

officials at Kyrgyz embassies in destination countries referred 18 victims to IOM for assistance with safe repatriation in 2009, compared with 20 victims referred by government officials in 2008. Although no foreign victims were identified in 2009, Kyrgyz law permits non-Commonwealth of Independent States' citizens to remain in the country pending investigation and prosecution of a trafficking case if the prosecutor or investigator in the case makes a request to immigration authorities. The government encouraged victims to participate in trafficking investigations and prosecutions; two victims assisted law enforcement during the reporting period. There were no reports of victims penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked during the reporting period.

### Prevention

The Kyrgyz government sustained its prevention efforts over the last year and made important progress in improving its national identity record system. The government has not historically maintained accurate birth and nationality records, which has made Kyrgyz nationals traveling abroad more vulnerable to trafficking, as they lacked appropriate travel documents. However the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, in partnership with the United Nations, began to digitize passport records in a central database during the reporting period. In 2010, the Kyrgyz Bureau of Vital Records is expected to expand this program to include birth records. In 2009, the Border Guard Service increased its efforts to provide travelers leaving Kyrgyzstan at the airport, train stations, and at land crossings with fliers and other trafficking awareness materials prepared by IOM. The Kyrgyz government maintained migration offices in six key destination cities in Russia to assist and advise its nationals vulnerable to labor trafficking of their rights and also provided in-kind assistance to an NGO-run national labor migration hotline that provided legal advice and assistance to potential victims of trafficking. The government strengthened partnerships with anti-trafficking NGOs during the reporting period. In 2009, the government issued 17 criminal citations against unlicensed labor recruitment companies; though these penalties are administrative in nature, such actions may reduce the potential for unlicensed labor recruitment companies from trafficking unsuspecting victims.

## LAOS (Tier 2 Watch List)

Laos is a source, and to a much lesser extent, a transit and destination country for women and girls who are subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution, and men, women, and children who are in conditions of forced labor in factory work, domestic labor, and the fishing industry. Lao men, women, and children are found in conditions of forced labor in Thailand. Many Laotians, particularly women, pay broker fees to obtain jobs in Thailand, normally ranging from \$70 to \$200,

but are subsequently subjected to conditions of sexual servitude and forced labor once they arrive in Thailand. Lao men are subjected to conditions of forced labor in the Thai fishing and construction industry. A small number of Lao women and girls reportedly were also trafficked to China to become brides for Chinese men. Ethnic minority populations are particularly vulnerable to trafficking in Thailand. Laos is increasingly a transit country for Vietnamese, Chinese, and Burmese women who are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor in Thailand. Some Vietnamese women are subjected to forced prostitution in Laos. Although there are fewer reported instances, internal trafficking also remains a problem, affecting young women and girls forced into prostitution.

The Government of Laos does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. Despite these efforts, Laos has not demonstrated enough evidence of progress in its law enforcement efforts to address human trafficking and in the identification and protection of trafficking victims; therefore, Laos is placed on Tier 2 Watch List. During the reporting period, the government reported three trafficking prosecutions, but did not convict any trafficking offenders. While the government provided some assistance to victims identified by foreign governments repatriated to Laos, it did not report identifying any trafficking victims. The government has never administratively or criminally punished any public official for complicity in trafficking in persons. The government continued to rely almost completely on NGOs and international organizations to provide victim assistance.

**Recommendations for Laos:** Increase efforts to investigate and prosecute both sex and labor trafficking offenders, including through cooperation with Thai authorities on cross-border trafficking cases; make efforts to address internal trafficking, including by identifying Lao citizens trafficked within the country; create and implement formal victim identification procedures and train police and border officials to identify trafficking victims, including victims returning from Thailand; improve coordination between Thai authorities and the central government regarding victim assistance and between the Vientiane transit center and local communities where victims will be reintegrated; consider opening a transit center in Savannakhet for victims repatriated from Thailand; increase efforts to combat trafficking-related complicity; expedite the processing of NGO MOUs to implement anti-trafficking projects; implement and support a visible anti-trafficking awareness campaign directed at clients of the sex trade; and increase collaboration with international organizations and civil society to build capacity to combat trafficking in persons.

### Prosecution

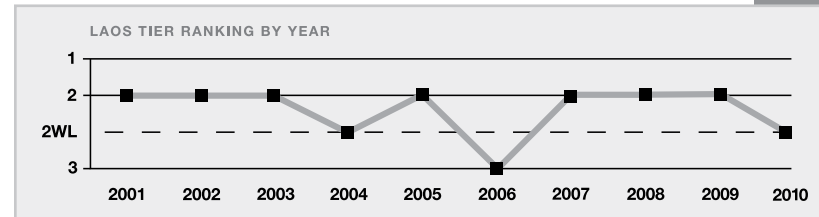
The Lao government continued to prosecute some trafficking cases, but did not convict any trafficking

offenders during the reporting period. Laos prohibits all forms of human trafficking through its 2006 revision of Penal Code Article 134, which prescribes penalties ranging from five years to life imprisonment, which is sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes. Lao police report investigating 50 suspected trafficking cases in 2009, and the prosecution of 11 trafficking offenders. Impunity of corrupt government officials remained a problem throughout the Lao justice system. Corruption is endemic in Laos, and observers of trafficking in Laos believe that particularly at the local level, some officials are involved in facilitating human trafficking, sometimes in collusion with their Thai counterparts. However, the government has never reported any officials disciplined or punished for involvement in trafficking in persons. The government continued to collaborate with international organizations and NGOs on law enforcement capacity building.

### Protection

The Government of Laos continued some efforts to ensure that victims of trafficking received access to protective services during the reporting period. The government did not employ systematic efforts to identify trafficking victims among Lao migrants returning from neighboring countries. The government continued to rely almost completely on NGOs and international organizations to provide victim assistance. Lao authorities did not report identifying any trafficking victims within Lao borders. In 2009, Thai authorities identified and repatriated approximately 155 Lao victims under an official repatriation mechanism; almost all of whom were girls. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW), with NGO funding, continued to operate a small transit center in Vientiane for victims identified and repatriated by Thai authorities to remain for one week. However, while most repatriated victims were from southern Laos, all victims were required to be processed through the Vientiane transit center in central Laos. The Lao Women's Union operates counseling centers in six provinces to provide information about trafficking prevention and, with the assistance of international NGOs and foreign donors, helps to run a shelter in Vientiane to assist victims and help reintegrate them into society. Women and children who are identified as trafficking victims are exempted from criminal prosecution for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of trafficking, but the law does not protect men from prosecution. Since victims generally avoid identification by Thai authorities, there are believed to be many victims who return to Laos through informal channels, particularly male victims, but no such victims were identified by the Lao government. The government does not have systematic procedures to proactively identify victims of trafficking among vulnerable groups, such as migrants returning from Thailand and girls and women detained for involvement in prostitution. The Lao Embassy in Bangkok assists in coordinating repatriation of Lao nationals who are identified as trafficking victims in Thailand. Inefficiency within the government in the

signing of MOUs has caused lengthy delays in NGO victim protection projects. The Law on Development and Protection of Women includes protection provisions for victims of trafficking, but these provisions do not apply to men. Victim access to legal redress is hampered by culture and lack of resources on the part of victims and the legal community. Through legal aid clinics, the Lao Bar Association, with NGO funding, is currently assisting six trafficking victims. Laos does not provide legal alternatives to the removal of foreign victims to countries where they may face retribution or hardship, but does not typically repatriate foreign trafficking victims.



### Prevention

The Lao government continued limited efforts to prevent trafficking in persons with assistance from international organizations and NGOs. The MLSW worked with UNICEF to set up trafficking awareness-raising billboards near border checkpoints and in large cities, and distribute comic books to schools, to educate younger Lao about the dangers of trafficking. UNESCO and the Lao Youth Union partnered on radio programs in Lao and minority languages on the dangers of trafficking. In October 2009, Laos and China established a liaison office in China's Yunnan Province to repatriate a small number of Lao women trafficked to China for forced marriage. Authorities did not employ screening procedures to identify trafficking victims in raids of nightclubs used as fronts for commercial sex. The Lao National Tourism Authority, with NGO and donor funding, ran a campaign prior to the 2009 Southeast Asia Games, warning tourists and citizens to not engage in child sex tourism.

## LATVIA (Tier 2)

Latvia is a source country for women subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution, and for men and women in conditions of forced labor. Latvian women are forced into prostitution in Italy, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, and Germany. Latvian men and women are subjected to conditions of forced labor in the United Kingdom. There are unofficial reports that some Latvian teenage girls are trafficked within the country for the purpose of forced prostitution.

The Government of Latvia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. During