

In 2018, the Dominican Republic made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government significantly increased the Labor Inspectorate’s budget from \$3.3 million in 2017 to \$4.8 million in 2018. The government also approved the 2017 - 2020 National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and Illicit Smuggling of Migrants and continued to fund and participate in multiple programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including expanding the Extended School Day program to cover 1.3 million students. However, children in the Dominican Republic engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Other gaps remain, including limited human and financial resources for the enforcement of child labor laws, and inadequate assistance for children engaged in harmful agricultural work and commercial sexual exploitation.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Dominican Republic engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-4) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (5-8) Table I provides key indicators on children’s work and education in the Dominican Republic.

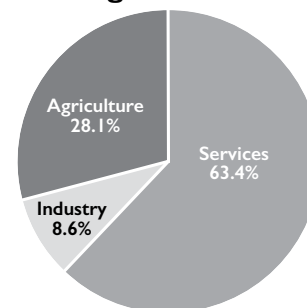
Table I. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education

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 (%)		95.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019. (9)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Encuesta Nacional de Fuerza de Trabajo, 2014. (10)

Figure I. 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	Clearing land for sugarcane production, planting and harvesting sugarcane,† and collecting cut cane† (11-14)
	Producing coffee, cocoa, rice, tomatoes, bananas, beans, corn, garlic, onions, and potatoes (7,15-21)
	Fishing† (18,22)
Industry	Producing baked goods (5,19)
	Mining† for <i>larimar</i> (a blue stone often used for jewelry) (5)
	Construction,† activities unknown (8)
Services	Street work, including vending,† shoe shining, begging, washing car windows, and transporting packages in markets (2,18,19,22-26)
	Working in beauty salons, restaurants, bars,† and coffee shops (5,27)
	Working in woodworking shops, auto repair shops, and welding shops (8,16,17,19,24)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Scavenging in landfills (19,24,28)
	Domestic work (2-5,19,26)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, construction, street vending, and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3,14,29)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,30)

† 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 engage in commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in coastal, tourist locations. The porous border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has allowed some Haitian children to be trafficked into the Dominican Republic, where they have been engaged in commercial sexual exploitation and forced to work in agriculture, domestic work, street vending, or begging. (1-3,14,24,31,32) Some children, including Haitian children and Dominican-born children of Haitian descent, work in agricultural production, including sugarcane, often alongside their parents, and live in communities that frequently lack basic services, including schools. (11-14,23,33-35)

Many Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent, including children, continue to remain in undocumented status as a result of the 2013 Constitutional Tribunal Judgement, which retroactively revised the Dominican Republic’s citizenship transmission laws, and were not able to obtain legal residency documents under Law 169-14 or the National Regularization Plan during the reporting year. (23,35,40-46) Children of undocumented migrant parents, many of Haitian descent, are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation because they may lack birth or residency documents. This increases the likelihood that undocumented children may be denied access to education or may be engaged in child labor, including its worst forms, as labor inspectors may not be able to verify their ages. (1,2,28,33,36-39) In addition, Haitian children who remain in the Dominican Republic after their parents have been repatriated to Haiti due to their undocumented status are more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (33,47,48)

In 2018, the government established a working group with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on the implementation of human rights policies in the Dominican Republic, including monitoring recommendations and commitments related to the acquisition of nationality, migration, and policies to combat all forms of discrimination. (49-53) The General Migration Directorate also extended the period for processing documentation and delivered more than 90,000 identity documents to undocumented individuals approved under the National Regularization Plan (PNRE). By the end of the reporting period, nearly 200,000 of the 260,000 approved PNRE participants had renewed their temporary migration status. (49-51) However, as of December 2017, the last date for which information is available, of an estimated 135,000 Dominican-born individuals of Haitian descent affected by the 2013 Constitutional Tribunal Judgement only 21,000 individuals had received birth registration documentation. (35,40,41)

National law guarantees free public education, requires 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. (47,54-57) Parents are also instructed to obtain birth registration documents for their children and the Ministry of Education provides free legal services to help parents obtain identity documents. In addition, national policy allows undocumented children to enroll in school. (58) The Ministry of Education’s Office of Community Participation is the point of contact to handle school denial cases for children without identity documents and has re-issued a directive to public schools noting all children must be allowed to attend school, regardless of their documentation. Parents may also appeal to the district government or the Ministry of Education’s regional office if their child is denied educational access. (21,40,45,58,59) In addition, the Ministry of Education conducted public awareness-raising campaigns during the reporting period about school registration and the right to education for all children. Research did not identify cases of children without identity documents being denied access to




education during the reporting period. (21,45,58,59) However, the Ministry of Education’s current Operations Manual of Public Education Centers incorrectly requires school administrators to request children to present identity documents to enroll in school. (62,63) Moreover, the Ministry of Education requires that students have a birth certificate on file to issue a high school diploma. As a result, children without identity documents are unable to prove that they have completed high school. (64,65)

Teacher shortages and a lack of school infrastructure create barriers to accessing education in the Dominican Republic. In addition, a high percentage of students drop out at the primary and secondary levels. (3,23,66-68) These issues particularly affect children living in rural areas and in communities predominantly of Haitian descent. Sources also indicate that some children of Haitian descent face discrimination by teachers and peers, travel long distances to schools, and are unable to afford school fees and supplies. (3,23,66-68)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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 (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Dominican Republic’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of military recruitment by non-state groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	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 (54,69)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Sections 1–2 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18; Article 251 of the Labor Code (34,69)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1–3 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18 (34)
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 40–41 of the Constitution (54,70,71)
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 (54,70,71)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 25 and 408–411 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; Article 3 of the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; Article 24 of the Law on Technological Crime (54,70,72)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 85 of the Law on Drugs and Controlled Substances (73)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes*	18	Articles 26 and 96–97 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (74)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Articles 96–97 and 231–232 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (74)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Article 63 of the Constitution; Articles 33, 35, 37, and 40 of the Organic Law of Education (55,71)
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 45–46 of the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (54,55,57,71)

* No conscription (74)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (55,71)

As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (55,71)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MT) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor (MT)	Leads efforts to eliminate child labor, conducts labor inspections, and oversees the Child Labor Directorate (DTI). Refers children found in exploitative conditions to social services, mainly the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI). (23,24,75-77)
Office of the Attorney General (AG)	Prosecutes crimes involving children, including criminal violations related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and other worst forms of child labor. Oversees the Special Prosecutor for Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking (PETT), which receives notifications of alleged violations related to the worst forms of child labor through a hotline. (1,14,78,79) In 2018, PETT secured 9 convictions related to human trafficking, and was investigating 33 human trafficking cases and prosecuting 23 cases. PETT also identified 44 human trafficking victims who were referred to the appropriate social services, but did not provide details on the ages and gender of the victims. (80)
National Police's Trafficking in Persons Unit and the Directorate of Migration	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. (1,14,18,79)
Specialized Corps for Tourist Safety (CESTUR)	Prevents child sex abuse and commercial sexual exploitation in tourist areas, rescues child victims, and arrests and brings to justice child sex offenders. Overseen by the Ministry of Defense. (14,81)
Local Vigilance Committees*	Prevent child labor at the local level by alerting law enforcement of activities linked to child labor, directing victims of child labor to social services, and working closely with the National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor (CDN) to raise awareness of child labor. (20,82) In 2018, an additional 14 Vigilance Committees were created in municipalities with a high presence of child labor for a total of 33 Vigilance Committees. (83,84)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role
National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI)	Develops and implements policies and programs to eradicate all forms of violence against children, including child labor, as well as improve the employability of young people. Coordinates with the MT to protect children against labor exploitation and enforce labor laws. (23,75,78,81)

* Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2018, labor law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the MT that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including penalty assessment authorization.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3.3 million (85)	\$4.8 million (85,86)
Number of Labor Inspectors	176 (8)	148 (21)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (8)	No (21)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	N/A	Yes (21)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A (21)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8,20)	Yes (21)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	83,436 (64)	75,751 (85)
Number Conducted at Worksite	83,436 (64)	75,751 (85)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	44† (8)	31‡ (21)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	44† (8)	31‡ (21)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (8)	Unknown (21)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (21)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8,20)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8,16)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8,16)	Yes (21)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8,16)	Yes (21)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8,22)	Yes (21)

† Data are from January 1, 2017 to October 31, 2017. (8)

‡ Data are from January 1, 2018 to November 30, 2018. (21)

In 2018, the labor inspectorate was allocated a budget of \$4.8 million, an increase of \$1.5 million from 2017. During the year, the MT employed 148 full-time labor inspectors, and plans to hire and train an additional 50 inspectors in 2019. (21,86) Even so, that number of labor inspectors is insufficient for the size of the Dominican Republic's workforce, which includes over 4.7 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, the Dominican Republic would employ about 315 labor inspectors. (87-89)

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. (69,90) If re-inspections find that the identified violations persist, the MT files infraction reports with its local office, which then transfers the infraction reports to the relevant local court for adjudication. (69,90) Re-inspections occur less frequently and are more difficult and less consistent in remote rural areas. In addition, evidence suggests that some inspection reports do not set a timeframe for the remediation of the violations identified. (91) The MT is not authorized to assess penalties, and penalties for violating child labor laws are insufficient to deter violations. (21,69,86)

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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 children under age 18 are not participating in dangerous or unhealthy work. (90) The MT indicated improvements could be made with respect to how inspectors conduct interviews, ask follow-up questions, and use inspection data to strengthen the inspection system. Moreover, reports indicate 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 may have further hindered the efficacy of those inspections. (18)

From January through November 2018, the MT conducted 75,751 labor inspection visits, of which 61,345 were routine inspection visits. In addition, the MT conducted 6,230 targeted child labor inspections in high-risk sectors, such as agriculture, construction, mining, and services in both rural and urban areas. (21,85,86) However, the MT only reported finding 31 child labor violations. (21) Some NGOs and labor unions have reported 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. (27,91,92) Reports also indicate substandard labor inspections, incomplete labor inspection reports, and the limited number of labor-focused prosecutors have hindered the ability of the Office of the Attorney General (AG) to pursue prosecutions on criminal matters involving child labor issues. (92)

A formal referral mechanism allows the MT to refer child labor victims found during labor inspections to the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) for social services. During the reporting period, the MT reported it removed 363 victims of child labor from work sites, and transferred their cases to CONANI, where the children received social and reintegration services. (20-22)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2018, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of publicly available enforcement information, coordination among agencies, and human and financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2017	2018
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown	Yes (21)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A (21)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (79)	Yes (21)
Number of Investigations	8 (8,59,93)	10 (21,93)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (21,94)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (21,94)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (21)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (80)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8,27)	Yes (21)

In 2018, law enforcement officials identified and assisted 25 child victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (94) The government also reported that it secured 22 convictions for human trafficking, and 9 cases of human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, the government reported 70 percent of the convictions in 2018 related to human trafficking involved underage victims. (94) Despite this information, the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions related to the worst forms of child labor is unknown. (21,94)

During the reporting period, the National Institute of Migration launched a certificate program for employees of the Ministry of the Interior and National Police on providing assistance to victims of human trafficking, and the National Police received training from an international NGO on combating human trafficking. (21,95,96) Despite these efforts, reports indicate the capacity of enforcement agencies to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminal cases related to the worst forms of child labor are limited due to a lack of human and financial resources. (1,18,59) In 2018, the leadership of the Attorney General’s Specialized Anti-Trafficking Unit (PETT) changed twice, and for most of the reporting period the office had half the number of prosecutors compared to previous years. (21,80) In addition, reports indicate coordination between the MT and the AG has been limited due mainly to a lack of appropriate case tracking systems and not all criminal violations identified by the MT have been referred to, and subsequently investigated and prosecuted adequately by the AG. (8,60,92)

During the reporting period, the Government of the Dominican Republic collaborated with the International Justice Mission to rescue 96 victims of commercial sexual exploitation, including 25 girls under age 18, and referred all of them to CONANI for services. Despite these efforts, reports indicate that CONANI does not have the resources, facilities, and institutional capacity to meet the demand for services nationwide. (2,3,6,93,95)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient funding for key coordinating bodies to carry out their mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor (CDN)	Develops policies, approves programs, and coordinates, monitors, and evaluates efforts to combat child labor in the Dominican Republic. Overseen by the MT and comprising ministerial representatives, labor unions, private sector representatives, and NGOs. (23,24,75,77,97) In 2018, met several times to implement activities under national action plans, including implementing awareness-raising campaigns in agricultural zones and training government and non-governmental stakeholders on child labor laws. In addition, coordinated the creation of 14 additional Local Vigilance Committees to combat child labor in high-risk municipalities. (21,83,84,86)
Inter-Institutional Commission Against Child Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation	Coordinates actions to combat commercial sexual exploitation and child abuse. Led by CONANI and the MT, and includes representatives from the Ministries of Tourism, Education, and CESTUR, local and international organizations, and the Hotel and Restaurant Association. (1,3,79,81) In 2018, met several times with the CDN and supported the creation of two Local Vigilance Committees in municipalities with a high prevalence of child commercial sexual exploitation. (84,86)
Inter-Agency Commission Against Trafficking in Persons (CITIM)	Coordinates 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. (1,86,98) In 2018, unveiled the new 2017–2020 National Action Plan Against the Trafficking of Persons and Illicit Smuggling of Migrants. (21,86,95) Also collaborated with the Attorney General’s Office, UNICEF, and the Dominican Airports (AERODOM) to conduct an awareness-raising campaign in airports to educate the public about the penalties for crimes involving the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (99)
Social Policies Coordination Cabinet (GCPS)	Coordinates all social policies and conditional cash transfer programs, such as the Progressing with Solidarity Program (PROSOLI). Led by the Vice President. (18,75) In 2018, continued to expand the coverage of PROSOLI, trained PROSOLI participants on preventing child labor, and collaborated with UNICEF to improve PROSOLI’s system to track program participants. (83,84,100)

Evidence suggests that the Local and Municipal Committees of the CDN face limitations in their coordination efforts due to a lack of financial resources to adequately carry out their mandates. (21)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including insufficient funding for implementation.

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Strategic Plan to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (PEN) (2006–2020)	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. (18,76,101) In 2018, the MT collaborated with the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo to develop a certificate program to train public officials on child labor laws and how to implement policies for the prevention and eradication of child labor. (83,84)
Roadmap Towards the Elimination of Child Labor in the Dominican Republic (2016–2020)	Aims to eliminate child labor by 2020 and sets targets and indicators for poverty reduction, health, education, institutional coordination, awareness raising, and information sharing. (3,22,75,77,102) In 2018, distributed information about child labor on radio and television programs for World Day Against Child Labor. (84)
National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and Illicit Smuggling of Migrants (2017–2020)†	Identifies the roles and responsibilities of government agencies in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and assisting trafficking victims. Approved in 2018 and implemented by the CITIM. (21,95,98,103)
Education Pact (2014–2030)	Includes strategies to combat child labor and 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. (75,104,105) Implemented by the Ministry of Education and supported by World Bank. In 2018, received an additional \$50 million in support for the 2018–2022 period and was extended for an additional 2 years until September of 2022. (105,106)
National Development Strategy 2030 (END)	Aims to reduce poverty and inequality and includes programs that aim to combat child labor, provide universal education to all children, and expand access to secondary school, including for students without identity documents. Implemented by the Ministry of Economy. (22,66,75,107) During the reporting period, the Ministry continued to dedicate 4 percent of GDP to education as indicated by the National Development Strategy. (21,108)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Insufficient allocation of resources has slowed efforts to fully implement key policies related to child labor, including conducting planned activities in a timely manner. (2,109,110)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2018, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Project to Reduce Child Labor and Improve Working Conditions in Agriculture in the Dominican Republic (2017–2021)	\$5 million USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO to support the efforts of the Government of the Dominican Republic to address child labor and strengthen labor law enforcement in agriculture. (111) In 2018, project implementers continued consultations with the MT to finalize implementation activities. (112) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labor (2015–2019)	USDOL-funded global project implemented by the ILO to support global and national efforts to combat forced labor of adults and children under the 2014 ILO Protocol and supporting Recommendation to C. 29 on Forced Labor. In the Dominican Republic, aims to build the capacity of the MT to enforce laws and regulations related to forced labor and improve data management systems. (113) In 2018, finalized a draft labor inspection needs assessment report; in addition, MT officials, including the Vice Minister and the Child Labor Director, implemented a workshop for 36 local representatives and labor inspectors. (114) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Progressing with Solidarity (PROSOLI)†	Government program that provides conditional cash transfers to low-income families to increase children's school attendance and reduce child labor. (3,67,75,115,116) The Vice President's Office reported PROSOLI's School Attendance and School Subsidy Incentives in 2018 supported 238,714 households with school-age children, reducing school dropout rates among project participants by 1.8 percent and children's vulnerability to child labor. In addition, PROSOLI launched the creation of community reports to improve monitoring and evaluation of program's impact. (117,118) Although previous reports indicated PROSOLI required program participants to present identity documentation to access program benefits, PROSOLI provides legal assistance to participants to obtain identity documentation. (21)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
Extended School Day Program (Jornada Escolar Extendida)†	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. (2,119,120) As of December 2018, the program covers nearly 68 percent of the nation's school children and is aiming to provide coverage nationwide by the end of 2020. (8,21,60)
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 aims 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. (121) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Regional Initiatives for the Elimination of Child Labor Program during the reporting period.
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 responsible for protecting children, especially those of Haitian descent, from sexual and labor exploitation. In 2018, was extended for an additional 3 month period and was allocated an additional \$110,000. (122,123)
Line 700 Hotline‡	Office of the First Lady's free hotline to enable citizens to report cases of the worst forms of child labor. Active in 2018. (81,124,125)
UNICEF Country Program (2018–2022)*	\$15.4 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, especially those without identity documents, from violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking in persons. (3,67,126)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of the Dominican Republic.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (16,127-130)

In 2018, in an effort to improve the national education system, the government allocated 4 percent of the national GDP in its budget for primary and secondary education for the sixth consecutive year. (2,3,8,22) 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 to address commercial sexual exploitation of children and harmful work in agricultural areas. (2,3,31)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

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

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2018
	Raise the minimum age for work from 14 years to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018
Enforcement	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2015 – 2018
	Publish information on the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, and the number of criminal law enforcement investigations, prosecutions, and convictions secured.	2009 – 2018
	Increase the number of labor inspectors in accordance with the ILO's technical advice to provide adequate coverage of the workforce, especially in remote rural areas.	2009 – 2018
	Increase the human and financial resources in order to ensure adequate criminal law enforcement related to child labor.	2009 – 2018
	Increase penalties and improve case tracking so that labor inspectors are able to promptly follow up on violation remediation to improve enforcement of laws prohibiting child labor and discourage the use of child labor by employers.	2012 – 2018
	Establish a system to verify the age of young workers to better protect children without birth certificates or other legal documentation from exploitation.	2012 – 2018

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Improve training of inspectors to increase the quality of interviews with employers and workers, gather consistent documentation, conduct timely re-inspection to ensure compliance, and use inspection data to enable prosecution.	2012 – 2018
	Ensure that labor inspectors are able to communicate with Creole-speaking workers, including those who may be underage, in order to adequately conduct inspections for child labor violations.	2012 – 2018
	Ensure that the National Council for Children and Adolescents has sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for victims of child labor.	2015 – 2018
	Improve coordination and case tracking systems between the Ministry of Labor and the Office of the Attorney General to ensure violations are adequately investigated and prosecuted.	2013 – 2018
Coordination	Ensure that the National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor's Local and Municipal Committees have sufficient resources to effectively coordinate efforts to address child labor.	2013 – 2018
Government Policies	Ensure that appropriate funding exists to effectively implement and coordinate policies related to child labor.	2009 – 2018
	Revise the Ministry of Education's Operations Manual of Public Education Centers to reflect Dominican law and policies that allow children without birth certificates or other identity documents to enroll in primary and secondary education and complete schooling.	2017 – 2018
Social Programs	Increase efforts to issue identity documents to all children to reduce their vulnerability to labor exploitation.	2011 – 2018
	Increase school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas, remove supply and school-related fees, and expand efforts to reduce discrimination in schools.	2011 – 2018
	Address the specific educational needs of vulnerable populations, including unaccompanied migrant children, children of parents who have been deported, and undocumented children.	2011 – 2018
	Expand social protection programs, particularly for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and harmful agricultural work.	2010 – 2018

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