

Dominican Republic

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2020, the Dominican Republic made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established the Oportunidad 14–24 program, with the aim of reintegrating high-risk and socially vulnerable adolescents and young people into technical or vocational education and training programs. To address the education challenges produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government procured 800,000 tablets and laptops to facilitate instruction, as well as distributed booklets with academic content and activities to nearly two million students. The Attorney General's Office also obtained three convictions against individuals for criminal violations related to the worst forms of child labor. However, children in the Dominican Republic are subjected to 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. Labor inspectors also lack the authority to assess penalties for violations related to child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in the Dominican Republic are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-5) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (6-8) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Dominican Republic.

Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

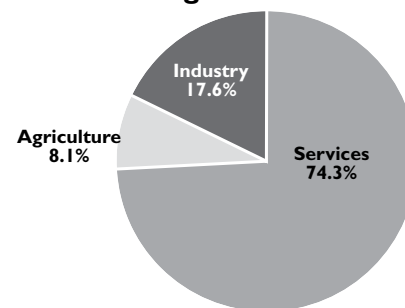
Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	1.0 (17,999)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	1.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		93.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (9)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Nacional de Fuerza de Trabajo (ENFT), 2016. (10)

These data are not comparable with data presented in last year's report due to changes in survey source, survey questionnaire, or age range surveyed. (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† (11-13)
	Producing coffee, cocoa, rice, tomatoes, bananas, beans, corn, garlic, onions, and potatoes (3,14-19)
	Fishing† (15,20)
Industry	Producing baked goods (6,16)
	Construction,† activities unknown (3,5,8)
Services	Street work, including vending,† shoe shining, begging, washing car windows, and transporting packages in markets (1,3,5,15,16,19-22)
	Working in beauty salons, restaurants, bars,† and coffee shops (6,23)

Dominican Republic

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Working in woodworking shops, auto repair shops, and welding shops (3,8,14,16,21)
	Scavenging in landfills (16,21,24)
	Domestic work (1-3,5,6,16,22)
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 (3,19,25)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3,5,26,27)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking(3,19,5)

† 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 victims of commercial sexual exploitation, particularly in tourist locations and major urban areas. (28) In addition, the Dominican Republic is a destination country for child sex tourists primarily from Northern America and Europe. (29) The porous border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has allowed some Haitian children to be trafficked into the Dominican Republic, where they are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and forced to work in domestic work, street vending, or begging. (1,2,5,21,30-33) Some children, including Haitian children and Dominican-born children of Haitian descent, work in agricultural production, often alongside their parents, and live in communities that frequently lack basic services, including schools. (26,34,35) Large populations of children, primarily Haitians or Dominicans of Haitian descent, live on the streets and were particularly vulnerable to trafficking. During the reporting period, the government noted an increase in domestic trafficking victims, specifically children, brought from the interior of the country to coastal tourist areas. (29)

Many Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent, including children, continue to remain in undocumented status because of a 2010 constitutional change and a 2013 Constitutional Tribunal Judgement. (36) These changes retroactively revised the Dominican Republic's citizenship transmission laws, by declaring that all persons born after 1929 to non-citizens in the Dominican Republic were not eligible for citizenship. As a result, thousands of people had their citizenship revoked, most of which were children of Haitian descent. (28,36) Afterwards, the government established new legal provisions aimed at providing legal pathways for these individuals to regularize their immigration status in the country. Yet, many of those of Haitian descent affected by the changes have been unable to obtain legal residency documents or have their citizenship reinstated. (28,36) Approximately 26,000 of an estimated 135,000 Dominican-born individuals affected by the change in law, most of whom are of Haitian descent, had their citizenship reinstated as of December 2019. (28,36,37) The government has also issued identity documentation, but not yet citizenship, to approximately 8,700 people who could prove they were born in the Dominican Republic prior to 2013 but had never registered their birth. (36,38,39) During the reporting period, the outgoing President issued a presidential decree naturalizing 749 of these individuals, nearly all of them minors, but the government has not yet brought the decree into effect. (40) In addition, thousands of other applicants remain trapped in legal limbo. Although their cases have been approved, the government has not yet issues a decree finalizing the naturalization process. (40) Due to the slow implementation of the program, coupled with response measures for the COVID-19 pandemic, many applicants have seen their interim identity and residency documents expire. (40) Local NGOs report that the applicants are often unable to renew their documents due to government office closures, high fees, and a requirement to present a foreign passport despite the fact that these applicants are Dominican-born. Individuals with expired documents are at heightened risk of labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (40) Some Dominican-born children of Haitian descent have been deported. (41) 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 these children may be denied access to education or may be engaged in child labor, including its worst forms, because labor inspectors may not be able to verify their ages. (1,3,4,24,30,42,43) 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. (44)

During the reporting period, due to the pandemic, public schools were entirely closed from March to November. In November, instruction moved to a remote and virtual format for the remainder of 2020. (19) To continue providing schooling for children during the pandemic, the government developed several initiatives, such as: procuring 800,000 tablets and laptops to facilitate instruction, as well as the use of television, radio, and take-home workbooks to reach students without access to computers or internet. Even with all these initiatives, the government was still unable to reach all the children who lost access to education due to the change to a remote learning environment as a result of the pandemic. (19)




National law guarantees free public education, requires that all children attend school until age 14, and prohibits the exclusion of children from the educational system based on a lack of identity documents. (45-48) 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. (49) 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 reissued a directive to public schools, noting that 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. (18,49-52) Research did not identify cases of children without identity documents being denied access to education during the reporting period. (19) 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. (53) 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. (54,55)

Teacher shortages and a lack of school infrastructure create barriers to accessing education in the Dominican Republic. (19) In addition, a high percentage of students drop out at the primary and secondary levels. (2,36,56-58) 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. (2,36,56-58)

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 armed groups.

Dominican Republic

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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 System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Article 56.1 of the Constitution (45,46,59)
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 (35,59)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1–3 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18 (35)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		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 System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Articles 40–41 and 62.2 of the Constitution (45,60,61)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		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 System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Article 41 of the Constitution (45,60,61)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 25 and 408–411 of the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Article 3 of the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; Article 24 of the Law on Technological Crime; Article 56.1 of the Constitution (45,46,60,62)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 85 of the Law on Drugs and Controlled Substances (63)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes*	18	Articles 26 and 96–97 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (64)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Articles 96–97 and 231–232 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (64)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	14‡	Article 63 of the Constitution; Articles 33, 35, 37, and 40 of the Organic Law of Education (47,61)
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 System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents (45,47,48,61)

* No conscription (64)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (47,61)

On December 21, the National Congress approved a new law prohibiting child marriage. Although this law does not directly address child labor issues, it is expected to indirectly assist in prevention efforts, because some reports indicate that child marriage has been used in recent years as a cover for children subjected to labor and commercial sexual exploitation. (19,29)

Laws related to forced labor are not sufficient because they do not criminally prohibit forced labor except when it results from human trafficking. (45,60,61) In addition, the prohibition against child trafficking is insufficient because it requires threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking under the Law Against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons; and although the Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents criminally prohibits accepting, offering, or transferring children without requiring threats, the use of force, or coercion as an element, it does not criminally prohibit the recruitment or harboring of children. (45,60)

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 enforcement agencies 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. Refers children found in exploitative conditions to social services, mainly the National Council for Children and Adolescents. (21,36,65)
Office of the Attorney General	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, which receives notifications of alleged violations related to the worst forms of child labor through a hotline. (4,26,30,66,67)
National Police's Trafficking in Persons Unit and the Directorate of Migration	Enforces criminal laws, including those prohibiting the worst forms of child labor; and coordinates with the Office of the Attorney General in the prosecution of perpetrators. Under the Ministry of the Interior. (15,26,30,66)
Specialized Corps for Tourist Safety	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. (26)
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 to raise awareness of child labor. (17,68) There are a total of 49 Local Vigilance Committees nationwide. (69-71)
National Council for Children and Adolescents	Develops and implements policies and programs to eradicate all forms of violence against children, including child labor; and improve the employability of young people. Coordinates with MT to protect children against labor exploitation and enforce labor laws. (36)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MT) that may hinder labor law enforcement, including the authority to assess penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$5.1 million (3)	\$3.9 million (19)
Number of Labor Inspectors	205 (3,37)	215 (19)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (59)	Yes (59)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (3)	Yes (19)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (3)	N/A (19)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (19)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	76,405 (3)	41,953 (19)
Number Conducted at Worksites	76,405 (3)	41,953 (19)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	30† (3)	15 (19)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	30† (3)	15 (19)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (19)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (19)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Unknown (19)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (59)	Yes (59)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Unknown (19)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (19)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (19)

† Data are from January 1, 2019 to November 30, 2019. (3)

Dominican Republic

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

The MT was working at approximately 40 percent capacity during most of 2020 due to the countermeasures established to address the pandemic, which likely impacted the agency's ability to carry out its mandate. (19) The circumstances caused by, and surrounding, the pandemic led to a 41 percent decrease in the total number of labor inspections conducted in 2020 when compared to the previous year. (40) Moreover, the reported budget for the labor inspectorate in 2020 represented an approximate 23 percent decrease in funding from 2019, which might be reflective of budget cuts made all over the government due to the economic contraction induced by the pandemic. (19)

During the reporting period, the MT employed 215 full-time labor inspectors, which is an increase from 2019. (3) Even so, that number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of the Dominican Republic's workforce, which includes more than 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. (72-74) In 2020, a total of 41,953 labor inspections were conducted, representing approximately 195 inspections completed by each inspector. This is a high number of inspections conducted by each inspector, and it is likely that this high number impacts the quality of such inspections. (19)

Labor inspectors are authorized to re-inspect worksites to ensure that violations are remedied. However, re-inspections occur less frequently and are more difficult, and less consistent, in remote rural areas. (59,75) In addition, evidence suggests that some inspection reports do not set a time frame for the remediation of the violations identified. (76)

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. (75) However, the MT indicated that improvements could be made with respect to how inspectors conduct interviews, ask follow-up questions, and use inspection data to strengthen the inspection system, to ascertain the ages of workers and guarantee that children under age 18 are not participating in dangerous or unhealthy work. 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 may have hindered those inspections. (15)

During the reporting period, the MT reported that 266 children and adolescents were identified through labor inspections in rural and urban areas and were removed from child labor. (19) Research indicates 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. (23,76) Research also indicates that substandard labor inspections, incomplete labor inspection reports, and a lack of prosecutorial resources have hindered the ability of the Office of the Attorney General (AG) to pursue prosecutions on criminal matters involving child labor issues. A formal referral mechanism allows the MT to refer child labor victims found during labor inspections to the National Council for Children and Adolescents for social services. (17,20)

The government did not provide information on the number of penalties imposed that were collected, whether routine inspections were targeted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted for inclusion in this report.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, 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 allocating financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (3)	Yes (19)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (3)	N/A (19)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (3)	Unknown (19)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (19)
Number of Violations Found	0 (3)	Unknown (19)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (3)	Unknown (19)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	3 (77)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (19)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (19)

The government did not provide comprehensive information on its criminal law enforcement efforts during the reporting period, but the AG indicated that in 2020 a total of eight cases of child labor and 41 cases of commercial sexual exploitation of minors were reported. The AG also reported three convictions against individuals for criminal violations related to the worst forms of child labor. (77) However, despite these efforts by the government, reports indicate that the capacity of enforcement agencies to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminal cases related to human trafficking is limited due to a lack of human and financial resources. (4,15,30,40,52) In addition, the lack of an appropriate case tracking system limits coordination between the MT and the AG. Reports also indicate that some cases referred to the AG by the MT are not subsequently investigated and prosecuted by the AG, which is partially due to this lack of coordination. (4,8,78) Moreover, research finds that the National Council for Children and Adolescents does not have the resources, facilities, and institutional capacity to meet the demand for services nationwide. (1,2,4,79)

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	Develops policies, approves programs, and coordinates, monitors, and evaluates efforts to combat child labor in the Dominican Republic. Overseen by MT and comprises ministerial representatives, labor unions, private sector representatives, and NGOs. (21,36,80) Oversees the system for referring children found during inspections to appropriate social services. (3) Also comprises local steering committees in each province that meet to coordinate government efforts. The committee met 5 times during the reporting period, and 15 of the steering committees met multiple times for a total of 96 meetings. (19) In February 2020, 45 government officials attended a training to raise awareness on the prevention and eradication of child labor. (81) Its members participated in the launch of the campaign <i>Lanza tu Dardo contra el Trabajo Infantil</i> , a campaign designed to raise awareness about the issue of child labor in the country. (82)
Inter-Agency Commission Against Trafficking in Persons (CITIM)	Coordinates efforts to combat human trafficking and is responsible for developing and implementing national plans. Led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and comprises 14 government agencies, including MT and law enforcement agencies. (30,83) In 2020, CITIM functioned normally after moving its meetings online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CITIM published its annual report of the government's efforts to combat human trafficking for the previous year. (40,84)
Social Policies Coordination Cabinet	Coordinates all social policies and conditional cash transfer programs, such as the Progressing with Solidarity (PROSOLI) program. Led by the Vice President. (15) Research was unable to determine whether the Social Policies Coordination Cabinet Coordinating Body was active during the reporting period.

In 2020, the government created the Cabinet for Children and Adolescents, with the aim to provide effective protection for the rights of children and adolescents, as well as promote their full personal and social development. Its objectives include establishing consensus, designing, and implementing policies on child marriage,

Dominican Republic

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

adolescent pregnancy, and other problems affecting children and adolescents in the country. (85) Yet, there is no indication that the Cabinet functions as a coordinating mechanism to address child labor. Evidence suggests that the local and municipal committees of the National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor face limitations in their coordination efforts due to a lack of financial resources to adequately carry out their mandates. (18)

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.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Strategic Plan to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2006–2020)	Identified the roles and responsibilities of government agencies and municipal representatives in eradicating the worst forms of child labor. Prioritized prevention, protection, assistance, and the progressive eradication of the worst forms of child labor. (15,86) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement the National Strategic Plan to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor.
Roadmap Toward the Elimination of Child Labor in the Dominican Republic (2016–2020)	Aimed to eliminate child labor and set targets and indicators for poverty reduction, health, education, institutional coordination, awareness raising, and information sharing. (2,20,65,87) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement the Roadmap.
National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and Illicit Smuggling of Migrants (2017–2020)	Identified the roles and responsibilities of government agencies in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and assisting trafficking victims. In 2020, the government reported undertaking an assessment of this plan, as well as beginning to develop the subsequent plan, though this process is still ongoing. (40)
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. (88,89) Implemented by the Ministry of Education and supported by the World Bank. Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement the Education Pact.
National Development Strategy 2030	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. (20,56,90) During the reporting period, the government continued to dedicate 4 percent of the nation's GDP to education as indicated by the National Development Strategy. (3,19,91)

In 2020, the National Institute of Migration of the Dominican Republic carried out a study on Boys, Girls, and Adolescents of foreign origin at risk of trafficking in the Dominican Republic. (77) In this study they explore the characteristics of the phenomenon of trafficking for purposes of sexual and labor exploitation. The study was conducted with the purpose of generating data to support the future creation of public policies, the study had not been published at the end of the reporting period. (77) However, despite these government efforts, an insufficient allocation of resources has slowed efforts to fully implement key policies related to child labor, including conducting planned activities in a timely manner. (1,92)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, 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
PROSOLI†	Main poverty eradication strategy by the government that serves as the primary line of social protection action. Focuses on social intervention through the integration of conditional cash transfers, socio-educational support, and links with other government programs and services. (93) Seven components help articulate its actions: identification, comprehensive health, education, human training and citizen awareness, food security, nutrition and income generation, habitability and protection of the environment, and access to information and communication technologies. (93) Addresses families in vulnerable situations, particularly low-income families, with one of its goals being to increase children's school attendance and reduce child labor. (2,57,93,94) To carry out its mission, it has established several projects, among which is <i>Progresando Unidos</i> , which aims to strengthen interventions in provinces with a large number of households in extreme poverty. (95,96) In 2020, PROSOLI conducted induction workshops for new trainers, coordinators, regional directors, and operational staff to instruct them on its functioning and operation. (97) PROSOLI also contributed approximately \$35,000 dollars to the National Institute of Professional Technical Training as part of the initiatives undertaken to carry out the <i>Oportunidad 14–24*</i> program. (98) PROSOLI also sponsored the campaign <i>Ahora Más que Nunca Sin Trabajo Infantil</i> , as part of the annual celebration of World Day Against Child Labor. This campaign aimed to raise awareness in the country about child labor. (99)
<i>Oportunidad 14–24†*</i>	Aims at reintegrating high-risk and socially vulnerable adolescents and young people into technical or vocational education and training programs. It will provide adolescents and young people between ages 14 to 24 with limited resources access to technical professional training, scholarships, a monthly provision of raw food, and transportation to study centers. (100-103)
Extended School Day Program (<i>Jornada Escolar Extendida</i>)†	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. (1,104) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement this program.
Line 700 Hotline‡	Office of the First Lady's free hotline to enable citizens to report cases of the worst forms of child labor. (105,106) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken during the reporting period to implement this program.
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL-funded projects that aim to eliminate child labor, including <u>Project to Reduce Child Labor and Improve Working Conditions in Agriculture in the Dominican Republic (FORMITRA) (2017–2022)</u> , a \$5 million project implemented by ILO to support the efforts of the Government of the Dominican Republic to address child labor and strengthen labor law enforcement in agriculture. (108) During the reporting year, this project provided training to 68 individuals, including 61 labor inspectors, on fundamental principles and rights at work. (109) The training was administered by a Senior Technical Specialist from the ILO, and its main objective was to develop and strengthen the capacities of labor inspectors. In addition, the FORMITRA project assisted in developing a training program for labor inspectors in the country. (109) Additional information is available on the USDOL website .

* 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. (2,14,57,100,107,110,111)

In 2020, 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 eighth consecutive year. (1-3,8,19,20) In addition, in response to the pandemic, the Ministry of Education, through the technical guidance of UNICEF and financial support of USAID, was able to distribute booklets with academic content and activities to nearly 2 million students in public schools. The government also opened school buildings for food distribution activities during the pandemic. (19) 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 the agricultural sector. (1,2)

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).

Dominican Republic

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits forced labor.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion as elements of the crime.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2020
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice to provide adequate coverage of the workforce, especially in remote rural areas.	2009 – 2020
	Determine whether the inspection ratio for each labor inspector is appropriate to ensure the quality and scope of inspections.	2020
	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 – 2020
	Establish a system to verify the age of young workers to better protect children without birth certificates or other legal documentation from exploitation.	2012 – 2020
	Ensure that labor inspectors are able to communicate with Creole-speaking workers, including those who may be underage, to adequately conduct inspections for child labor violations.	2012 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Publish comprehensive information on the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected, if routine targeted inspections and unannounced inspections were conducted, as well as the training provided to criminal law enforcement, the number of criminal law enforcement investigations conducted, violations found, prosecutions initiated, and penalties imposed.	2009 – 2020
	Increase the human and financial resources to ensure adequate criminal law enforcement related to child labor.	2009 – 2020
	Improve coordination and case tracking systems between the Ministry of Labor and the Office of the Attorney General to ensure that violations are adequately investigated and prosecuted.	2013 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates.
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 – 2020
Government Policies	Take steps to implement the policies related to child labor on an annual basis and publish information about these efforts.	2020
	Ensure that appropriate funding exists to effectively implement and coordinate policies related to child labor.	2009 – 2020
Social Programs	Increase efforts to issue identity documents to all children to reduce their vulnerability to labor exploitation.	2011 – 2020
	Address the specific educational needs of vulnerable populations, including unaccompanied migrant children, children of parents who have been deported, and undocumented children.	2011 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Update all Ministry of Education's school manuals to align with Dominican law guaranteeing that children without birth certificates or identity documents are able to enroll in schools, and ensure that all children receive diplomas certifying school completion.	2017 – 2020
	Ensure that all social programs are adequately funded, implemented, and report on their yearly efforts.	2020
	Expand social protection programs, particularly for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and harmful agricultural work.	2010 – 2020

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