



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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14 May 2003

### MLI41494.FE

Mali: Update to MLI41213.F of 18 March 2003 and to MLI40537.F of 30 January 2003 on the situation of children in Mali, particularly the forced labour of children; available state protection; government structures or organizations that help children who are victims of forced labour; internal flight alternative; whether violence toward children is commonplace

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Various sources indicate that children in Mali generally live in very poor conditions (*Afrique Relance* Apr. 2002; Fondation des enfants orphelins de la rue n.d.; IPS 19 Feb. 2002; ENDA n.d.).

According to *Afrique Relance*, [translation] "approximately one child in four dies before the age of five. One in three suffers from chronic malnutrition" (Apr. 2002). The Foundation for Street Orphans (Fondation des enfants orphelins de la rue, FEOR) indicated that, [translation] "according to various sources, the number of children living on the streets of Bamako, Mali's capital and major centre, varies between four thousand (4,000) and six thousand (6,000), the majority of whom are boys" (n.d.). The same source also stated that [translation] "more than 20,000 girls between the ages of 10 and 15 work as domestics in mediocre conditions and are victims of physical, psychological and sexual abuse" (Fondation des orphelins de la rue n.d.).

According to Inter Press Service (IPS), forced labour in Mali is an issue that

[translation]

affects 26,000 children, 60 per cent of whom are little girls. These children are exploited in Mali itself, while an additional 34,000 Malian children work on plantations in Côte d'Ivoire, according to a study conducted in 2001 by the National Directorate for the Promotion of Women and Children (Direction nationale de la promotion de la femme et de l'enfant), in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (19 Feb. 2002).

Under ENDA, an organization fighting for the preservation of the environment and the development of third world countries that [translation] "takes a hands-on approach to health, agriculture, sanitation, alternative education, young workers, etc." (ENDA 2001), the NYETA program was put into place to [translation] "protect and assist children living in difficult conditions in Bamako and support [similar] activities in Mopti, Kayes, Sikasso, Ségou and Koulikoro" (ibid. n.d.). The program points out that [translation] "some 10,000 children and youths in residential neighbourhoods in and on the outskirts of the city are working, deprived of their freedom, enrolled in Koranic schools, separated from their family, idle, unemployed and/or unskilled" (ibid.).

In addition to the information found in MLI41213.F of 18 March 2003 and in MLI40537.F of 30 January 2003, the sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicated that, despite the Malian government's firm commitment to eradicate the forced labour of children and in spite of the labour code governing the employment of children in Mali, the forced labour of children still seems to be quite commonplace (*Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003; IPS 19 Feb. 2002; ENDA n.d.).

*Country Reports 2002* stated that "an estimated 15,000 Malian children between the ages of 9 and 12 have been sold into forced labor on cotton, coffee, and cocoa farms in northern Cote d'Ivoire over the past few years; an even greater number were forced into domestic service" (31 Mar. 2003).

In regards to organizations that help children who are victims of forced labour, IPS stated that, [translation] "aware of the harmful effects of these bad practices on the psychomotor development of a child, the NGOs for women in Mali made a commitment to fight against all forms of child abuse through CAFO, their coordinating body" (19 Feb. 2002).

Furthermore, in the interest of improving the lives of underprivileged children, the NYETA program carries out activities in the following areas: vocational training, income generating activities, lobbying for children's rights, health, schooling and literacy education, an urban youth associative movement, social reintegration services, and head start programs (ENDA n.d.). The NYETA program also promotes the participation of the children concerned and works

[translation]

through various child and young workers' associations (AEJT), neighbourhood development associations (ADQ) and all other forms of amalgamated services, and promotes stronger partnerships with national programs and other organizations operating in the same field (ibid.).

Moreover, the NYETA program is operated in conjunction with ongoing national programs, such as,

[translation]

the national program against child labour (IPEC/BIT), the Mali-UNICEF protection program, and the project for the development of the rights of adolescents and the promotion of their participation in society (PDAP) (ibid.).

The NYETA program also works in collaboration with the following government organizations:

[translation]

national youth, children and family, anti-HIV/AIDS, social development, and health directorates; the Bamako city council; member NGOs of COMADE (a Malian coalition to defend children's rights), of REMEDE (an integrated network to protect children living in difficult conditions), and of COPJT (the coordinating body of organizations working for the promotion of young workers); ADNEF (the association for the development of non-formal education in Mali); CAO (the coalition of associations and NGOs promoting literacy, the pivotal group for basic education); CCA-ONG (the committee for the coordination of NGO actions in Mali); the UNESCO National Commission of Mali; ... various associations for children and young workers; neighbourhood development associations; the coordinating body of the neighbourhood development associations; and popular theatre groups (ibid.).

With respect to the measures taken by the Malian government to protect children, the International Labour Organization (ILO) stated that

[translation]

Mali recognizes the principle of effectively abolishing child labour. In fact, the development of a coherent national policy in favour of eradicating child labour in Mali, as evidenced by Mali's participation in the IPEC program since 1998, is a fine example. This policy also led to the creation of a government department responsible for matters concerning children in September 1997.

The principle of effectively abolishing child labour can be found in Law no. 92/020 of 23 September 1992, which amends the Labour Code and its regulations.

The same principle is supported by the government's ratification of ILO Conventions nos. 5 and 39, as well as the Children's Rights Convention and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The informal sector, which has not yet been subject to specific regulations, is excluded from the effective implementation of the law.

According to the legislation currently in force, labour inspectors enforce the regulatory provisions for the abolition of child labour (5 May 2000).

No additional information on the above-mentioned subject, particularly information indicating whether violence toward children is common, could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

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Additional Sources Consulted

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*Afrique/Asie*

Amnesty International. Annual Reports

*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

*Jeune Afrique*

*Keesing's Record of World Events*

*New African*

Resource Centre country file. Mali

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