



AFRICAN PROGRAMMING & RESEARCH INITIATIVE TO END SLAVERY (APRIES)

Sex Trafficking of Young Women Aged 15 to 30 Years in the Gold Mining Region of Kédougou

The African Programming & Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES) at the University of Georgia's Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) seeks to measure and reduce the prevalence of sex trafficking of young women aged 15 to 30 years in the Kédougou gold mining region in southeastern Sénégal.

We aim to identify service and policy gaps that can help reduce the trafficking and exploitation of women. Our project goals are: a measurable reduction in the baseline prevalence of sex trafficking in target communities; and an increase in the number of trafficking victims served by sub-awardee implementing partners.

Sex trafficking is a crime and a form of human trafficking. In Sénégal, sex trafficking was criminalized by the 2005 Law to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Related Practices and to Protect Victims.

This law prohibits all forms of human trafficking and prescribes penalties of 5 to 10 years imprisonment for the crime, on par with punishment for other serious felonies such as rape. Although prostitution is not prohibited in Sénégal, it is regulated by the state. It is also illegal in Sénégal to make a profit from the prostitution of others because of the power that one can exercise over them.

Sex trafficking in Sénégal has been identified by the US Department of State, NGOs and INGOs as concentrated in and around gold mining sites, known in Malinke as diouras, across the Kédougou region, within which 98% of Sénégal's gold mining activity takes place.

Young women who are foreign nationals may be among the sex trafficking victims in and around Kédougou.

However, human trafficking does not always include a transit component, as a victim may not need to be physically moved or transported from one location to another for them to be subject to this crime.



Kédougou Brief

- 172,482 — Estimated Population
- 23 — Ethnic Groups
- 31% — Fulani Ethnicity
- 28% — Malinke Ethnicity
- Pular, Wolof, French — Major Languages



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Key Insights on Kédougou

THE SCOPE OF THE ISSUE NEEDS TO BE DETERMINED

- Anti-trafficking efforts are challenged by porous borders, the lack of enforcement personnel and specialized anti-trafficking units, insufficient anti-trafficking training, lack of dedicated resources, poor infrastructure, insufficient interagency collaboration, and the inadequate application of existing laws to prosecute and punish perpetrators.
- Potential hotspots of sex trafficking activity within this region mostly occur in the departments (districts) of Saraya and Kédougou, where the majority of artisanal gold mines are located. The majority of these sites are clandestine and unregulated.
- APRIES is working with a research partner to gather empirical data to establish baseline and endline numbers for the prevalence of sex trafficking in target communities and better understand the nature and scope of the problem. These data are used to inform and refine implementation partners' programming, build technical capacity, and guide policy planning.

SEX TRAFFICKING IS REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL

- Trafficking victims and survivors may be young women from the Kédougou region coerced, deceived or forced into sexual exploitation by recruiters and traffickers. These perpetrators may take advantage of the socioeconomic pressures that the young women are subject to.
- The expansion of sexual exploitation beyond the gold panning sites throughout the department of Kédougou has been reported by local stakeholders; with nightclubs and bars as potential sites of recruitment and sex trafficking. Other potential sites of sex trafficking activity may include brothels disguised as legitimate businesses, e.g., hairdressing salons, sewing services and restaurants.
- Transnational sex trafficking activity may be linked to the smuggling of young women migrants in search of economic opportunities and jobs abroad. They may pass through neighboring countries such as Benin and Mali, arriving in Senegal via a variety of transportation routes and bearing false identity documents.
- Trafficking agents, networks and prostitution rings target young female minors and women from within the region and across the ECOWAS space in West Africa. The perpetrators often promise the young women well paid jobs abroad, only to confiscate their travel documents en route and force them into prostitution to earn back their freedom.

Strategy

To address policy and service gaps, our program implements interventions utilizing the “3Ps” paradigm—prevention, protection, and prosecution—employed and endorsed by The U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Early findings and stakeholder consultations point to the following needs.

INCREASE REPORTING, INVESTIGATION, AND PROSECUTION RATES

Build capacity and train police investigation units in the latest anti-trafficking infiltration and investigation techniques, in child protection mechanisms, and in the use of any attendant data management technologies.

Provide Trafficking in Persons (TIP), case detection and policy training for all administrative authorities and personnel involved in anti-trafficking cases, as appropriate, including area magistrates and judges.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Connect more victims and survivors of trafficking with appropriate psychosocial and medical support services, working with child protection actors such as the Departmental Committee to Promote Child Protection (CDPE).

Establish gender-sensitive, survivor-centered collaborative programs with protective services and the Bajenu gox (meaning “neighborhood godmothers” in Wolof) to encourage victims and survivors to overcome their fears, such as fear of reprisals from their traffickers, and seek help.

Devise mobile strategies to reach more remote areas and mining sites, offering a range of required services, which may include community dialogue and awareness raising.

RAISE AWARENESS OF SEX TRAFFICKING TO STRENGTHEN PREVENTION

Collaborate with victims and survivors, at-risk girls and women, local authorities, local leadership, government agencies and other community stakeholders to raise awareness of the phenomenon and its driving factors and practices.

Sensitize and train local actors and trusted networks, such as teachers, community workers and village chiefs to the roles they may play to effectively prevent and combat sex trafficking.