

# Dominican Republic

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

*In 2016, the Dominican Republic made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the year, the Government of the Dominican Republic made efforts by implementing initiatives that aim to remove children and youth from exploitative street work through the Roadmap towards the Elimination of Child Labor, and providing vocational training programs and labor rights education to 40,000 at-risk youth through the social program Progressing with Solidarity (PROSOLI). In addition, the Ministry of Education released a directive that eliminates the eighth-grade national exam, a barrier for children without identity documents to continue their education to secondary school. However, the Dominican Republic is receiving this assessment because it continued to implement a practice that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. While Dominican law and polices prohibit the exclusion of children from the educational system based on a lack of identity documents, there are reports that some children, particularly those of Haitian descent, were prevented by primary and secondary school officials from attending or completing public school in both urban and rural areas if they could not present birth certificates or other identifying documents, making them more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Children in the Dominican Republic are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Other gaps remain, including limited resources for the systematic enforcement of child labor laws. Social programs for victims of harmful agricultural work and commercial sexual exploitation also do not appear to address the scope of these problems.*



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Dominican Republic perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Children also engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation.(1-4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in the Dominican Republic.

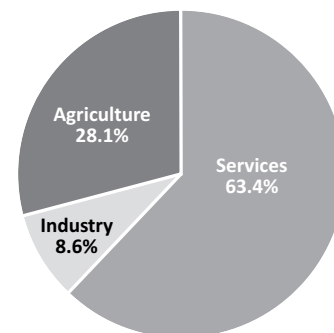
**Table 1. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	2.1 (21,968)
Attending School (%)	10 to 14	98.4
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	2.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		94.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2015, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.(5)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis of statistics from Encuesta Nacional de Fuerza de Trabajo (ENFT) Survey, 2014.(6)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14**



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

**Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting sugarcane,† collecting cut cane,† planting sugarcane,† and clearing land for sugarcane production (4, 7-11)
	Producing coffee, rice, tomatoes, bananas, beans, corn, garlic, onions, and potatoes (11-19)
	Fishing† (18, 20)

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**Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Producing baked goods (21)
	Mining† for larimar (a blue stone often used for jewelry) (21)
	Construction,† activities unknown (3, 21, 22)
Services	Street work, including vending,† shining shoes, begging, washing car windows, and transporting packages in markets (1, 11, 18-20, 23, 24)
	Working in beauty salons, restaurants, bars,† cantinas,† and coffee shops (1, 21)
	Transporting and selling alcohol,† including Haitian rum, at border areas (25)
	Working in woodworking shops, auto repair shops, and welding shops (15-19)
	Scavenging in landfills (15, 19)
	Domestic work (11, 18, 21, 24)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, street vending, shining shoes, and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3, 11, 15, 26, 27)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2, 3, 9, 18, 28)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3, 11, 15, 25, 29, 30)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

Children in the Dominican Republic are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in touristic locations and major urban areas. The porous border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has allowed some children to be trafficked into the Dominican Republic, where they have been engaged in commercial sexual exploitation or forced to work in agriculture, domestic work, street vending, or begging.(2, 3, 18, 19, 26, 27, 31) Some children, including Haitian children and Dominican-born children of Haitian descent, work in sugarcane production, a hazardous occupation, often alongside their parents, and live in communities that often lack adequate housing and basic services.(4, 7-10, 32)

Children of undocumented migrant parents, many of Haitian descent, are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation, because they do not possess birth or residency documents. (3, 32-34) Many Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent, including children, remain in undocumented status as a result of the 2013 Constitutional Tribunal Judgment, and were not able to obtain legal residency documents under Law 169-14 and the National Plan to Regularize Foreigners during the reporting year.(11, 32, 35-38) Moreover, the Government continued to involuntarily repatriate to Haiti undocumented individuals including 2,551 unaccompanied children. This practice increases the likelihood that these children will engage in child labor, including its worst forms, as some reside in camps in Haiti near the border with the Dominican Republic where schools and other basic services are not available.(39-42) In addition, the children who remain in the Dominican Republic after their parents have been repatriated to Haiti are also vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.(32, 42)

National law guarantees free public education, requiring that all children attend school until age 18, and prohibits the exclusion of children from the educational system based on a lack of identity documents. (18, 42-46) However, in practice, some public primary and secondary schools in both urban and rural areas deny access to children who cannot present birth certificates or identity documents, mainly children of Haitian descent, sometimes due to the lack of understanding of national laws and policies. (11, 12, 42, 47-50) The Ministry of Education also continued to lack a formal complaint and redress system to handle these school denial cases. (51) In addition, the current Operations Manual of Public Education Centers of the Ministry of Education incorrectly requires school administrators to require children to present identity documents to enroll in school.(52, 53) Some primary and secondary schools permitted access without birth certificates, but required such documentation for the eighth and twelfth grade national exams required for graduation during the 2015-2016 school year. (11, 18, 34, 53, 54) In August 2016, the Ministry of Education released a directive that eliminates the eighth-grade national exam, which was a requirement to graduate from primary school, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year.(18, 42, 55, 56) However, in contradiction to national law, some schools continued to require children to present identity documents in order to take the twelfth grade national exam to graduate from secondary school.(11, 42, 57) Without the opportunity to graduate from secondary school and pursue higher education, and with limited access to formal sector

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work as adults, children without identity documents have less incentive to enroll or remain in school. Out-of-school children are at increased risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor. (11, 27, 48, 50, 53, 58, 59)

Research did not identify evidence of actions taken by government authorities during the year to adequately address the aforementioned practices, such as by providing training to school officials, conducting public awareness campaigns, or taking disciplinary action against officials who violate laws or policies regarding the education of undocumented children. This lack of proactive steps delayed the government’s advancement in addressing the worst forms of child labor within the country.

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Dominican Republic has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Dominican Republic’s legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 245 of the Labor Code; Article 40 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (43, 60)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 1 and 2 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18; Article 251 of the Labor Code (60, 61)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1–3 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18 (61)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 1, 3, and 7 of the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; Articles 25 and 409 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Articles 40 and 41 of the Constitution (43, 62, 63)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 1, 3, and 7 of the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; Articles 25 and 409 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 41 of the Constitution (43, 62, 63)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 25 and 408–411 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 24 of the Law on Technological Crime (43, 64)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 85 of the Law on Drugs and Controlled Substances (65)
Minimum Age for Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes*	18†	Articles 96, 97, 231 and 232 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (66)

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**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)**

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
State Voluntary	Yes	18 <sup>†</sup>	Articles 26 and 96–97 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (66)
Non-State Compulsory	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18 <sup>‡</sup>	Article 63 of the Constitution; Articles 33, 35, 37, and 40 of the Organic Law of Education; Articles 45 and 46 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (43, 44, 63)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 63 of the Constitution; Articles 33, 35, 37, and 40 of the Organic Law of Education; Ministry of Education Circular No. 18 of 2011; Articles 45 and 46 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (43, 44, 46, 63)

\* Articles 96, 231 and 232 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (No. 139-13) state that there is no conscription in peacetime and that compulsory military recruitment may be authorized in situations of national defense or emergency. (66)

† The minimum age for voluntary military service is 18. However, children ages 16 to 18 may enlist for training with parental consent. (66)

‡ Age calculated based on available information. (44, 63)

Article 410 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents prescribes penalties of 3 to 10 years of imprisonment for the commercial sexual exploitation of children. UNICEF has stated that these penalties may not be severe enough to deter the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Dominican Republic. (1, 43)

Article 2 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18 specifies activities that the Government deems hazardous and prohibits them for children under age 18. Article 3 of the same Resolution allows children ages 16 to 18 to engage in some hazardous activities, such as the use of industrial machines, as part of vocational training programs and only when properly trained, supervised, and protected. (61) Despite these protections, Article 251 of the Labor Code sets the general minimum age for hazardous work at 16. (60) The ILO has called upon the Government to amend the Labor Code to ensure that children ages 16 to 18 who are permitted to engage in hazardous activities are fully protected. (67)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5). However, gaps in labor law and criminal law enforcement remain and some enforcement information is not available.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MT)	Lead efforts to eliminate child labor; conduct labor inspections; and direct the Child Labor Unit (UTI) to investigate child labor. Refers children found in exploitative conditions to social services, mainly CONANI. (11, 18, 59, 68).
National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI)	Promote policies to eradicate all forms of violence against children, including child labor, as well as improve the employability of young people. (11, 59, 69) Coordinate with the MT to protect children against labor exploitation and enforce labor laws. (11, 59, 69, 70) Receive victims of child labor through 43 municipal-level offices for psychological evaluation and refer them for services. (69, 70).
Office of the Attorney General (AG)	Prosecute crimes involving children, including criminal violations related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and other worst forms of child labor. Oversee the Special Prosecutor for Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking, which receives notifications of alleged violations related to the worst forms of child labor through a hotline. (3, 18, 30, 70)
National Police's (PN) Trafficking in Persons Unit and the Directorate of Migration (DGM)	Enforce criminal laws, including those prohibiting the worst forms of child labor, and coordinate with the AG in the prosecution of perpetrators. Under the Ministry of the Interior. (11, 18, 30, 71)
Specialized Corps for Tourist Safety	Prevent child sex abuse and commercial sexual exploitation in touristic areas, rescue child victims, and arrest and bring to justice child sex offenders. Overseen by the Ministry of Defense. (69)

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### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2016, labor law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4.5 million (1, 16)	\$3.6 million (18, 20)
Number of Labor Inspectors	186 (1, 16)	183 (1, 16)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (1, 16)	No (18)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	N/A
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (1, 16)	Yes (18)
Number of Labor Inspections	92,644 (72)	84,474 <sup>‡</sup> (18, 20)
Number Conducted at Worksite	92,644 (16, 72)	84,474 <sup>‡</sup> (18)
Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	0 (16)	0 (18)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	211 (1)	31 <sup>‡</sup> (18)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown(18)
Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown(18)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (18)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (1, 16)	Yes (16, 18)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (1, 16)	Yes (16, 18)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (16)	Yes (16, 18)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (16)	Yes (16, 18)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Yes (20)

<sup>‡</sup> Data are from January 01, 2016 to October 31, 2016 (20).

The number of labor inspectors is insufficient for the size of the Dominican Republic's workforce, which includes over 5.1 million workers. According to the ILO's recommendation of 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, the Dominican Republic should employ roughly 341 labor inspectors.(73-75) Despite the reduction in the overall funding for the labor inspectorate compared to 2015, an additional \$140,000 was allocated to the MT to increase labor law enforcement actions to combat child labor during 2016.(18, 20)

The MT's process for labor inspections includes a preliminary visit, during which inspectors inform employers of violations and establish periods for remediation but do not issue fines. Upon expiration of the remediation periods, inspectors conduct re-inspections to determine whether the violations have been remedied.(60, 76, 77) If re-inspections find that the identified violations persist, the MT files infraction reports with the local office of the MT, which then transfers the infraction reports to the relevant local court for adjudication.(60, 76, 77) This two-tiered inspection process puts a strain on the Inspectorate's limited human and financial resources and may not sufficiently deter employers from exploiting children in the workplace, particularly in remote rural areas where re-inspections are more difficult and less consistent. In addition, evidence suggests that some inspection reports do not set a timeframe for the remediation of the violations identified.(78) Furthermore, the lack of published information on the results of inspections prevents a complete understanding of how effective this inspection system is in practice.(18)

Although the 2008 General Inspection Protocol and the 2011 Inspection Protocol for Agriculture instruct inspectors to assess child labor violations by reviewing workers' identity documents and employers' records, making observations, and conducting interviews, the widespread lack of identity documents impedes both inspectors and employers from verifying the ages of workers and guaranteeing that children under age 18 are not participating in dangerous or unhealthy work.(7, 12, 58, 76, 77) The MT has indicated that improvements could be made with respect to how inspectors conduct

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interviews, ask follow-up questions, and use inspection data to strengthen the inspection system.(12) Moreover, reports indicate that in some cases, Spanish-speaking inspectors working without translation assistance have been responsible for interviewing Creole-speaking workers with limited or no Spanish-language abilities, which has further hindered the efficacy of those inspections.(18)

From January through October 2016, the MT conducted 84,474 labor inspections. (18, 20) During this period, each inspector conducted an average of 461 inspections. It is unknown whether the high number of inspections conducted by each inspector affects the quality of inspections. Some NGOs and labor unions have reported that inspections are not always conducted in a timely manner after requests are made. In addition, evidence suggests that inspection reports often contain errors and contradictions that undermine the credibility of these reports, including by limiting the sample size of worksites for inspection in large rural facilities.(1, 15, 78) Reports also indicate that substandard labor inspection reports have hindered the ability of the Office of the Attorney General (AG) to pursue prosecutions on criminal matters involving child labor issues.(15)

A formal referral mechanism is in place that allows the MT to refer child victims of exploitative labor conditions found during labor inspections to the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) for social services. During the reporting period, the MT reported that it removed 103 victims of child labor, mainly from the agriculture, fishing, and services sectors and transferred them to CONANI where they received social and reintegration services.(18, 20)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2016, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2015	2016
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (1)	Yes(30)
Number of Investigations	19 (79)	19(80)
Number of Violations Found	45 (79)	19(80)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	21(80)
Number of Convictions	7 (1)	13(80)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (1)

In 2016, the AG’s Special Prosecutor for Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking employed five investigators to conduct investigations regarding the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. However, reports indicate that its capacity to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor is limited due to resource constraints.(1, 18) Similarly, the National Police (PN) maintains a Trafficking in Persons Unit, but reports indicate that it did not investigate trafficking in persons crimes during the reporting period also due mainly to a lack of resources.(18, 30)

In 2016, the AG reported that it removed 63 victims of the worst forms of child labor and transferred them to CONANI where they received social and reintegration services.(30) Despite these efforts, reports indicate that CONANI does not have the resources, facilities, and institutional capacity to meet the demand for services nationwide.(3, 18, 30, 79) In addition, reports indicate that coordination between the MT and the AG has been limited due mainly to a lack of resources and that not all criminal violations identified by the MT have been referred to, and subsequently investigated and prosecuted effectively, by the AG.(15)

### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor (CDN)	Develop evidence-based policies to combat child labor and coordinate efforts of 48 Local and Municipal Committees to implement CDN efforts at the local level. Overseen by the MT and composed of ministerial representatives, labor unions, private sector, and NGOs.(11, 18, 19, 59, 81) In 2016, the CDN met to implement activities under national action plans, including awareness raising campaigns in agricultural zones and training labor inspectors on child labor laws.(18, 82, 83)
Inter-Institutional Commission Against Child Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation	Coordinate actions to combat commercial sexual exploitation and child abuse. Led by CONANI and the MT, and includes representatives from local and international organizations, and the Hotel and Restaurant Association.(18, 30, 69) In 2016, organized workshops to raise awareness of the code of conduct to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourist sector.(84, 85)
Inter-Agency Commission Against Trafficking in Persons (CITIM)	Coordinate efforts to combat human trafficking and responsible for developing and implementing national plans. Led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and comprises 14 government agencies, including the MT and law enforcement agencies.(3, 36, 86) In 2016, met multiples times to implement protocols to identify and assist child trafficking victims.(3, 30)
Social Policies Coordination Cabinet (GCPS)	Coordinate all social policies and conditional cash transfer programs, such as the Progressing with Solidarity Program (PROSOLI). Led by the Vice President.(18, 59) In 2016, implemented activities to expand social protection services to groups vulnerable to human trafficking and forced labor.(87)

Reports indicate that the Local and Municipal Committees of the National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor (CDN) face limitations in their coordination efforts due to a lack of resources.(88)

### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor<sup>‡</sup>**

Policy	Description
National Strategic Plan to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (PEN) (2006–2016)	Identifies the roles and responsibilities of government agencies and municipal representatives in eradicating the worst forms of child labor. Prioritizes prevention, protection, assistance, and the progressive eradication of the worst forms of child labor.(18, 68, 89) In 2016, launched media campaign to mobilize communities to report cases of child labor, especially in rural and agricultural zones.(20)
Roadmap Towards the Elimination of Child Labor in the Dominican Republic (2016–2020)	Aims to eliminate child labor by 2020. Sets targets and indicators for poverty reduction, health, education, institutional coordination, awareness-raising, and information sharing.(18, 20, 59, 90) In 2016, partnered with the ILO to implement initiatives that aim to remove children and youth from exploitative street work.(11)
National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking and the Smuggling of Migrants	Aims to combat human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants through strategic objectives, including prevention, investigation and prosecution, and victim assistance and protection.(79, 86, 91) The Government reported that this plan remained in effect for 2016 despite the fact that the policy indicated its conclusion in 2014. In 2016, conducted training sessions for judges on human trafficking.(30)
Education Pact (2014–2030)	Seeks to improve the quality of, and access to, primary and secondary education by increasing attendance and graduation rates, and enrolling more students in the Extended School Day Program. Includes strategies to combat child labor.(59, 92, 93) Implemented by the Ministry of Education and supported by World Bank. In 2016, focused on improving recruitment and training of school teachers.(93)
National Development Strategy 2030 (END)	Aims to reduce poverty and inequality, and includes programs that aim to combat child labor and provide universal education to all children. Includes strategies to expand access to secondary school, including for students without identity documents.(20, 59, 94) Implemented by the Ministry of Economy.(94) In 2016, carried out activities to improve access to education and health services to children living near sugarcane plantations (bateyes).(95)

<sup>‡</sup> The Government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (1, 70, 84, 96, 97)

Efforts to implement child labor elimination policies in the Dominican Republic have been slowed by an insufficient allocation of resources.(71, 96)

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## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2016, the Government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor<sup>‡</sup>**

Program	Description
<a href="#"><u>Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project</u></a>	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries, including the Dominican Republic, to support the priorities of the <i>Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016</i> established by The Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010. Aims to build the capacity of the national government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor in the Dominican Republic and improve the evidence base on child labor through research. For additional information about USDOL's work, please see our Web site.(98)
Progressing with Solidarity (PROSOLI) <sup>†</sup>	Government program that provides conditional cash transfers for low income families to increase children's school attendance and reduce child labor.(59, 70, 96, 97). In 2016, launched an action plan to combat violence against children and provided vocational training programs and labor rights education to 40,000 at-risk youth.(96, 99, 100) In addition, the Vice President's Office reported that PROSOLI's School Attendance and School Subsidy Incentives in 2015 benefited 325,217 students, reducing school dropout rates among project participants by 3.8 percent and children's vulnerability to child labor.(69, 97)
Progressing Together ( <i>Progresando Unidos</i> )	Government program financed by the World Bank that aims to reduce extreme poverty among 180,000 participants in 14 provinces, including Santo Domingo. Includes activities that enhance access to decent work for youth.(101, 102) In 2016, provided technical and vocational training programs to 42,000 at-risk youth.(103)
Extended School Day Program ( <i>Jornada Escolar Extendida</i> ) <sup>†</sup>	Ministry of Education program to extend school hours to a full day (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) to improve educational achievement and reduce child labor.(12, 104, 105) A 2016 study showed that the program contributed to increasing the school enrollment rate from 87.56 percent in the 2011-2012 school year to 94.14 percent in 2015-2016.(106)
Regional Initiatives for the Elimination of Child Labor in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014–2018)	\$2.2 million Government of Spain-funded, 4-year project implemented by the ILO that aim to strengthen public policies and government capacity to combat child labor in 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic. Seeks to develop information systems on the worst forms of child labor and increase youth employment in the Dominican Republic.(107)
Empowering and Supporting the Human Rights of Children and Youth (2012–2018)	\$1.2 million Government of Canada-funded, 6-year project that aims to build the capacity of government agencies and civil society organizations that are responsible for protecting children, especially those of Haitian descent, from sexual and labor exploitation.(108)
Line 700 Hotline <sup>†</sup>	Office of the First Lady's free hotline to enable citizens to report cases of the worst forms of child labor. In 2016, conducted awareness campaigns to increase its visibility. (69, 109)
Rooms to Grow and Learn <sup>†</sup>	Government after-school programs that seek to prevent children from working by keeping them in a creative learning environment outside of normal classroom hours.(12, 110, 111)
Youth Alert Program (2012–2017)	USAID-funded project to protect at-risk youth from crime and promote access to education and vocational training programs, including for youth without identity documents. During 2016, benefited 55,203 youth, including by assisting 841 to obtain identity documents.(50, 112, 113)
UNICEF Country Program (2012–2016)	\$13.7 million UNICEF funded program that supports the Government's efforts to improve education, health, social inclusion, and protection for children in the Dominican Republic. Includes projects to increase birth registration rates and build the capacity of relevant government agencies to protect children from violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.(114-116)

<sup>†</sup> Program is funded by the Government of the Dominican Republic.

<sup>‡</sup> The Government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.(16, 69, 71, 104, 117, 118)

In an effort to improve the national education system, the Government has allocated 4 percent of the national GDP in its budget for primary and secondary education for the fourth consecutive year.(18, 20, 59) While the Progressing with Solidarity (PROSOLI) program has been effective in reducing child labor and increasing school enrollment among its project participants, the program requires participants to present identification documents to access program benefits, which limits the participation of those individuals lacking such documentation, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to child labor.(12) Although the Dominican Republic has programs that target the worst forms of child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly commercial sexual exploitation and harmful work in agricultural areas.(31, 86)



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### VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in the Dominican Republic (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Amend the Labor Code to raise the general minimum age for hazardous work to 18 and ensure that children ages 16 to 18 who are permitted to engage in hazardous activities are fully protected by the law.	2014 – 2016
	Ensure that penalties for the commercial sexual exploitation of children are adequate.	2015 – 2016
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016
	Ensure the law establishes a minimum age of 18 for compulsory military recruitment in situations of national defense or emergency.	2014 – 2016
Enforcement	Take concrete steps to remedy violations of Dominican law and policies that allow all children without birth certificates or other identity documents to enroll in primary and secondary education and complete schooling, including by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Undertaking training of school administrators;</li> <li>■ Conducting public awareness campaigns;</li> <li>■ Establishing a complaint and redress system; and</li> <li>■ Penalizing those school officials that violate the law or policies regarding school registration for undocumented children.</li> </ul>	2011 – 2016
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2015 – 2016
	Publish complete information on the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected, as well as the training for criminal law investigators related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2016
	Increase the number of labor inspectors and resources for criminal investigators responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor in order to provide adequate coverage of the workforce, especially in remote rural areas.	2009 – 2016
	Strengthen the enforcement of child labor laws by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reforming the two-tiered inspection system to support the MT’s ability to enforce laws prohibiting child labor and discourage the use of child labor by employers;</li> <li>■ Following the MT’s 2008 General Inspection Protocol and 2011 Inspection Protocol for Agriculture to establish a system to verify the age of young workers to better protect children without birth certificates or other legal documentation from exploitation;</li> <li>■ Training inspectors to improve the quality of interviews, gather consistent documentation, conduct timely re-inspection to ensure compliance, and use inspection data to enable prosecution; and</li> <li>■ Ensuring that labor inspectors, as needed, are able to communicate with Creole-speaking workers, including those who may be underage, to adequately conduct inspections for child labor violations.</li> </ul>	2012 – 2016
	Examine whether the inspection ratio for each labor inspector is appropriate to ensure the quality and scope of inspections.	2016
	Ensure CONANI has sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2016
	Improve coordination between the MT and the AG to ensure violations are effectively investigated and prosecuted.	2013 – 2016
Coordination	Ensure that the CDN’s Local and Municipal Committees have sufficient resources to effectively coordinate efforts to address child labor.	2013 – 2016
Government Policies	Ensure that appropriate funding exists to effectively implement and coordinate policies related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2009 – 2016

# Dominican Republic

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms (cont)**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including those of Haitian descent, by – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensuring that all children are able to obtain identity documents to reduce their vulnerability to labor exploitation; and</li> <li>■ Addressing the specific educational needs of vulnerable populations, including unaccompanied migrant children, children of parents who have been deported, and undocumented children.</li> </ul>	2011 – 2016
Social Programs	Eliminate the requirement that individuals present identity documents to participate in social programs intended to combat child labor, including in the PROSOLI program.	2012 – 2016
	Expand social protection programs, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation and harmful agricultural work.	2010 – 2016

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75. UN. *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2012 Statistical Annex*. New York; 2012. [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp\\_current/2012country\\_class.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_current/2012country_class.pdf). For analytical purposes, the Development Policy and Analysis Division (DPAD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UN/DESA) classifies all countries of the world into one of three broad categories: developed economies, economies in transition, and developing countries. The composition of these groupings is intended to reflect basic economic country conditions. Several countries (in particular the economies in transition) have characteristics that could place them in more than one category; however, for purposes of analysis, the groupings have been made mutually exclusive. The list of the least developed countries is decided upon by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and, ultimately, by the General Assembly, on the basis of recommendations made by the Committee for Development Policy. The basic criteria for inclusion require that certain thresholds be met with regard to per capita GNI, a human assets index and an economic vulnerability index. For the purposes of the Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor Report, "developed economies" equate to the ILO's classification of "industrial market economies;" "economies in transition" to "transition economies," "developing countries" to "industrializing economies, and "the least developed countries" equates to "less developed countries." For countries that appear on both "developing countries" and "least developed countries" lists, they will be considered "least developed countries" for the purpose of calculating a "sufficient number" of labor inspectors.
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