



SEX TRAFFICKING IN KÉDOUGOU, SENEGAL BASELINE FINDINGS SUMMARY

STUDY OVERVIEW AND AIMS

Research on sex trafficking in Senegal is lacking but crucial to developing evidence-based policies. The Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) in collaboration with Mantle:

1. Estimated the prevalence of sex trafficking¹ among women (aged 18–30) who were engaged in commercial sex in the Saraya and Kédougou departments in the gold mining region of Kédougou.
2. Identified perceived service and policy gaps in prevention, prosecution, and protection responses to sex trafficking in Senegal.

Data were collected in Saraya and Kédougou departments between October – December 2021:

- **140 qualitative interviews** with women (18–30 years old) who had experienced sex trafficking (n=68), parents/caregivers of sex trafficking victims (n=13), and key informants (n=59); including community leaders and professionals.
- **561 quantitative surveys** with women aged between 18–30 years who were engaged in commercial sex (375 in Saraya, 186 in the Kédougou department).

CenHTRO would like to thank the Government of Senegal, Kédougou local authorities and actors, and the communities and people of Kédougou for making this research possible.

¹ The study focuses on sex trafficking as defined by the US DoS, which is defined as “sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (TVPA, section 103(9)).

KEY FINDINGS



Prevalence

- Nearly **1 in 5 (19%)** women engaged in commercial sex in the Kédougou region are estimated to be victims of sex trafficking (13% in Saraya, 30% in Kédougou department).
- In total, 1,500 women aged 18–30 were engaged in commercial sex in the Kédougou region, of whom 280 were estimated to be victims of sex trafficking.
- **Most victims of sex trafficking came from countries other than Senegal**, with most coming from Nigeria (68%).



Vulnerabilities

- **64%** of sex trafficking victims reported experiencing at least one detrimental living condition and **over half (55%)** of sex trafficking victims experienced domestic abuse prior to trafficking.
- Likelihood of experiencing sex trafficking was **2.1 times higher** for individuals who reported a **frequent childhood experience of going hungry** and **8.8 times higher** for individuals who reported **sexual violence in childhood**.



Resilience

- **78%** of women surveyed reported having at least one **type of social support**. Over half said they had a special person in their life who cared about their feelings and/or someone who was a source of comfort.
- **Most victims of sex trafficking have been to school**, with nearly half of them having attended secondary school or higher (48%).



Impacts

- **8%** of individuals surveyed reported that they had had **suicidal thoughts all the time** and **12%** reported thinking of a plan to take their own life. Among women who reported suicidal thoughts **22%** noted that they **frequently felt that their life was over and wanted to end their life**.
- Among sex trafficking victims, **15%** reported having their **ID papers confiscated** and **9%** reported experiencing **physical harm during trafficking**.

Service Gaps

- Sex trafficking victims and survivors reported that they **relied solely on themselves** to leave sex trafficking and that they **lacked awareness of any type of support services available for them in the study region**.
- Respondents noted a **lack of holistic services**, including psychological care, income generation training, and rehabilitation of victims and providing facilities for rehabilitation.
- **Sex trafficking victims reported being disappointed with law enforcement and justice engagement**, noting a lack of training and awareness among justice stakeholders on how to work with women who have experienced sex trafficking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Help survivors establish financial stability.** Increase opportunities for vocational training, training in small business practices, and access to saving and loan services.
- **Ensure services are interconnected and holistic.** Strengthen referral pathways between medical, legal, economic, and psychosocial services to help ensure that victims and survivors can access the full collection of services they need. Disseminate information about protection mechanisms and available services.
- **All services (including law enforcement and psychological support) should center survivors' voices and well-being in the development and implementation of programs.** Implement a trauma-informed approach to working with survivors at all levels in an organization. Rather than asserting control over survivors and their choices (which could be re-traumatizing) programs should aim to have a strength-based model for working with survivors by adopting a collaborative and equitable approach.
- **Programs should meaningfully involve survivors and advocates in the development, design, and provision of services.** Regularly seek feedback from current and former clients regarding service quality and survivor experiences with services. Consider hiring women who had experiences with sex trafficking as peer mentors and to play a key role in program leadership.



To cite this report: Cody, A., Yi, H., Okech, D., Balch, A., Diagne Barre, A., & Clay Warner, J. (2022). *Sex Trafficking in Kédougou, Senegal: Baseline Findings Summary*. Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach, School of Social Work, University of Georgia, & Mantle.

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This research was funded by a grant from the United States Department of State (SSJTIP19ca0032). The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the author[s] and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.