

strict licensing procedures for new recruitment agencies to prevent exploitation of intending migrant workers, in practice it often issued business registration certificates before the transnational organized crime unit had finished vetting the prospective agencies. MLSS's draft labor migration policy to expand protections for migrant workers remained pending for the second year. To increase regional anti-trafficking cooperation, Sierra Leonean, Guinean, and Liberian authorities met regularly to discuss border security, including trafficking. Although the government did not have comprehensive research on its trafficking problem, it implemented a centralized database for trafficking information better analyze trafficking trends. The government did not make discernible efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor. The government did not provide anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

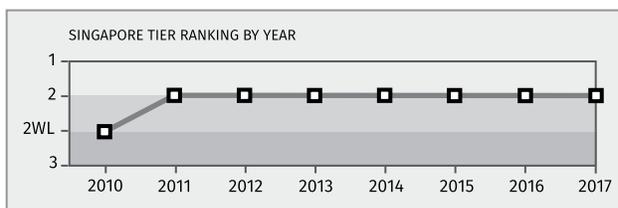
TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, Sierra Leone is a source and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Victims originate largely from rural provinces and are recruited to urban and mining centers for exploitation in sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic service, artisanal diamond and granite mining, petty trading, portering, making ceramics, rock breaking, street crime, and begging. At times, sex trafficking occurs on beaches and in nightclubs. Trafficking victims are also exploited in fishing and agriculture and subjected to sex trafficking or forced labor through customary practices, such as forced marriages. Traffickers typically operate individually, convincing parents to hand over their children and promising to provide an education or better life but instead exploiting the children in trafficking. Sierra Leonean girls are increasingly exploited in Guinea. Traffickers have exploited boys and girls from Sierra Leone to reportedly work as "cultural dancers"—and possibly also for sexual exploitation—in The Gambia. Sierra Leonean adults voluntarily migrate to other West African countries, including Mauritania and Guinea, as well as to the Middle East and Europe, where some are subjected to forced labor and forced prostitution. As in previous years, Sierra Leonean women are subjected to trafficking in Kuwait and Lebanon. Children from neighboring West African countries have been exploited in forced begging, forced labor, and prostitution in Sierra Leone. Indian and Kenyan men were exploited in forced labor in Sierra Leone during the reporting period, and Chinese and Sri Lankan men have been victims in previous years.

SINGAPORE: TIER 2

The Government of Singapore does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore, Singapore remained on Tier 2. The government demonstrated increasing efforts by prosecuting and convicting more traffickers. It provided protective services to victims, including through the distribution of funds to an NGO that offered trauma recovery services. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Large numbers of migrant workers experience conditions indicative of labor trafficking in Singapore, and, although the government began to prosecute its first labor trafficking cases, it has yet to secure the conviction of a labor trafficker under the trafficking

law. Authorities did not effectively identify victims compelled into service through psychological coercion, leaving some victims unidentified and subject to punishment or deportation.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SINGAPORE

Using the 2015 anti-trafficking law, increase investigations and prosecutions of sex and labor trafficking offenses, including debt bondage, and convict and stringently sentence traffickers; strengthen efforts to identify trafficking victims, including by conducting training for front-line law enforcement officials with a focus on screening for psychological coercion among women in prostitution and individuals in debt bondage; strengthen the legal framework to enhance protection for victims from punishment for acts committed as a result of being subjected to trafficking; develop formal policies to provide all victims the right to robust protective services, regardless of their individual circumstances; conduct law enforcement operations using victim-centric methods; increase resources for investigative and prosecutorial training on human trafficking for Ministry of Manpower officials who handle labor violations; strengthen efforts to increase victims' awareness of available protective services and incentives for participating in investigations and prosecutions; develop transparent communication with service providers during the duration of court cases; and expand cooperation with and funding to NGOs for developing and implementing anti-trafficking policies and assisting victims.

PROSECUTION

The government increased efforts to prosecute and convict traffickers. The Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) criminalizes all forms of human trafficking and prescribes penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment and fines up to 100,000 Singapore dollars (\$69,200), which are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes. In addition, article 140 of the Women's Charter criminalizes forced prostitution involving detention or physical force and article 141 criminalizes the movement of women and girls for "trafficking" but does not define the term. Penalties prescribed for these sex trafficking offenses in the Women's Charter include a maximum of five years imprisonment, which are sufficiently stringent but not commensurate with other serious crimes. The government investigated most suspected labor trafficking cases as labor law offenses under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA) or the Employment Act, laws that carry significantly lower penalties than the anti-trafficking law and exclude domestic workers and fishing crews.

In 2016, the government prosecuted eight suspects (three for sex trafficking and five for labor trafficking) and convicted two sex trafficking offenders, compared with two traffickers prosecuted and one convicted in 2015. Police investigated 20 cases of suspected sex trafficking and initiated a prosecution of one alleged sex trafficker under the anti-trafficking law; this case, which involved a Malaysian national accused of recruiting a minor for sexual exploitation and receiving

payment in connection with the exploitation of a trafficked victim, was ongoing at the end of the reporting period. During the reporting period, the high court upheld a 56 month prison sentence handed down in 2015 for the first Singaporean to be convicted of organizing child sex tourism. The Ministry of Manpower investigated two potential labor trafficking cases involving four suspects under the anti-trafficking law and 11 potential labor trafficking cases under employment laws. The government initiated prosecutions of five suspects in three cases of labor trafficking—the first in Singapore—which remained ongoing at the close of the reporting period. In one case, two suspects were alleged to have subjected seven Bangladeshi women to forced labor as performing artists in a nightclub, and the other involved five victims and one suspect. The government obtained two sex trafficking convictions in cases begun in the previous year, both involving multiple victims; the convicted offenders received sentences of three years and two months imprisonment and four years imprisonment. Two defendants convicted the previous year under the EFMA for starving a domestic worker, forcing her to work excessive hours, and restricting her access to communication in 2013—prior to the passage of the PHTA—received prison sentences in March 2017 of three months and three weeks and a 10,000 Singapore dollars (\$6,920) fine. The prosecutors reported they were in the process of filing an appeal to secure a one year sentence—the maximum sentence available under the EFMA—at the end of the reporting period. The government has not obtained a labor trafficking conviction, nor has it prosecuted any cases of domestic servitude under the trafficking law.

The government organized a two-day conference with international experts to educate prosecutors and law enforcement officers on trafficking issues, delivered a training session for front-line Ministry of Manpower officers, and funded more than 150 officials to attend international trainings and conferences in 2016. Despite these efforts, authorities' investigative progress—particularly in cases involving debt bondage or prostitution—was hampered by a lack of awareness among some officials regarding the role of psychological coercion in trafficking cases. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking.

PROTECTION

The government increased protection efforts, but insufficient communication between the authorities and service provision NGOs continued to hamper victim identification and referral processes. Police and labor officials had standard operating procedures for identifying victims, and the government had a victim referral process among government officials, civil society organizations, and foreign embassies. The government reported identifying 20 sex trafficking and 13 labor trafficking victims in 2016, compared to seven sex trafficking and seven labor trafficking victims in 2015. The government reported providing services to 22 adult women, including 10 sex trafficking victims and 12 labor trafficking victims. The government did not identify or provide services to any child victims during the year. Several NGOs reported officials failed to recognize key indicators of trafficking when interviewing potential victims, particularly in cases involving sex or labor exploitation through various forms of psychological coercion or debt bondage, and among migrant workers. NGOs reported authorities' opaque victim identification and referral standards sometimes complicated effective use of the government's referral mechanism.

The government allocates funds for anti-trafficking activities in its annual budget, and the PHTA authorizes the social welfare department to provide shelter and counseling services to all victims. The government has administrative discretion to provide a range of additional support measures, customized according to victims' needs, including interpreters, medical services, temporary work permits, and resettlement assistance. However, absent a formal policy mandating the provision of these services to all victims, and due to front-line officers' incomplete understanding of psychological coercion, some victims likely did not benefit from these services. The 2015 trafficking law mandates some additional protections for child victims, including a requirement that their testimony be held via video conference. NGOs reported supplementing certain government-funded victim services deemed insufficient, such as healthcare.

The government provided partial funding and oversight to 22 shelters serving vulnerable children, four shelters for vulnerable women and their children, and two shelters for male foreign workers. One shelter was designated exclusively for adult female sex trafficking victims and exploited female domestic workers. Authorities permitted freedom of movement outside of the shelter for most residents, but restricted movement for any residents deemed to be under physical threat or in need of psychological care. The government allocated funding for an NGO that provided trauma recovery services for 12 female labor trafficking victims and 10 female sex trafficking victims, 18 of whom were residing in the shelter for female victims. One of the shelters was designated for adult male trafficking victims, although no male trafficking victims were identified during the year. Other NGO-identified victims who did not meet the government's referral standards received shelter or services from privately funded NGOs. The government granted 12 victims short-term work permits, available for the duration of their legal processes, under a temporary job scheme.

The government issued a statement of its policy not to punish victims for crimes committed as a direct result of being subjected to trafficking. According to NGOs, police did not always screen for trafficking indicators among women apprehended in law enforcement operations despite a government policy requiring it; the government may have prosecuted and punished unidentified sex trafficking victims among them for immigration violations or soliciting. The government offered assistance for victims participating in investigations and prosecutions of trafficking offenses. NGOs reported that victims of trafficking were offered pro bono legal assistance to pursue civil court claims for restitution, but that all declined the offer; some purportedly did not wish to file official complaints out of skepticism that they would secure said restitution. Others who incurred significant debt burdens as a result of trafficking returned to their home countries instead of seeking redress. As a result, there were no reports of trafficking victims pursuing or receiving restitution through civil claims or criminal court proceedings. NGOs and foreign embassies reported coordination between public and private stakeholders had improved, but the government's lack of detailed feedback regarding ongoing cases remained a problem for some NGOs and interfered with service providers' ability to assist victims. During the reporting period, authorities facilitated the repatriation of eight labor trafficking victims per their request. The government did not provide long-term alternatives to removal to countries where victims may face hardship or retribution.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. The interagency taskforce coordinated anti-trafficking efforts in line with Singapore's "National Approach Against Trafficking in Persons," which was developed and launched in 2015 following consultation with NGOs. The taskforce conducted campaigns through social media, newspapers, television, posters, and other outreach materials to educate workers on their rights, raise public awareness of trafficking, and publicize efforts to punish employers for trafficking-related violations. The National Crime Prevention Council funded a television program focusing on Singapore's first sex trafficking conviction; the program, broadcasted in Singapore's four main languages, reportedly reached 1.7 million viewers. The taskforce also launched a public awareness-raising grant to individuals and anti-trafficking NGOs. The government provided pre-departure trainings and materials to educate foreign workers on their rights prior to migrating to Singapore. In April 2016, amendments to the Employment Act came into effect requiring Singaporean employers to issue all workers key employment terms in writing and provide itemized pay slips.

NGOs reported migrant workers in Singapore face barriers to recovering unpaid wages, as their single-employer work permit makes them ineligible to change employers while the government considers their claim. Further, employers who were found at fault in civil cases sometimes failed to comply with court rulings in the employee's favor and the government did not take action to enforce these decisions. The government investigated and imposed fines on unlicensed employment agencies and those that engaged in other illegal practices that could facilitate trafficking. NGOs reported some agencies still engaged in contract switching and charged workers fees over the legal limit. The government provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel. The government made some efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts, including through public information campaigns, and made limited efforts to address the demand for forced labor.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, Singapore is a destination country for men, women, and girls from other Asian countries subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor, a source country for Singaporean women and children subjected to sex trafficking, and a transit country for Asian men subjected to forced labor on fishing vessels that transit through Singapore or its territorial waters. Some of the 1.4 million foreign workers that comprise approximately one-third of Singapore's total labor force are vulnerable to trafficking; most victims migrate willingly for work in construction, domestic service, performing arts, manufacturing, the service industry, or commercial sex. Domestic workers from countries such as Cambodia and Burma, whose nationals have a small presence in Singapore, experience language barriers that increase their isolation and vulnerability to trafficking; some employers exacerbate this vulnerability by denying workers access to mobile phones. NGO-released research found some domestic workers in Singapore experience conditions indicative of forced labor including restriction on their movement and communications; verbal, physical, or sexual threats and abuse; and denial of a legally-required weekly day off of work. In September 2014, the Burmese government imposed a ban on emigration to Singapore for domestic work, citing concerns of abuse and non-payment of wages. Although Singaporean law limits agency fees and mandates prosecution for those

who exceed them, many foreign workers assume large debts to recruitment agencies or individual recruiters in their home countries and sometimes in Singapore, making them vulnerable to forced labor, including debt bondage. Victims are also compelled into sex or labor exploitation through illegal withholding of their pay, threats of forced repatriation without pay, restrictions on movement, and physical and sexual abuse. Withholding identity documents such as passports and work permits is illegal; however, it is common practice for some employment agencies to encourage employers to hold employees' documents and the practice remains widespread, increasing workers' vulnerability to trafficking. Research conducted by the government in 2014 found six of 10 foreign work permit holders did not possess their passports and work permits. Foreign workers have credible fears of losing their work visas and deportation, since employers have the ability to repatriate workers legally at any time during their contracts with minimal notice. Unscrupulous employers exploit the non-transferability of low-skilled work visas to control or manipulate workers. Some employers rely on repatriation companies to seize, confine, and escort foreign workers to the airport for departure from Singapore, including through the use of assaults, threats, and coercion, to prevent them from complaining about abuses to authorities.

Foreign women sometimes enter Singapore with the intention of engaging in prostitution but are subjected to forced prostitution under the threat of serious harm, including financial harm, or other forms of coercion. A small number may be recruited for work in the service sector and forced into prostitution upon arrival. Singaporean women and children are at risk of sex trafficking in the country. A small number of Singaporean residents facilitate and engage in child sex tourism abroad. An NGO reported that some men are subjected to forced labor and abuse by captains on long-haul fishing vessels that depart from Singapore or dock in Singaporean ports, and that some agencies in Singapore use deceptive tactics to recruit Filipino and Cambodian men for this work.

SLOVAKIA: TIER 1

The Government of the Slovak Republic, or Slovakia, fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period; therefore, Slovakia remained on Tier 1. The government demonstrated serious and sustained efforts by increasing investigations and collaboration with foreign law enforcement authorities to identify and prosecute traffickers. The government proactively identified more victims and launched extensive trafficking prevention and public awareness campaigns to engage the general public and at-risk populations. Although the government meets the minimum standards, it did not adequately identify foreign trafficking victims. Legal support to victims was inadequate, and victims who cooperated with prosecution were at risk of re-traumatization. The government supported some innovative prevention activities, but NGOs continued to report that they were not given adequate time to prepare effectively for the expert working group.