



Q10026. Ghana – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 May 2009

Information on sex trafficking from Ghana

Section 5 of the *United States Department of State 2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Ghana*, under the heading ‘Trafficking in Persons’, states:

“The law prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons and provides for a minimum prison sentence of five years for convicted traffickers. The country is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purpose of forced domestic and commercial labor and sexual exploitation.

The number of trafficked victims was unknown, although NGOs estimated the number to be in the thousands annually. During the year DOVVSU received reports of twenty cases of child trafficking. Numbers reported in the media and obtained from police sources indicate that the actual figure is higher.

Trafficking was both internal and international, with the majority of trafficking in the country involving children from impoverished rural backgrounds.”
(United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor) (25 February 2009) - *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Ghana*)

The same section of this report states:

“Women also were trafficked to Western Europe, mostly to Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. International traffickers promised the women legitimate jobs; however, the women often were forced into prostitution once they reached their destination. Women were sometimes sent directly to Europe while others were trafficked through third countries. Some young women were trafficked to the Middle East, particularly Lebanon, where they worked in menial jobs or as domestic help. There were also reports that women from Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Burkina Faso were trafficked through the country in transit to Western Europe or the Middle East to work in the commercial sex industry. Traffickers sometimes operate under the guise of being employment agents, promising work as domestics or in other fields.” (ibid.)

Section 2 of a 2008 *Danish Immigration Service* report on a fact finding mission to Accra, Ghana, under the heading ‘Traffickers’ network and recruitment procedures’, states:

“Interpol-Ghana explained that the contract between the trafficker and the victim is often a matter solely involving the two families, i.e. the trafficker and

the victim. This means that any dispute in connection with the trafficking arrangement is up to the two families to solve, and the dispute will never come to the knowledge of the police or other law enforcement agencies, and should these be involved they would find it extremely difficult get to the full truth about the dispute. Should the trafficker claim any remaining debt, because the victim was not able to pay this during her stay in Europe, this claim would normally be made to the family of the victim. It was emphasized that such debts and claims are illegal.

Interpol-Ghana considered that traffickers in Ghana are not organised in unified units or strong networks, and some traffickers may not know the identity of all the other traffickers in a certain network.

Regarding recruitment and victims' debt to traffickers the Attorney-General's Department explained that sometimes the parents of the victim give their children to the trafficker in return for money. Some of the victims are also lured by traffickers with petty gifts and money. The victims then have to serve long periods of time sometimes in perpetuity to defray these debts.

The Attorney-General's Department added that some relatives of the victims are of the view that these are better off when they are trafficked even though some oppose this." (Danish Immigration Service (17 June 2008) - *Protection of victims of trafficking in Ghana*)

The June 2008 *United States Department of State* Trafficking in Persons Report for Ghana, states:

"Ghana is a source, transit, and destination country for children and women trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Trafficking within the country is more prevalent than transnational trafficking and the majority of victims are children. Both boys and girls are trafficked within Ghana for forced labor in agriculture and the fishing industry, as porters and for street hawking. The Government of Ghana estimated in 2005 that up to 40,000 children worked as porters, or Kayaye, on Ghana's streets. Girls are trafficked within the country for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Local and international NGO reports in the past year indicate that child prostitution within the country is widespread and increasing. There were also reports that some boys are trafficked internally for prostitution. Liberian refugee children and women in Ghana are also trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. Media and NGO reports in the last year indicated that tourist locations in Ghana are increasingly becoming destinations for sex tourists. Transnationally, children are trafficked to and from other West African countries, primarily Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Nigeria, and The Gambia, for the same purposes listed above. Women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation from Ghana to Western Europe, from Nigeria through Ghana to Western Europe, and from Burkina Faso through Ghana to Cote d'Ivoire.

The Government of Ghana does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The Ghanaian government recently established a Human Trafficking Board, which has begun drafting a national action plan to combat trafficking. Overall victim assistance efforts have declined over the past two years, however, particularly with respect to sex trafficking victims. While Ghana took

some law enforcement steps to address sex trafficking through police raids in the last year, there were limited investigations and prosecutions, and no convictions of perpetrators of this crime during the reporting year.” (United States Department of State (04 June 2008) - *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008 – Ghana*)

Paragraph 18 of an April 2008 *UN Human Rights Council* report, under the heading ‘Right to life, liberty and security of the person’, states:

“In 2006, CRC was concerned about cases of ill-treatment and abuse, including sexual abuse, and about the fact that there are no mandatory reporting requirements for professionals with regard to child abuse.⁵⁶ It recommended that Ghana: take the necessary measures to prevent child abuse and neglect; investigate cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse through a child-sensitive judicial procedure, and ensure that sanctions be applied to perpetrators; and raise awareness among the public of the problem of domestic violence, with a view to changing public attitudes and traditions that inhibit victims, particularly women and girls, from reporting it.⁵⁷ CRC was also concerned about the information that sexual exploitation, particularly sex tourism, is growing in the country and that many girls and boys at a very young age are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation. It recommended that Ghana effectively implement the Human Trafficking Act and provide adequate programmes of prevention, assistance, recovery and reintegration for trafficked children” (UN Human Rights Council (04 April 2008) - *Compilation Prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in accordance with paragraph 15(b) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1 – Ghana*. p.6)

Section 2.3.2 of an August 2007 *Country of Return Information (CRI) Project* document, under the heading ‘Risk of becoming a victim of human trafficking’, states:

“For long time the country has been a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purpose of forced domestic and commercial labour and sexual exploitation. But even though there are situations where human trafficking is recorded as prevalent, the rate is not as high as it has been projected. There exists no reliable estimation of the number of internally or externally trafficked victims, although both NGOs and IOM consider this number to be in the thousands. From January to September 2006, four cases of child trafficking and seven cases of child labour exploitation were reported to the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit DOVVSU. The Human Trafficking Act, which President Kufuor signed in December 2005, prohibits trafficking in persons and provides for a minimum prison sentence of five years for convicted traffickers.

Trafficking is both internal and international, with the majority of the victims coming from across the country and having impoverished rural backgrounds. Parents, especially in rural areas, who have too many children to cater for end up trading their children in exchange for various benefits, some of which include money. The most common forms of internal trafficking involved boys from the Northern Region going to work in the fishing communities along the Volta Lake or in small mines in the west, and girls from the north and east

going to Accra and Kumasi to work as domestic helpers, porters paid to transport various items, and assistants to local traders. Child victims of trafficking are rescued mostly by both the Department of Social Welfare and some non-governmental institutions, and are subsequently housed in the few existing rehabilitation centres. These children are to be later reintegrated into their societies and reunited with their families. This is done after the families have been educated on the dangers connected to trafficking.” (Country of Return Information (CRI) Project (01 August 2007) - *Country Sheet – Ghana*)

References:

Country of Return Information (CRI) Project (01 August 2007) - *Country Sheet – Ghana*

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/476293ad2.pdf>

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

All Africa
Amnesty International
BBC News
Country of Return Information (CRI) Project
Danish Immigration Service
ECOI: European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Human Rights Watch
International Crisis Group (ICG)
IRB: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
United Kingdom: Home Office
UNHCR Refworld
UN Human Rights Council
United States Department of State