

GUYANA (Tier 2 Watch List)

Guyana is a source and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. Guyanese and foreign women and girls are subjected to forced prostitution in Guyana. Country experts express concern that exploitative child labor practices, some of which likely include human trafficking, occur within the mining industry, agriculture, and forestry sectors. Traffickers are attracted to Guyana's interior mining communities where there is limited government control. In addition, a lack of economic opportunities in more populated coastal regions of the country draws individuals, some underage, to seek employment in the interior, where they sometimes fall victim to trafficking. According to a media report in November 2012, a child was murdered while working in the mines, and reports linked his death to his attempt to collect wages due to him. Guyanese from rural, economically depressed areas are particularly vulnerable to trafficking in mining areas and urban centers. Indonesian workers were subjected to forced labor on several Guyanese-flagged fishing boats off of the coast of Trinidad and Tobago during the reporting period. There is additional concern that Venezuelan and Brazilian women in prostitution are vulnerable to trafficking in Guyana. Guyanese nationals have been subjected to human trafficking in other countries in the Caribbean region.

The Government of Guyana does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. Despite these measures, such as the identification and assistance of some trafficking victims, the government failed to demonstrate evidence of increasing efforts to hold trafficking offenders accountable with jail time over the previous reporting period; therefore, Guyana is placed on Tier 2 Watch List. While there have been some efforts to protect victims, the lack of punishment for trafficking offenders creates an enabling environment for continued human trafficking. The government did not provide evidence that it followed through with prosecution for high-profile suspected child trafficking cases reported in the media.

Recommendations for Guyana: Boost efforts to hold trafficking offenders accountable by vigorously and appropriately investigating and prosecuting forced prostitution and forced labor; in partnership with NGOs, develop standard operating procedures to guide and encourage frontline officials, including police, health, immigration, labor, mining, and forestry personnel in the identification and protection of victims of forced labor and forced prostitution, ensuring that victims are not punished for crimes committed as a result of being subjected to human trafficking; offer protection and assistance for victims near mining communities; investigate and hold accountable the perpetrators of forced labor on Guyanese-flagged vessels; and foster a climate of open dialogue on trafficking and encouraging people to come forward to authorities on potential cases.

Prosecution

The government made no discernible progress in holding human trafficking offenders in Guyana accountable during the reporting period. The Combating Trafficking of Persons Act of 2005

prohibits all forms of trafficking and prescribes sufficiently stringent penalties, ranging from three years' to life imprisonment. These penalties are commensurate with penalties prescribed under Guyanese law for other serious crimes, such as rape. The government reported two new labor trafficking investigations and 16 new sex trafficking investigations during the reporting period, and reported the initiation of seven sex trafficking prosecutions. It was unclear if the one prosecution documented in the previous reporting period was included in this figure. The great majority of prosecutions initiated in other reporting periods were dismissed when the prosecutors were unable to proceed, usually because witnesses declined to testify. The government continued to investigate a particularly brutal May 2012 case involving the severe beating, rape, and disfigurement of a girl connected to a mining camp brothel. At the close of the reporting period, law enforcement and prosecutors were continuing to gather information in order to issue warrants for the arrest of suspected perpetrators and to initiate prosecution. The government reported no convictions of sex or labor trafficking offenders. The government did not report any investigations or prosecutions of government employees for complicity in trafficking-related offenses during the reporting period.

Stakeholders reported that the lack of transparent public standard operating procedures for handling trafficking cases was an obstacle to progress. The Guyana Police Force conducted training programs for police ranks stationed at regional communities of Bartica, Port Kaituma, and Lethem in November 2012. The Guyana Police Force also conducted sensitization training for students, nurses, and regional officials in January and February 2013.

Protection

The government made efforts to protect victims of trafficking during the reporting period by identifying and assisting trafficking victims, but these efforts were hindered by the lack of accountability for perpetrators of human trafficking. The government identified 19 girls, two boys, three women, and two adult men as suspected human trafficking victims during the reporting period, an increase from 13 victims identified the previous year. The government, in a positive step, listed the funding and a synopsis of support provided to suspected victims during the reporting period. Government-provided services consisted of psycho-social support, some medical care, transportation, and some assistance for the reintegration of victims. Regarding a specific inquiry regarding a case of a girl who had been severely beaten, raped, and disfigured during the reporting period, the government reported it had provided assistance such as medical care in a public hospital, initial psycho-social counseling, and assigned a case worker to the girl.

Guyana had a shelter for victims of domestic violence in the capital that reportedly also provided assistance to 10 female trafficking victims during the reporting period. The shelter received a government subsidy of the equivalent of approximately \$50,000. The government did not provide specialized care for adult male victims but reported that men received similar access to care services offered to female victims. In areas outside of the capital, NGOs provided shelter and assistance to trafficking victims, often in dangerous conditions, without any funding from the government. Longer term shelter and protection was not available in Guyana, putting victims

at risk of traffickers' reprisals since the government also failed to punish most trafficking offenders with incarceration.

Officials reportedly encouraged victims to participate in the prosecution of trafficking offenders; however, backlogs throughout the court system and delays increased the likelihood that victims would become discouraged and cease cooperation as witnesses in trafficking prosecutions. Stakeholders reported that there are no clear, written operating procedures to guide officials in handling human trafficking cases in coordination with NGO partners. The law protects victims from punishment for crimes committed as a result of being subjected to human trafficking and relief from deportation for foreign victims.

Prevention

The government made limited progress in preventing human trafficking during the reporting period. While the government recognizes that human trafficking occurs and affirmed its commitment to preventing and combating cases, public comments that seek to downplay the scope of Guyana's trafficking problem diminished the potential impact of trafficking awareness campaigns. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Human Services operated a hotline for trafficking victims. Officials conducted awareness and sensitization sessions that targeted several vulnerable communities as well as a trafficking awareness workshop for 40 participants. The Ministry of Human Services, funded by United Nations Development Program, also conducted a campaign in Region Nine to educate residents and visitors on the issue of human trafficking. The Region Nine outreach included setting up a booth at the popular annual Rupununi Rodeo. Officials did not report any measures to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts during the reporting period.