

State must tackle human trafficking, says the HSRC

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GOVERNMENT and civil society need to take serious action against human trafficking in South Africa, according to a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) report released today.

"Human trafficking in South Africa is a serious problem and warrants intervention on all fronts," said the study released at a National Prosecuting Authority conference on the subject.

Victims are mostly women, girls and boys, and they are trafficked for a variety of purposes including prostitution, pornography, domestic servitude, forced labour, begging, criminal activity and trafficking for the removal of body parts or muti. Young boys are trafficked to smuggle drugs and for other criminal activities.

South Africa is a destination country for long-distance flows of mainly women from Thailand, Philippines, India, China, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and the Ukraine, who enter the country at Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport.

From within Africa, people are trafficked across the extensive land borders of South Africa, mostly from Mozambique and Zimbabwe and to a lesser extent Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho.

Longer-distance trafficking involves victims trafficked from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Rwanda, Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria and Somalia.

"All documented cases in this last category are women trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation," according to a summary of the report.

The albino community was also identified as vulnerable to human traffickers for the harvesting of body parts, due the belief that a white skin had potent powers, the report claimed.

Trafficking of South Africans out of the country was less of a problem, but eight cases were identified between January 2004 and January 2008.

Destination countries included Ireland, Zimbabwe, Israel, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Macau.

In all cases, the victims were women trafficked for either sexual exploitation, labour exploitation or forced marriage.

Perpetrators and intermediaries included large organised crime networks and South African men with military backgrounds working together with syndicates.

The researchers said they experienced serious difficulties in conducting the study.

"South Africa is not collecting even basic national-level data which will allow sound estimates about the scale of the problem. They also had difficulty accessing key informants in government departments, because government databases of contacts were not made available."



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