficking indicators. NGOs reported some authorities detained and fined Bangladeshi trafficking victims who transited through various land and sea routes for failure to carry a passport; one NGO noted the government may have deported some victims without screening for trafficking. The government did not provide legal alternatives to the removal of foreign trafficking victims to countries where they might face hardship or retribution.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking. In partnership with an international organization, the government drafted and adopted a 2018-2022 anti-trafficking national action plan. The plan notably designated MHA as the lead for anti-trafficking efforts, created a supervisory inter-ministerial committee to oversee the plan's implementation, and included objectives specifically aimed at investigating and preventing human trafficking of Rohingya in Cox's Bazar. MHA, however, relied substantially on international organizations and foreign donors for both financial and technical support to achieve nearly all of the plan's objectives. During the reporting period, MHA published its 2017 annual report on human trafficking. Contacts reported collaboration remained weak between MHA, MSW, and MEWOE on trafficking cases, including case referrals for investigation and victim referrals to care. The government had 555 district- and sub-district level counter-trafficking committees, and some allocated funding for coordination and victim support while others did not function.

The 2013 Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (OEMA) criminalized fraudulent recruitment and unlawful amounts of recruitment fees; however, these provisions still permitted the government to set legal recruitment fees at rates between 85,000 and 262,000 BDT (\$1,010-\$3,120), high enough to render many migrant workers indebted and vulnerable to trafficking through debt-based coercion. The Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) oversaw 1,115 licensed labor recruitment agencies. Its vigilance task force conducted 15 operations in 2018, compared to 14 in 2017, against corrupt recruitment agencies, travel agencies, and *dalals*—illegal and unregulated sub-agents who operated in rural locations and connected prospective migrant workers to licensed employment agencies. MEWOE convicted three labor recruitment agency workers for illegal recruiting practices, sentenced them to three months' imprisonment and a fine, and canceled their registrations. This is a decrease from 2017, when MEWOE suspended 29 recruitment agencies, fined 12, and convicted four individuals with terms of imprisonment for violations of OEMA. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledged the absence of a legal framework to regulate *dalals*, including those who fraudulently recruited migrant workers for exploitation or used unlawful recruitment fees. BAIRA acknowledged migrant workers frequently paid *dalals* fees in addition to the legal amount BAIRA agents charged before the worker began the formal recruitment process. *Dalals* also directly connected workers to overseas jobs by providing fake visas and other documentation, and in some cases, incorrect information about the migration process and the job in the destination country. Observers stated a migrant worker's financial situation often determined job placement, not his skills or abilities, and migrant workers frequently paid as much as five times above the government's maximum fee level.

The government continued to use a number of bilateral labor agreements, in part intended to protect Bangladeshi workers abroad. During the reporting period, the government signed an MOU with the United Arab Emirates that established standards for the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, including fixed recruitment fees; however, the fixed recruitment fees remained high enough to render migrant workers indebted and vulnerable to trafficking through debt-based coercion. The Saudi Arabian and Malaysian governments deported hundreds of undocumented Bangladeshi workers during the reporting period, some of whom employers had coerced into forced labor or had allowed their documents to expire. The government did not report engagement with these governments or assistance to the deportees. The government continued to require pre-departure training, including safe migration and anti-trafficking components, for some migrant workers, including a 30-day pre-departure training course for female domestic workers. The government provided safe migration information through its 42 district employment and manpower offices and 64 Technical Training Centers (TTCs), an increase from 47 TTCs the previous reporting period. Labor inspectors had responsibility for both the formal and informal sectors. While international organizations estimated 93 percent of child labor—including forced child labor—took place in the informal sector, inspectors did not inspect the informal sector despite their role of monitoring child labor in that sector under the Child Labour Elimination Policy. While inspectors removed more than 375 child laborers from factories in 2018-2019, including forced child labor victims, they did not have a mechanism to refer these children to social services for care or to law enforcement to screen for trafficking. Resources, inspections, and remediation efforts for such offenses remained inadequate. The government continued to conduct national

awareness campaigns through print media, television, and text message, at times in partnership with NGOs.

The government continued biometric registration for Rohingya refugees and allowed the UN, international organizations, and foreign governments to provide some assistance to refugees. The government increased the number of security forces deployed to guard and control access to Rohingya camps, which may have contributed to the prevention of some trafficking crimes. However, the government continued to deny Rohingya access to formal schooling, prevent them from working legally, restrict their movement, and suspend birth registration for nearly one year, all of which increased vulnerability to trafficking. The government provided anti-trafficking training to its troops prior to their deployment as peacekeepers and provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel. During the reporting period, the UN substantiated two sex trafficking claims against two Bangladeshi peacekeepers that had taken place in 2015-2017. The UN repatriated the peacekeepers, and the Bangladeshi authorities' investigations were pending at the end of the reporting period. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for child sex tourism. Bangladesh is not a party to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Bangladesh, and traffickers exploit victims from Bangladesh abroad. Traffickers exploit some Bangladeshi men, women, and children who migrate willingly to work in the Middle East, Southern and East Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States in forced labor. An international organization estimates more than 700,000 Bangladeshis migrate for work each year through illegal channels and are vulnerable to traffickers. Before departure, many migrant workers assume debt to pay high recruitment fees, imposed legally by recruitment agencies belonging to BAIRA and illegally by unlicensed sub-agents; this places migrant workers at risk of debt-based coercion. Some recruitment agencies, agents, and employers also commit recruitment fraud, including contract switching, in which they promise one type of job and conditions but then change the job, employer, conditions, or salary after arrival; this includes promising women and children jobs and exploiting them in sex trafficking upon arrival. During the reporting period, Vanuatu authorities identified more than 100 Bangladeshi male forced labor victims in construction and administration allegedly recruited by the same company between March 2017 and August 2018. Women and girls who migrate for domestic work are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers have sold some women who migrated through Bangladeshi recruitment agencies to Lebanon or Jordan for domestic work into forced labor and sex trafficking in Syria. Some Chinese men exploit Bangladeshi women in domestic servitude and sex trafficking through arranged marriages. Some traffickers falsify identity documents to make children appear older than age 18 to send them abroad. Saudi Arabia and Malaysia deported hundreds of undocumented Bangladeshi workers during the reporting period, some of whom employers had coerced into forced labor due to their irregular status, or for whom employers had allowed documents to expire.

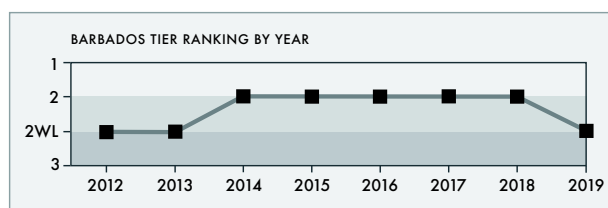
Bangladesh hosts more than one million undocumented Rohingya in refugee camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar near the Burmese border and other parts of the country, approximately 700,000 of whom arrived after August 2017.

Traffickers exploit Rohingya men, women, and children from refugee camps for both sex and labor trafficking, including domestic servitude, although the scale is unknown, including in comparison to the local host community. The Bangladesh government has allowed significant humanitarian access to the Rohingya camps and cooperates closely with UN and NGOs in counter-trafficking efforts. Traffickers sometimes transport Rohingya girls within Bangladesh to Chittagong and Dhaka and transnationally to Kathmandu and Kolkata for sex trafficking; some traffickers “trade” these girls over the internet. Some Rohingya traffickers defraud and coerce Rohingya women and girls from refugee camps into sex trafficking through fraudulent job or marriage proposals, and abduction. Local criminal networks take Rohingya women from refugee camps at night, exploit them in sex trafficking, and bring them back to the camps during the day. International organizations allege some Bangladeshi border guard, military, and police officials facilitate trafficking of Rohingya, including accepting bribes from traffickers to gain access to camps. Rohingya girls and boys are recruited from refugee camps to work as shop hands, fishermen, rickshaw pullers, and domestic workers in Bangladesh. Some Bangladeshi fishermen use debt-based coercion to exploit Rohingya men if they place their shelter on the fishermen’s land. Some Rohingya men who fled to Bangladesh from Burma decades ago have been trapped in forced labor through debt-based coercion to Bangladeshi fishermen for 20 years. In the recent past, some traffickers sold into forced labor Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants, who traveled by boat to Southeast Asian and could not pay ransoms. The stateless status and inability of Rohingya to receive formal schooling or work legally increases their vulnerability to human trafficking. Multiple NGOs and humanitarian officials assess these restrictions have increased forced labor and sex trafficking of Rohingya over the past year. Bangladeshis and foreigners create demand for child sex tourism, including exploitation of Rohingya girls near Cox’s Bazar.

Within the country, traffickers exploit Bangladeshi children and adults in sex trafficking and forced labor, including domestic servitude and bonded labor, in which traffickers exploit an initial debt assumed by a worker as part of the employment terms. Traffickers further exploit children in forced labor in fisheries, aluminum and garment factories, and dry fish production. Traffickers use false promises of work to lure poor women and children into sex trafficking. In some cases, traffickers force sex trafficking victims to become addicted to drugs and use drug addictions to keep them in sex trafficking and forced criminality. Child sex trafficking remained widespread. Traffickers coerce street children into criminality or force them to beg, and begging ringmasters sometimes maim children to increase their earnings. Bangladeshi children are vulnerable to forced labor in tanneries. According to an international expert on debt bondage, traffickers subject Bangladeshi families and Indian migrant workers to bonded labor—a form of forced labor—in some brick kilns; some kiln owners sell bonded females into prostitution purportedly to recoup the families’ debts. Some traffickers exploit Bangladeshi families in debt bondage in shrimp farming. Traffickers force ethnic Indian families to work in the tea industry in the northeastern part of the country. NGOs allege some officials allow human traffickers to operate at brothels, at India-Bangladesh border crossings, and at maritime embarkation points.

BARBADOS: TIER 2 WATCH LIST

The Government of Barbados does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included conducting raids on nightclubs suspected of trafficking, screening vulnerable individuals for trafficking, providing anti-trafficking training for immigration officials and the police force, and conducting public awareness campaigns. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. The government identified no victims for the past two reporting periods, initiated no new prosecutions for the fifth consecutive year, and has never secured a trafficking conviction. The government did not complete its national action plan or an anti-trafficking manual for interviewing and providing assistance for suspected trafficking victims. Government agencies continued to report a lack of resources for their anti-trafficking activities. The government’s anti-trafficking law did not provide penalties that were commensurate with other serious crimes. Therefore Barbados was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List.



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Proactively screen for trafficking indicators and identify victims in vulnerable populations and areas, including children and migrants. • Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, and apply adequate sentences. • Complete and implement an anti-trafficking manual for law enforcement on identifying, referring and protecting potential trafficking victims. • Complete and implement a national action plan to combat trafficking. • Provide adequate funding to implement the national action plan and support government agencies’ anti-trafficking activities. • Amend the anti-trafficking law to remove sentencing provisions that allow fines in lieu of imprisonment. • Provide adequate accommodations with trauma-informed service providers for potential and identified trafficking victims. • Amend the Recruiting of Workers Act to specify the responsible government agency for the enforcement functions.

PROSECUTION

The government decreased prosecution efforts. The Trafficking In Persons Prevention Act (TIPPA) criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The penalties prescribed for adult trafficking were up to 25 years’ imprisonment, a fine of up to 1 million Barbados dollars (BDS) (\$495,050), or both. The penalties prescribed for child trafficking were up to life imprisonment, a fine of up to 2 million BDS (\$990,100), or both. These penalties were sufficiently stringent. However, by allowing for a fine in lieu of imprisonment, the prescribed punishment for sex trafficking was not commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as rape. Authorities conducted two investigations in 2018, compared with five in 2017, three in 2016, and six in 2015. Police and immigration officials conducted the investigations into suspected trafficking activities in a nightclub and the