

Togo - United States Department of State

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 to the previous reporting period; therefore Togo remained on Tier 2. These efforts included identifying an increased number of victims and investigating and prosecuting more suspected traffickers. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Authorities convicted fewer traffickers, and officials failed to update the government's national action plan for the 12th consecutive year. Additionally, the government did not finalize its pending decree to create a national anti-trafficking committee, despite the support of law enforcement officers, judicial officials, and civil society organizations.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Council of Ministers finalize and adopt the pending decree to create a Trafficking in Persons National Committee to improve governmental coordination. • Update existing victim referral manuals to include victim identification standard operating procedures (SOPs) and train law enforcement and justice sector personnel on those procedures to increase the number of victims identified and referred to protective services. • Provide anti-trafficking training to law enforcement and judicial officials to increase their ability to effectively prosecute trafficking cases. • Enact anti-trafficking legislation that includes provisions for victim protection, and implement measures that incentivize victims to participate in the law enforcement and judicial process, including witness protection, as well as the provision of shelter, medical care, and psycho-social services. • Work with NGOs and international organizations to increase the provision of protective services to all trafficking victims. • Draft and implement an updated national action plan that incorporates adult victims and increases coordination with NGOs, neighboring countries, and regional organizations. • 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 maintained 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) (\$17,180 and \$85,910) for offenses involving an adult victim and 20 to 30 years' imprisonment and fines between 20 million and 50 million FCFA (\$34,360 and \$85,910) for offenses involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent, and with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape.

The Ministry of Justice's anti-trafficking cell reported investigating 60 cases involving 95 suspects in 2019, compared with investigating 62 suspected traffickers in 2018. Officials reported prosecuting 54 suspects in 2019 versus 49 in 2018. During the reporting period, authorities convicted three traffickers, compared with eight during the previous reporting period; courts sentenced the three traffickers to between 12 months' to 10 years' imprisonment. The government did not report investigating, prosecuting, or convicting any officials complicit in human trafficking offenses, although judicial corruption may have hindered some trafficking investigations during the reporting period. Officials reported adjudicating some forced child labor cases through informal mediation processes.

The government continued to provide written instructions on victim identification to its law enforcement and immigration officials through the course of their basic training. One urban law enforcement unit stated the government provided comprehensive trafficking in persons training for 10 of the unit's 30 officers during the reporting period, although frequent turnover hindered the development of the unit's institutional knowledge. In December 2019, the government finalized its tripartite agreement with Benin and Burkina Faso to synchronize law enforcement efforts on transnational trafficking cases, although officials did not report using the agreement to investigate any cross-border cases or extradite any suspects.

PROTECTION

The government increased efforts to identify victims but did not report if it referred and provided care to all victims. In 2019, officials reported identifying 225 child victims of trafficking (19 boys and 206 girls) and 87 adult victims (38 men and 49 women), compared with 118 child victims and 86 adult victims in 2018. Officials used written manuals from 2007 to identify and refer victims to services in coordination with NGOs; however, the manuals did not include SOPs for identifying victims among high-risk populations. NGOs reported the government's victim identification and referral processes were effective and the Ministries of Social Action, Labor, and Justice were key partners on prevention, protection, and investigation efforts, respectively.

In Lomé, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) continued to run a toll-free helpline, Allo 10-11 16 hours per day, seven days a week; officials reported out of 13,769 calls the hotline received in 2019, 5,506 were substantive, resulting in the identification of 97 child trafficking victims (12 boys and 85 girls). The MSA provided cell phones to Allo 10-11's network of 150 contacts to facilitate nationwide coverage and utilized an informal referral system when callers identified potential victims. In 2018, officials reported the hotline received approximately 118 trafficking-specific calls resulting in an unknown number of victims identified. The government did not report repatriating any victims in 2019, compared with repatriating nine trafficking victims in 2018.

The Directorate-General for Child Protection provided psycho-social and health services in addition to shelter to 147 child victims in 2019. MSA continued to operate the Reference Center for the Guidance and Care of Children in a Difficult Situation (French acronym CROPESDI). The CROPESDI shelter, located in Lomé, received victims referred by the Allo 10-11 hotline and provided shelter, legal, medical, and social services before transferring them to NGO-managed care facilities. Officials did not report the number of victims these shelters served during the reporting period. The government reportedly provides foreign trafficking victims

the same access to shelters as domestic victims and performs a risk evaluation before it repatriates potential victims.

The government did not have a formal process to encourage victims' participation in the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. While there were no reports the government penalized any trafficking victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, authorities may have detained or deported some victims due to the lack of victim identification SOPs and some officials' limited understanding of the crime.

PREVENTION

The government demonstrated mixed efforts to prevent trafficking in persons; while its nationwide awareness campaign reached more people, it decreased funding for the campaign, and the government's lack of overall coordination continued to hinder its anti-trafficking efforts. The government managed its anti-child trafficking efforts and dissemination of information through the National Committee for the Reception and Social Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking (French acronym CNARSEVT), which routinely convened during the year. CNARSEVT acted as the government's central hub of information for trafficking in Togo; however, data collection and reporting remained weak during the reporting period. The government drafted but did not finalize a decree to create a Trafficking in Persons National Committee—a key recommendation of NGOs and working-level officials to mitigate Togo's coordination challenges—and has not updated its anti-trafficking national action plan since 2008.

The government allocated seven million FCFA (\$12,030) to continue a nationwide awareness campaign during the reporting period, compared with reportedly budgeting 174.6 million FCFA (\$300,000) to the Directorate for Child Protection to launch the awareness campaign in 2018. The campaign targeted urban and rural areas, used radio interviews, and featured signage in schools, public buildings, and traditional chiefs' halls. Officials estimated the initiative reached approximately 30,000 citizens during the reporting period in the Maritime, Kara, and Savanes Regions where many trafficking victims originate or transit; the government reported the campaign reached approximately 20,000 Togolese over the course of the previous reporting period. The government included French, Kabiyé, and Ewe languages in the campaign, which involved parents, community-based organizations, government officials, and religious leaders. Additionally, officials collaborated with the Governments of Benin and Ghana to sensitize communities along the Abidjan-Lagos corridor. The government continued to employ a network of "vigilance committees" in more populated villages across the country to provide education on trafficking and report cases to the government, although the effectiveness of these committees varied greatly.

Similar to last year and despite reports of fraudulent recruiters facilitating the exploitation of Togolese abroad, authorities did not report investigating any foreign labor recruiters for trafficking crimes. The Ministries of Labor and Social Action regulated labor recruitment firms, but the government's weak information management systems hindered its ability to provide enforcement statistics. The government worked to reduce the demand for forced child labor by continuing to partner with traditional religious leaders to eliminate exploitation in religious "apprenticeships." These "apprenticeships" involve parents entrusting their children to religious leaders for education and employment purposes, who exploit the

children in forced domestic work, or sexual slavery when parents are unable to pay “apprenticeship fees.” The government distributed an unknown number of birth certificates in coordination with NGOs; the lack of identification documents contributed to an increased vulnerability to trafficking in persons.

The government did not take any discernible measures to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. Officials provided anti-trafficking training to Togolese troops prior to their deployment abroad on international peacekeeping missions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided its diplomats a guide to hiring domestic workers but did not report delivering trafficking-specific training.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Togo, and traffickers exploit victims from Togo abroad. The western border of the Plateau region, which provides easy access to major roads between Lomé and Accra, Ghana, remained a primary area traffickers used to transport victims during the reporting period. NGOs noted the Abidjan-Lagos corridor remains a prominent route for movement-based trafficking of persons—as well as the smuggling of illicit goods—with criminals using Togo as a transit country. Civil society actors and law enforcement officers reported the country’s rise as a regional economic and logistics hub has led to a corresponding increase in trafficking and smuggling. Families and trusted intermediaries take advantage of high levels of poverty throughout the country to exploit many Togolese trafficking victims, with the Centrale and Savanes regions serving as primary source regions. Traffickers force Togolese children to work in the agricultural sector—particularly on coffee, cocoa, and cotton farms—as well as in stone and sand quarries, where children and adults break rocks by hand. Observers stated trafficking networks are predominantly community-based and loosely organized by local actors.

NGOs and government officials reported markets selling Togolese children for commercial sex acts (“small girls markets” or *devissime*) exist in Lomé and elsewhere in the country. Traffickers visit rural areas in the north and central regions to recruit children from impoverished parents to sell in these markets. These illicit recruiters promise lucrative employment for the children and pay parents an advance before transporting the minors to Lomé, where traffickers subject minors to forced labor as domestic servants, roadside vendors, and porters, or exploit them in child sex trafficking. Togolese businesspeople exploit boys through forced labor in construction, salvage yards, mines, and as mechanics, often involving hazardous machinery.

Transnationally, fraudulent recruiters work with loosely affiliated networks to transport victims to Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, and Nigeria. Traffickers force victims to work in the following sectors: cocoa harvesting in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire; palm wine production in rural Nigeria; gold mining in Burkina Faso; domestic service in urban Nigeria; and sex trafficking in Beninese and Nigerian bars and restaurants. Traffickers recruit children from Benin and Ghana and transport them to Togo for forced labor. Illicit networks exploit Ghanaian girls in sex trafficking in Togo. Every year from September to April, in order to search for economic opportunities, many Togolese adults and children migrate to Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, where criminal elements may exploit them in forced labor and sex trafficking. Nigerians force Togolese men to work in agriculture and Togolese women in domestic service in Nigeria. Some fraudulent labor agencies

recruit Togolese and West African women for employment in Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, where wealthy families exploit them in domestic servitude or sex trafficking. Officials noted sex tourists from Lebanon, France, and Nigeria exploit children in Togo.