

# Comoros

The Government of Comoros adopted a National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor during the reporting period. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor in agriculture, however. Gaps remain in legislation, enforcement and programs to address this problem.

## Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5 - 14 yrs.	35.6*
Attending School	5 - 14 yrs.	44.2
Combining Work and School	7 - 14 yrs.	23.9

\* Population of working children: 56,840



## Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Comoros are engaged in the worst forms of child labor,<sup>1417</sup> many of them in agriculture.<sup>1418</sup> Some reportedly cultivate cloves, vanilla and *ylang ylang* (a flower). Children also engage in animal husbandry and fishing.<sup>1419</sup> Children's work in these sectors may involve using potentially dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads, applying harmful pesticides and exposure to disease and injuries from animals. Fishing may involve dangerous activities, such as risk of injury and drowning.

In urban areas, some children work as domestic servants in exchange for food, shelter or educational opportunities.<sup>1420</sup> These children often work long hours, risk physical and sexual abuse and are not paid for their work. Some children are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation and drug trafficking.<sup>1421</sup>

Children facing forced labor conditions can be found in agriculture and domestic service.<sup>1422</sup> In Comoros and other countries, it is a traditional practice to send boys to Koranic teachers to receive education, which may include a vocational or apprenticeship component. While some boys




receive lessons, many are engaged in forced labor, which includes carrying produce, selling items in markets and performing various domestic activities.<sup>1423</sup>

## Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code establishes the minimum age for work and apprenticeship at 15, but this does not apply to self-employed children.<sup>1424</sup> Children in apprenticeships must be paid, and the duration of the apprenticeship should not exceed three years.<sup>1425</sup>

The *Labor Code* requires that children work no more than 40 hours per week and receive a minimum of 12 consecutive hours off per day.<sup>1426</sup> A labor inspector can require a medical examination of a child to confirm that the work does not exceed his or her strength.<sup>1427</sup> Research has not identified any laws or regulations specifying a list of hazardous work activities that are prohibited for children.

The law prohibits pornography and sexual exploitation of children younger than age 18.<sup>1428</sup> The *Labor Code* prohibits forced and bonded labor, except in instances of obligatory military

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	No
	Minimum Age for Work	15
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	No

service, civic duty or work that is required in times of accidents, fires and calamities. While the law does not expressly forbid trafficking in persons, traffickers may be prosecuted for kidnapping.<sup>1429</sup> The minimum age for voluntary military recruitment is 18.<sup>1430</sup> The law does not prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.

**Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement**

Research found no evidence that the Government of Comoros has established a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws.<sup>1431</sup> The Government has three

labor inspectors. This small number of inspectors appears to be insufficient given the size of the problem. During the reporting period, the Government did not perform any inspections or provide training to labor inspectors.<sup>1432</sup>

**Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

In 2010, the Government adopted a five-year National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor (2010-2015).<sup>1433</sup> The plan’s many goals include harmonizing labor laws, mobilizing groups to combat the worst forms of child labor, promoting universal primary education, addressing family poverty, collecting systematic information on the worst forms of child labor and establishing a coordinating mechanism.<sup>1434</sup>

Child labor concerns have been mainstreamed into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2008-2012).<sup>1435</sup>

Children in Comoros are required to attend school only until age 12, and students must pay fees as well as purchase their own supplies.<sup>1436</sup> This standard makes children ages 13 to 15 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work either. Additionally, the costs of schooling are prohibitive for many families, barring their access to education.

**Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

The National Action Plan proposes several programs targeting the worst forms of child labor; however, research found no evidence that any were implemented during the reporting period.<sup>1437</sup>

## Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Comoros:

### IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Extend the minimum age for work to self-employed children.
- Draft and enact legal provisions specifying a list of hazardous work activities that are prohibited for children.
- Enact a law to prohibit the use of children in illicit activities in accordance with international standards.

### IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat the worst forms of child labor.
- Increase the number of labor inspectors and provide them with training on the worst forms of child labor.
- Carry out inspections to enforce compliance with worst forms of child labor laws and make information on the outcome of inspections available.

### IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Make education a viable alternative to exploitative work by
  - Raising the compulsory education age to 15, the established minimum age for work.
  - Eliminating school fees and providing supplies for students.

### IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Implement social programs to address the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and domestic service.

<sup>1417</sup> Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates, 2005-2010. Data provided are from 2000. Reliable data on the worst form of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

<sup>1418</sup> U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo, reporting, February 15, 2011, 1.

<sup>1419</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Comoros," in Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2010, Washington, DC, April 8, 2011, section 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154339.htm>. See also Direction Generale de la Condition feminine/Protection de

l'enfant official, Interview with USDOL consultant, April 24, 2007. See also Ministère de la fonction publique et du travail official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 1, 2007. See also ILO Committee of Experts, Individual Direct Request concerning Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) Comoros (ratification: 2004) Submitted: 2010, February 16, 2011, para 3; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/iloquery.htm>.

<sup>1420</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Comoros," section 7d. See also SOS Espoir official, Interview with USDOL consultant, 2007. See also Bureau de Réseau Femme et Développement official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 1, 2007. See also Ministère de l'Economie de l'Union des Comores, Interview with USDOL official, April 21, 2007. See also ILO Committee of Experts, Individual Direct Request C138: Comoros (2010), para 3.

<sup>1421</sup> Ministère de l'Economie du Travail de l'Emploi du Commerce Extérieur, Plan d'Action National pour l'Élimination des Pires Formes de Travail des Enfants aux Comores: 2010-2015, Moroni, October 2009, 6.

<sup>1422</sup> Ministère de la fonction publique et du travail official, Interview, May 1, 2007. See also Ministère de l'Economie de l'Emploi et du travail, Interview with USDOL consultant, April 21, 2007.

<sup>1423</sup> Union Internationale des Droits de l'Homme, Interview with USDOL consultant, April 24, 2007. See also Ministère de l'Economie de l'Emploi et du travail, Interview, April 21, 2007, 1.

<sup>1424</sup> Government of Comoros, Relative à l'apprentissage, Loi No. 88-014/AF, (December 10, 1980), article 5. See also Government of Comoros, Code du Travail, Loi No. 84-018/PR portant Code du Travail, (1984), article 123; available from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/1515/64795/F84COM01.htm>. See also ILO Committee of Experts, Individual Direct Request C138: Comoros (2010), para 2.

<sup>1425</sup> Government of Comoros, Relative à l'apprentissage, articles 5, 10, 16.

<sup>1426</sup> Government of Comoros, Code du Travail, article 119. See also Government of Comoros, Fixant les Modalités d'application de la Durée du Travail et les majorations de Salaire pour les heures Effectuées au delà de la Durée Legale de 40 heures par Semaine, Arrete No. 01-386, (December 27, 2001), article 1.

<sup>1427</sup> Government of Comoros, Code du Travail, article 124.

<sup>1428</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Comoros," section 6.

<sup>1429</sup> U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo, reporting, March 11, 2011, para 14 A-E.

<sup>1430</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Comoros," in Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, London, 2008;

available from [http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country\\_pdfs/FINAL\\_2008\\_Global\\_Report.pdf](http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country_pdfs/FINAL_2008_Global_Report.pdf).

<sup>1431</sup> U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo, reporting, February 15, 2011, 2. See also U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo, reporting, March 11, 2011, para 13 B.

<sup>1432</sup> U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo, reporting, February 15, 2011, 2.

<sup>1433</sup> Ministère de l'Economie du Travail de l'Emploi du Commerce Extérieur, Plan d'Action National pour l'Élimination des Pires Formes de Travail des Enfants aux Comores: 2010-2015. See also U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo, reporting, February 15, 2011, 3. See also U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, July 23, 2010.

<sup>1434</sup> Ministère de l'Economie du Travail de l'Emploi du Commerce Extérieur, Plan d'Action National pour l'Élimination des Pires Formes de Travail des Enfants aux Comores: 2010-2015, 33-45.

<sup>1435</sup> UNDAF, Plan Cadre des Nations Unies pour l'Aide au Développement, 2008-2012: Comoros, 2008, 8; available from [http://www.km.undp.org/doc/undf\\_08.pdf](http://www.km.undp.org/doc/undf_08.pdf).

<sup>1436</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Comoros," section 6. See also U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, March 18, 2011.

<sup>1437</sup> U.S. Embassy- Antananarivo, reporting, February 15, 2011, 3.