



SENEGAL TRIP

APRIL 18-28, 2022

CenHTRO/APRIES staff and faculty from the US and UK travelled to Senegal in April 2022. The aims of the trip were to hold the National Launch of CenHTRO/APRIES programs in this country, collaborating with its implementation partners and key stakeholders, to meet with key project partners in government and civil society, and to visit program target areas in the Kédougou region.

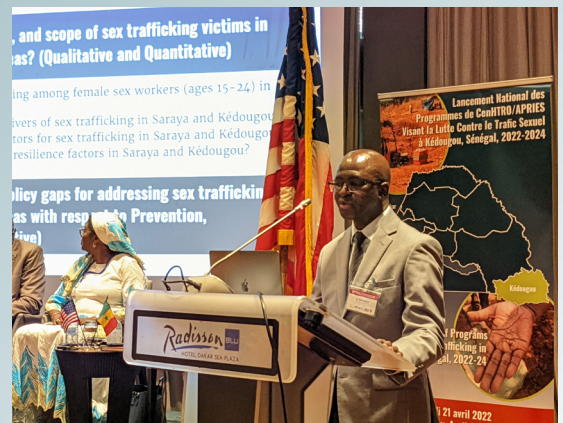


National Program Launch

CenHTRO/APRIES held an official national launch of programs to counter sex trafficking of girls and young women aged 15–30 years in Kédougou, on April 21, 2022, at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Dakar, Senegal. CenHTRO/APRIES organized and funded the event, collaborating closely with the US Department of State TIP Office, the US Embassy in Dakar, and key government partners in Senegal. The live event hosted over 100 attendees. Program Manager Nnenna Onyioha-Clayton worked with Country Coordinator Aminata Diagne Barre to plan and coordinate the event, with support and guidance from CenHTRO/APRIES Assistant Director Dr. Claire Bolton and Director of Communications André Gallant.

The primary objective of the national program launch was to strengthen national and local partnerships between CenHTRO/APRIES and anti-sex trafficking stakeholders in Senegal. The event was presided over by His Excellency Mr. Mamadou Saliou Sow, Senegal Secretary of State to the Keeper of the Seals, in Charge of the Promotion of Human Rights and Good Governance. CenHTRO/APRIES Director Dr. David Okech presented preliminary results of a baseline prevalence study carried out by research partner Kantar Public in 2021–2022. Implementation partners the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Free the Slaves (FTS) also presented their programs.

Other prominent stakeholders included Jonathan Fischer, Chargé d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Senegal and



Guinea-Bissau; Saër Ndao, Honorable Governor of Kédougou; Dr. Mody Ndiaye, Permanent Secretary of the National Unit for the Fight against Human Trafficking (CNLTP); Ibrahima Gueye, Secretary General of the Ministry of Mines and Geology; Mame Ngor Diouf, Secretary General of the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender and Child Protection; and Kameldy Neldjingaye, UNODC Deputy Regional Director for West and Central Africa. Representatives from the Embassies of Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Switzerland were among the distinguished guests.

Speakers praised the relevance and timeliness of CenHTRO/APRIES program and reiterated their commitment to support it. Speakers emphasized the need to:

- Focus on identification, confidence-building, psycho-social assistance, care, and protection of survivors.
- Support survivor reintegration through vocational training and socio-economic support projects.
- Develop a stronger legal framework and better document cases. For example, Mame Ngor Diouf pledged to work to reopen the currently shuttered Kédougou law clinic to assist victims of human trafficking.
- Raise awareness among young girls on sex trafficking.
- Conduct ECOWAS-wide advocacy activities.
- Promote access to social services and socio-economic opportunities to fight against the vulnerability of girls and women in the ECOWAS region.
- Strategically draw on policies and initiatives within education, employment, migration, mining, environmental, and agricultural sectors, among others, to counter sex trafficking.

Stakeholders noted that the national program launch brought together actors (particularly ministries and civil society organizations) that ordinarily would not have convened. It was also noted that CenHTRO/APRIES mobilized national actors on a local issue and expanded the conversation on human trafficking beyond the topic of child begging. A Kédougou stakeholder commented that “CenHTRO/APRIES did not have a national launch, but an international launch.” The event generated press and media coverage not only in Senegal on news outlets such as “Seneweb,” but on various news channels and platforms across the ECOWAS region.



Trip to Kédougou Region

Five members of the CenHTRO/APRIES team traveled to Kédougou in southeast Senegal to meet with local authorities, to visit candidate shelters for survivors, and to see the artisanal gold mines at Kharakhena.



Day 1 – The CenHTRO/APRIES team met with implementation partners FTS and La Lumière to reflect on the launch and integrate lessons learned. The team also discussed issues faced in the field, including victim identification, denunciation of perpetrators by victims/survivors, and the relationship between security agencies and victims. Finally, the group visited a prospective shelter for survivors.

Day 2 – The CenHTRO/APRIES team paid courtesy visits to a number of government stakeholders and local authorities in Kédougou and Saraya departments. These included the Prefect of Saraya; the Chief of the Departmental Service of Social Action; the President of the Saraya Tribunal; and the Brigadier Commander of the Gendarmerie.



A trip to the Kharakhena artisanal mines in Saraya department followed. Accompanied by local guides, the team gained deeper understanding into the grueling working conditions of artisanal gold miners in the 110-degree heat. The team also visited a prospective survivor shelter in nearby Saraya. In the evening, CenHTRO/APRIES held a stakeholder fast-breaking attended by the Kédougou Head of the Departmental Service for Community Development, the Prosecutor of Kédougou, and the Director of the Kédougou Regional Development Agency.



Key points raised by stakeholders in Kédougou and Saraya include:



- Survivors are not sufficiently protected when they are involved in the judicial process. As such, they may refuse to cooperate with judicial authorities for fear of losing access to basic needs provided by their trafficker(s) such as food and shelter.
- Stakeholders shared that judicial and police actors sometimes pay out of their own pockets to provide meals for survivors, as the government has no structure or mechanism dedicated to caring for them.
- Relatedly, judicial system actors should be trained on these social dimensions of survivors' experiences.
- While one stakeholder noted that “as long as gold mining is unregulated, human trafficking will persist,” another noted that dismantling mining sites altogether would have negative economic impacts on girls and women who rely on them for their livelihoods.



Other Stakeholder Engagements

In Dakar, the CenHTRO/APRIES team met privately with key stakeholders including the Governor of Kédougou, the Permanent Secretary of the National Unit for the Fight against Human Trafficking (CNLTP), Ministry of Mining and Geology officials, the Nigerian Ambassador to Senegal, the Deputy Director of Criminal Affairs and Pardons, and CenHTRO/APRIES' Think Tank consultants, who advise the project as experts in their respective fields. All stakeholders offered enthusiastic support for the project, and gave concrete advice on project outputs such as the upcoming baseline and policy reports. Key insights are as follows:

- The National Action Plan could be expanded to a National Strategy to fight human trafficking. The capabilities of the CNLTP and trafficking sectors it addresses could otherwise be expanded.
- There are concerns about security in the Kédougou region, specifically religious extremist networks infiltrating mining communities.
- Stakeholders emphasized the importance of survivor protection, just as we heard in Kédougou. They noted the limitations of addressing trafficking as a primarily criminal justice issue. Legal measures should be linked to education, employment and socio-economic integration. One stakeholder expressed a wish to see survivors to become active, rather than passive participants in counter-trafficking work.
- There is a need for ECOWAS-wide cooperation on trafficking issues, given that CenHTRO/APRIES' research reflects the cross-border character of sex trafficking in the Kédougou region.



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