

Comoros

Country Overview

Politics

Comoros is a democratic republic off the southeastern coast of the African continent. Presidents are elected every five years, rotating between the three islands that make up the nation of Comoros. The current president, Azali Assoumani, was elected after a second round of voting, winning by a plurality in May 2016. Elections will occur again in 2021.¹

Economy

Comoros is classified by the World Bank as a low-income economy.² The economy of Comoros is undergoing an economic recovery, with the country's GDP experiencing negative growth in the 1990s, and remaining relatively stagnant in the 2000s. The Comorian GDP grew by 1 percent in 2015, and more than doubled that growth in 2016, growing by 2.2 percent.³ With few natural resources, 80 percent of Comorians are employed in agriculture, which accounts for 50 percent of GDP. Vanilla, cloves, ylang-ylang, coconuts, bananas, and cassava are the primary agricultural products produced in Comoros. Despite the country's large agricultural sector, the island imports 70 percent of its food.⁴

Threats to Comoros's economy include: inadequate transportation links, a young and growing population, few natural resources, a relatively uneducated populace, heavy dependence on foreign grants and assistances, political instability, and a heavy reliance on remittances.⁵

Social/Human Development

There are five primary ethnic groups in Comoros, the Antalote, the Cafre, the Makoa, the Oimatsahsa, and the Sakalava. Arabic, French, and Shikomoro (a blend of Swahili and Arabic) are the country's official languages.⁶ 98 percent of the Comorian population is Sunni Muslim. 60 percent of the country's population is under the age of 25. The country's growing population and focus on agriculture is causing a shortage of habitable land.⁷ With no universities, the young Comorian population is not well equipped to enter the workforce.⁸

In 2004, 44.8 percent of the population of Comoros was living below the national poverty line.⁹ In 2011 this number had not changed significantly, with 46.1 percent of the population living below the



international poverty line of USD 1.25 per day.¹⁰ Comoros's Human Development Index score for 2015 was .497, ranking 160 out of 188 countries. The United Nations classifies Comoros as having low Human Development.¹¹

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2017)

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 3

According to the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, trafficking risk may be found among children in export supply chains including agriculture and fishing.

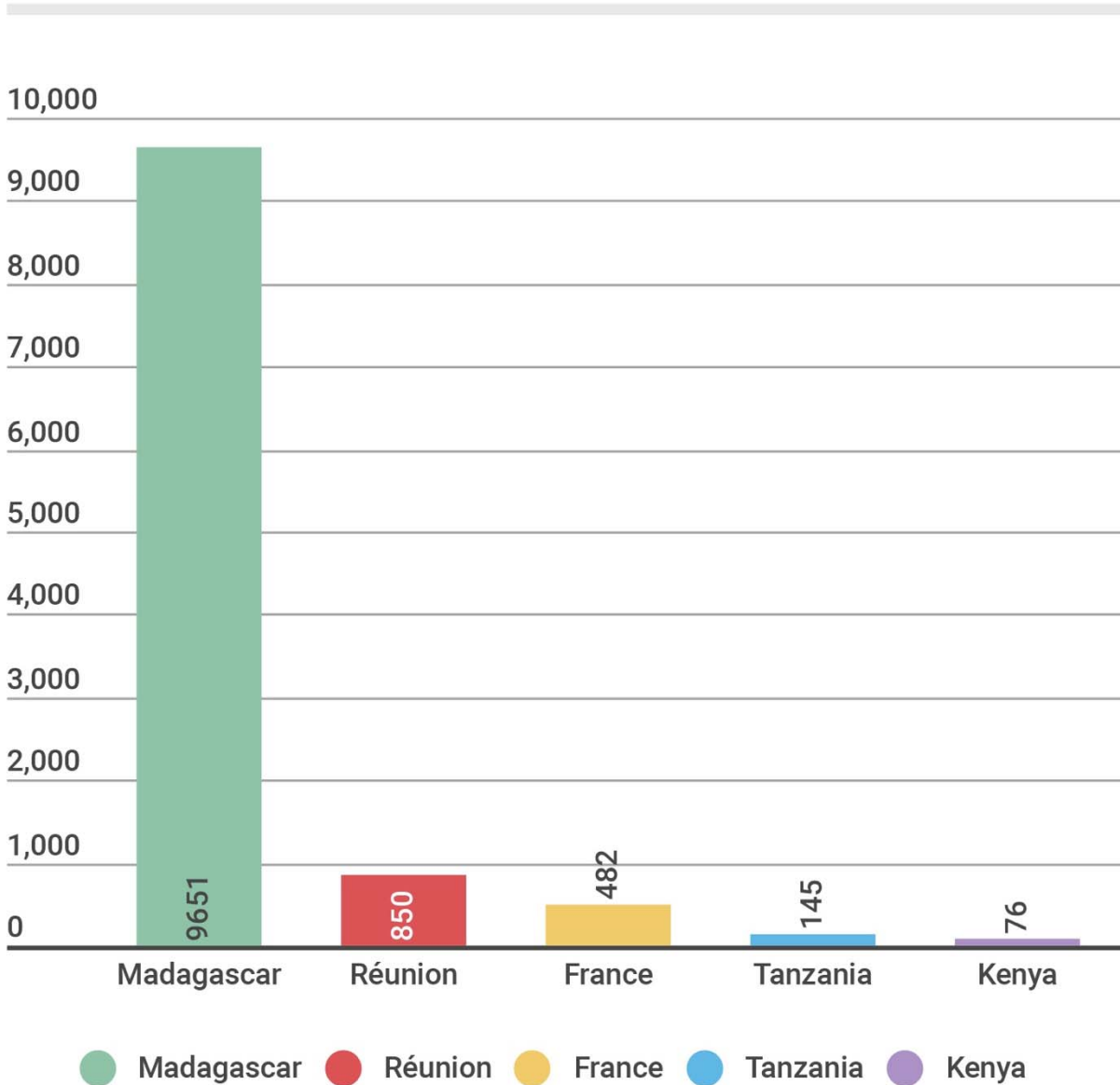
Read the full TIP Report at <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271167.htm>

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

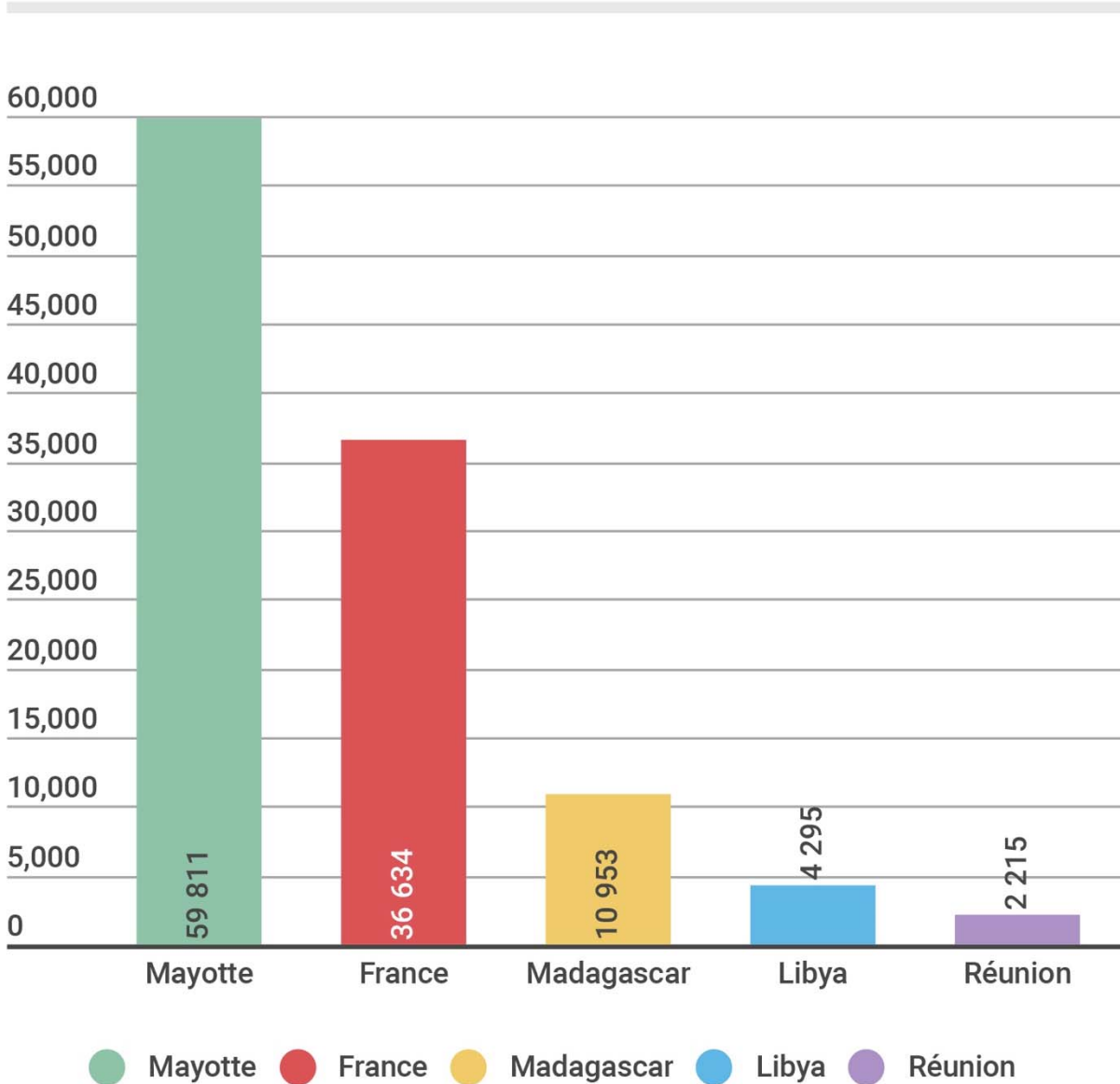
Comoros has a negative net migration rate.¹² Up to 25 percent of the country's population was living abroad in 2017.¹³ The most common destination countries for migrants from Comoros were Mayotte, followed by France, Madagascar, Libya, and Réunion.¹⁴ Migrants made up 1.7 percent of the Comorian population in 2013.¹⁵ The top sending countries for migrants to Comoros were Madagascar and Réunion.



Migrants to Comoros



Migrants from Comoros



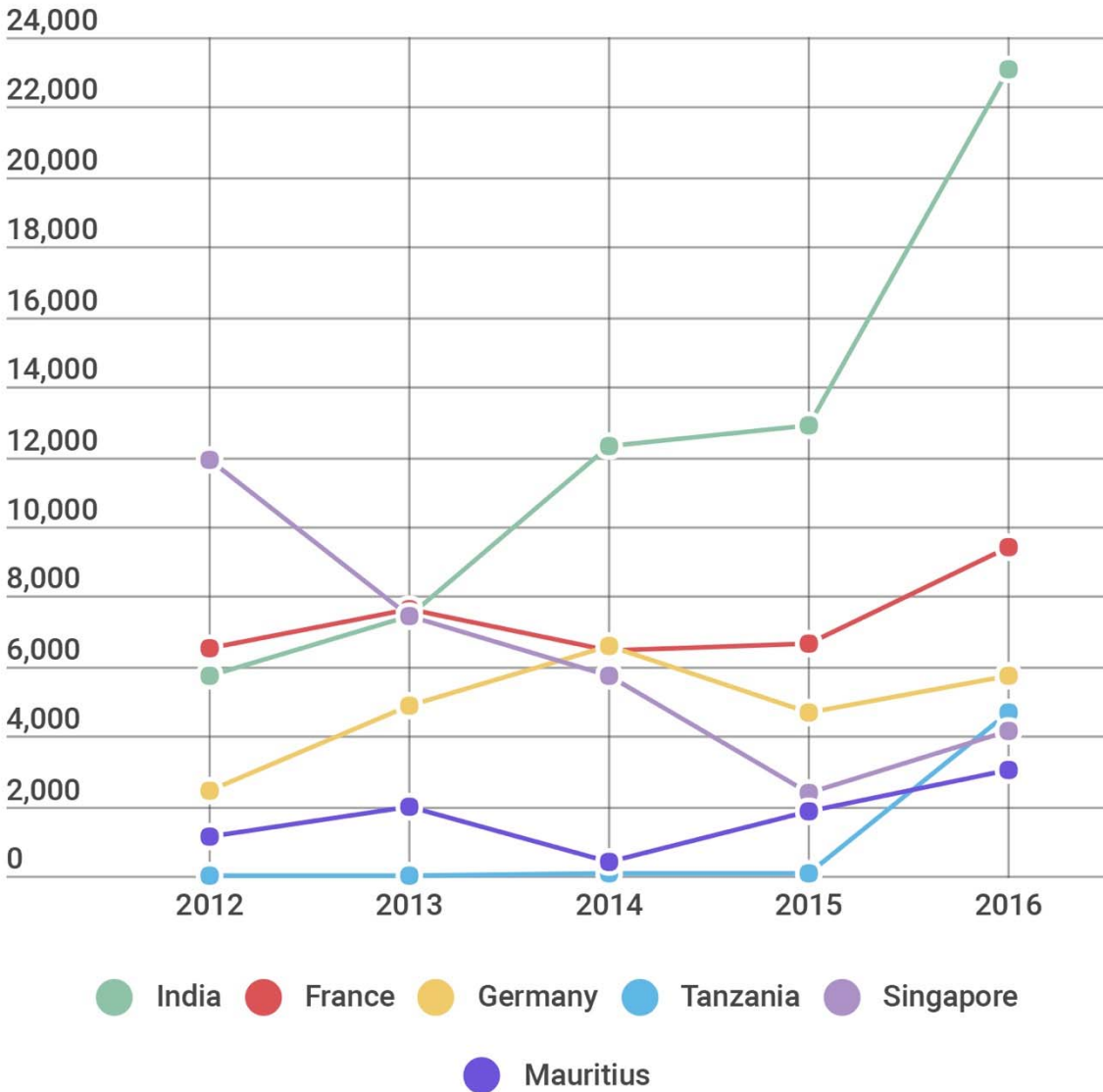
Exports and Trade

Comoros's top exports in 2016 were cloves (fruit and stems), vanilla, essential oils, aluminum and articles thereof, electrical machinery, wood and articles of wood, fruit and nuts, machinery, and live trees and plants.¹⁶



The top importers of all goods from Comoros were India, France, Germany, Tanzania, and Singapore.¹⁷

Comoros Export Partners (USD/Thousands)



Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for and protects freedom of association, and the Azali Assoumi government has generally respected these rights. The law also allows workers the right to form and join independent unions without previous authorization. The law also provides a means to resolve labor disputes. Unions have the right to collectively bargain and conduct activities without government interference. The law does not prohibit anti-union discrimination by employers during hiring. There were no reported retributions against strikers or anti-union discrimination by employers.¹⁸

Working Conditions

The law sets a guideline for a minimum wage of KMF 55,000 (USD 130) per month, but this is not a legal requirement. The law provides for a 40-hour workweek for non-agricultural work. For agricultural work, the maximum hours worked per year may not exceed 2,400 (approximately 46 hours a week). There is a minimum weekly rest period of 24 consecutive hours. The law provides for a paid annual leave requirement of 2.5 days per accumulated month of service. There is no law barring compulsory overtime. Workplace safety standards were codified in the law, but the U.S. Department of State has reported that these codes are seldom enforced.¹⁹

Discrimination

The Comorian constitution provides for equality regardless of sex, origin, race, or religion. Labor law forbids employer discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national ancestry or social origin, or actual or presumed state of health. The U.S. Department of State has reported that there are certain regulations on women's work in rural areas, but that there have been no recent reports of discrimination.²⁰

Forced Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced labor, but the U.S. Department of State reports that the government has not met the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and has failed to make significant efforts to do so.²¹



Child Labor

The law sets the minimum age for work at 15 years and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 years. Labor inspectors have the right to require the medical examination of a child to determine if the work assigned to them is beyond their physical capacity, and may remove the child from the employment situation if it is deemed beyond their capacity. Despite these stipulations, the government reportedly did not adequately enforce child labor laws.²²

Civil Society Organizations

The U.S. Department of State has reported that human rights groups “generally operated without government restriction” and that “government officials were often cooperative and responsive to their views.” It was also reported that domestic NGOs often supplanted government ministries on human rights issues.²³

Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

Conventions	Status
ILO 29 Forced Labor	In force
ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize	In force
ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force
ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies	Not ratified
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified

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Promotion of Emigration/Remittance Economy

At least 150,000 Comorian citizens live abroad. In 2013, 25 percent of Comoros's GDP came from remittances. Most of these remittances are spent on private consumption and do not contribute to development or poverty reduction. Remittances represent a larger share of GDP than exports of goods and services.²⁵

Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

Comoros scored an 84.8 in the 2017 Fragile State Index, ranking 52nd out of 178 countries. The score has only experienced marginal change in the past five years.²⁶

Comoros's percentile rank for political stability and absence of violence/terrorism was 40.8 on the World Bank's 2015 Worldwide Governance Indicators Report.²⁷

Level of corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Comoros as a 24 out of 100, where 0 signals "Highly Corrupt" and 100 signals "Very Clean." Comoros is ranked 153 out of 176 on that index.²⁸ The U.S. Department of State reported that resident diplomatic, UN and humanitarian agency workers reported petty corruption as commonplace. The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators also reported corruption as a significant problem.²⁹

Freedom House reported that corruption was a problem in the judiciary, civil service, and security forces.³⁰

Level of Crime and Violence

The U.S. Department of State reports that the crime level in Grand Comore, Moheli, and Anjouan, is relatively low.³¹ The World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report did not rank Comoros in the 2016-2017 report.

State Persecution

There were no reports of unlawful killings, detentions, or otherwise.³²



Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

Comoros is scored in the low human development category according to the UN Human Development Index, with a rank of 160 out of 188 countries and a score of .497. Comoros's Human Development score is lower than its neighboring islands in the Indian Ocean, Madagascar and Mauritius.³³

Level and Extent of Poverty

Comoros has a relatively high level of poverty, with 34.3 percent of the population determined to be living in “multidimensional poverty” according to the UN.³⁴ When adjusted for inequality, the Human Development Index score falls to .270.³⁵ Comoros's gross national income (GNI) per capita was USD 760 in 2016, a substantial increase from the 2003 GNI per capita of USD 390, but a decrease from the 2013 and 2014 all-time high of USD 830.³⁶

Degree of Gender Inequality

Discrimination based on gender is prohibited by the Comorian constitution. Rape is illegal, including spousal rape. The U.S. Department of State has reported that the government enforces the laws if rape victims filed charges. The law also prohibits domestic violence, but courts do not often fine or order imprisonment for convicted perpetrators. Women have the right to decide the spacing and timing of their children and to manage their reproductive health, but the UN Population Fund has reported that existing healthcare resources for women are inadequate.³⁷ The Service d'Ecoute estimates that more than 50 percent of girls under the age of 18 are married.³⁸ The UN Development Programme reports a maternal mortality ratio of 335 mothers per 100,000 live births.³⁹

The U.S. Department of State reports that inheritance and property laws favor women due to the local cultures of Grande Comore and Moheli being matrilineal. Women experience employment discrimination in rural areas, however, where wage labor for women is uncommon.⁴⁰

Women held a 3 percent share of the Comorian parliament in 2015.⁴¹

Environmental factors

Comoros experiences cyclones each year from December to April, as well as volcanism on Grande Comore. In 2005 Mount Karthala erupted on Grand Comore and forced thousands of people to evacuate. Soil degradation, erosion, and deforestation are other issues that threaten Comorian food stability.⁴²



Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Fishing

Fishing Overview

Approximately 140,000 Comorians earn their living from the country's fishing sector, which accounts for ten percent of the country's GDP. Most of the 16,000 metric tons caught annually remain on the archipelago for local consumption.⁴³

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Fishing

The U.S. Departments of State and U.S. Department of Labor have both reported on the presence of child labor in the Comorian seafood sector in the catching and processing of fish, both of which are considered hazardous. The European Union criticized Comoros for deciding to partially outsource their fishing fleet to an off-shore private company and encouraged them to improve their practices against illegal fishing.⁴⁴

Vanilla

Vanilla Overview

80 percent of the labor force is employed in agriculture, of which vanilla is a primary commodity.⁴⁵ An estimated 70 percent of people in rural areas participated in vanilla production.⁴⁶ 50 tons of vanilla were produced in 2011.⁴⁷ Comoros produces 'Bourbon Vanilla,' as does Madagascar.⁴⁸

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Vanilla

According to the U.S. Department of State, children are engaged in forced labor in agricultural work in Anjouan, although vanilla is not cited specifically.⁴⁹





Gift of the United States Government

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Endnotes

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