

## Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In March 2002, the Government of Comoros participated in a 2-day conference on child exploitation with seven other francophone African countries. The conference participants agreed to define a “child” as a person under the age of 18, and produced a list of 21 guiding principles, which outline exploitative activities in the context of children that must be banned.<sup>1044</sup> The government has also worked together with UNICEF to formulate a response to a rising number of incidences of child labor<sup>1045</sup> and improve education for girls.<sup>1046</sup> Since 1997, the World Bank has financed a USD 7.5 million project to improve primary and vocational education in the country.<sup>1047</sup> From 2002 to 2007, the government will collaborate with the European Commission on various projects in the education sector aimed at developing elementary education infrastructure, technical and vocational training, institutional capacity, improving the quality of secondary education, and promoting higher education.<sup>1048</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 36.7 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Comoros were working.<sup>1049</sup> Children work in the informal sector, agriculture, and family enterprises, particularly in subsistence farming and fishing.<sup>1050</sup> Children, some as young as 7 years old, also work as domestic servants, in exchange for food and shelter.<sup>1051</sup> Migration from rural areas and poverty has led to a growing number of children working and living on the streets.<sup>1052</sup>

Primary education is compulsory until the age of 10.<sup>1053</sup> In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 86.0 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 56.2 percent.<sup>1054</sup> According to UNICEF, only 22.1 percent of boys and 26.9 percent of girls enrolled in primary school reach grade 5.<sup>1055</sup> Attendance is not enforced by the

<sup>1044</sup> The other countries participating in the meeting were: Mali, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo (Republic of), Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia. See UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Nations Press Ahead to End Child Exploitation*, IRINnews.org, [online] April 2, 2002 [cited August 28, 2003]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=27066&SelectRegion=Africa&SelectCountry=AFRICA>.

<sup>1045</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 666th Meeting: Comoros*, CDC/C/SR.666, Geneva, June 2001, para. 39.

<sup>1046</sup> UNICEF has also supported the Government of Comoros to implement a 2000 study to establish baseline performance indicators for children in grade 4, the collection of data for the 2000 Education for All reports, and a reconciliation accord in February 2001 to bring about political stability to the country. See Government of Comoros, *Girls' Education in Comoros*, [previously online], UNICEF, [hard copy on file]; available from [http://www.unicef.org/programme/girlseducation/action/ed\\_profiles/Comorosfinal.PDF](http://www.unicef.org/programme/girlseducation/action/ed_profiles/Comorosfinal.PDF).

<sup>1047</sup> World Bank, *Education Project (03)*, in Projects Database, [online database] October 31, 2003 [cited October 31, 2003]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P000603>.

<sup>1048</sup> Afrol News, *Comoros and Europe Agree on Cooperation Programme*, in afrol.com, [online] August 14, 2002 [cited August 28, 2003]; available from [http://www.afrol.com/News2002/com010\\_eu\\_cooperation.htm](http://www.afrol.com/News2002/com010_eu_cooperation.htm).

<sup>1049</sup> Children who are working in some capacity include children who have performed any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, who have performed more than four hours of housekeeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. See Government of Comoros, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2 (MICS2): Standard Tables for Comoros*, UNICEF Statistics, 125 [cited August 28, 2003]; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/comoros/comoros.htm>.

<sup>1050</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Comoros*, CRC/C/15/Add.141, October 2000, para. 48. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Comoros*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 6d [cited August 28, 2003]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/index.htm>.

<sup>1051</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record*, para. 3.

<sup>1052</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, para. 39. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record*, para. 3.

<sup>1053</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2002: Comoros*, Section 5.

<sup>1054</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

<sup>1055</sup> Government of Comoros, *MICS2: Standard Tables for Comoros*, Table 11, 39.

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government,<sup>1056</sup> and only 31.2 percent of all primary school children ages 6 to 12 attend school.<sup>1057</sup> There is a general lack of facilities, equipment, qualified teachers, textbooks and other resources.<sup>1058</sup> Salaries for teachers are often so far in arrears that many teachers refuse to work.<sup>1059</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 18 years.<sup>1060</sup> The Constitution prohibits forced and bonded labor, though not specifically by children.<sup>1061</sup> The Criminal Code makes any act of indecent assault committed against a child under the age of 15 years punishable by 2 to 5 years imprisonment.<sup>1062</sup> The penalty is enhanced to up to 15 years imprisonment if the act committed or attempted is rape.<sup>1063</sup> If a minor under 21 years is discovered engaging in prostitution, a juvenile court may impose protective measures.<sup>1064</sup> The Code provides for imprisonment of 2 to 5 years for anyone who is complicit in the prostitution of a minor or uses threats, coercion, violence, assault, or the abuse of authority.<sup>1065</sup> Article 323 of the Criminal Code also provides for the same penalties for complicity in international trafficking.<sup>1066</sup> Enforcement of labor laws including the minimum age provision is lax, and in practice, many children begin work at age 15.<sup>1067</sup> This is due in part to a lack of labor inspectors and general lack of resources.<sup>1068</sup>

The Government of Comoros has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.<sup>1069</sup>

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<sup>1056</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2002: Comoros*, Section 5.

<sup>1057</sup> Government of Comoros, *MICS2: Standard Tables for Comoros*, Table 10, 38.

<sup>1058</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, para. 43. See also Government of Comoros, *Girls' Education in Comoros*.

<sup>1059</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record*, para. 23.

<sup>1060</sup> U.S. Department of State official, electronic communication to USDOL official, February 18, 2004.

<sup>1061</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2002: Comoros*, Section 6c

<sup>1062</sup> *Criminal Code of Comoros*, Article 318 [cited August 27, 2003]; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/Comorosf.pdf>.

<sup>1063</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 319.

<sup>1064</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 327.

<sup>1065</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 323.

<sup>1066</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1067</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, para. 48. See also U.S. Department of State official, electronic communication, February 18, 2004.

<sup>1068</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2002: Comoros*, Sections 5 and 6d.

<sup>1069</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited August 28, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.