

In 2021, the Dominican Republic made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor hired 23 child labor specialists to work in the offices of the Local Labor Representations in the interior of the country. The Dominican Municipal League, the Dominican Federation of Municipalities, and the Ministry of Labor also undertook a new inter-institutional cooperation agreement to develop awareness and training programs for municipal government personnel to integrate local governments in efforts to address child labor throughout the country. In addition, the government prepared a labor inspection manual to provide guidance to labor inspectors on the actions they should take while carrying out labor inspections. 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, including a lack of a sufficient number of labor inspectors and criminal investigators, and adequate facilities, transportation, and fuel. Labor inspectors also lack the authority to assess penalties for labor law violations, including those 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. (6,7) 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)	5 to 14	6.3 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	96.4
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	9.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		96.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (8)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019. (9)

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† (10-12)
	Producing coffee, rice, tomatoes, bananas, beans, and garlic (3,13-18)
	Fishing† (13,19)
Industry	Producing baked goods (14)
	Construction,† activities unknown (3,5,7)
Services	Street work, including vending,† shoe shining, begging, washing car windows, and transporting packages in markets (1,3,5,13,14,17-20)
	Working in convenience store deliveries (20)
	Working in woodworking shops, car washes, and auto repair shops (3,7,14,20)
	Scavenging in landfills (14)
	Domestic work (1-3,5,14)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, construction, street vending, and begging (3,17,20,21)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3,5,20,22)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, sometimes as a result of human trafficking(5,17,20)

† 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, principally in tourist locations, such as coastal resorts and major urban areas. In addition, the Dominican Republic is a destination country for child sex tourists primarily from the United States, Canada, and Europe. (20,23) 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, and begging. (1,2,5,24-27) Some children, including Haitian children and Dominican-born children of Haitian descent, also work in agricultural production, often alongside their parents, and live in communities that frequently lack basic services, including schools. (22) Large populations of children, primarily Haitians or Dominicans of Haitian descent, live on the streets and are especially vulnerable to human trafficking. During the reporting period, the government noted an increase in domestic human trafficking victims, specifically children, brought from the interior of the country to coastal tourist areas. (20)

According to reports, most children working in the country do so in the informal sector, mainly on family farms in rural areas. The child labor rates from rural areas are almost double of those in urban areas. (20) The National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) officials observed in 2021 that Constanza and the southern part of the country have the highest incidences of child labor. (20)

Many Dominican-born persons of Haitian descent, including children, continue to remain in undocumented status because of a legal change that retroactively revised the Dominican Republic's citizenship laws, which declared 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 whom were children of Haitian descent. (28,29) Afterward, the government established new legal provisions aimed at providing legal pathways for these individuals to regularize their immigration status. Yet, many of those affected by the changes have been unable to obtain legal residency documents or have their citizenship reinstated. (28,29) In 2020, the outgoing President issued a presidential decree naturalizing 749 of these individuals, nearly all of them minors, but the decree has still not been brought into effect. (30,31) In addition, thousands of other applicants remain trapped in legal limbo. Although their cases have been approved, the government has not yet issued a decree finalizing the naturalization process. (30) 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. (30) NGOs report that 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. (30) Some Dominican-born children of Haitian descent have been deported. (32) 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, in part because labor inspectors may not be able to verify their ages. (1,3,4,24,33,34) In addition, children who remain in the Dominican Republic, after their parents have been deported to Haiti due to their undocumented status, are more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (35)

Education in the country was provided remotely from November 2020 until mid-October 2021 due to the pandemic. (20) The government continued enacting several initiatives begun in 2020 to facilitate instruction, such as the procurement of 800,000 tablets and laptops and the use of television, radio, and take-home workbooks to reach students without access to computers or Internet. (31) However, coverage of these initiatives was

inconsistent, especially in the poorest areas of the country. Reports indicate that remote learning tended to reinforce existing inequalities in education, since students with poor Internet connections or with parents unable to support their learning were at a disadvantage. (20) In addition, some reports indicate that children without documentation were sometimes denied access to laptops. (36)




National law guarantees free public education, requires that all children attend school until age 14, and prohibits exclusion of children from the educational system based on a lack of identity documents. (37-39) 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 for their children. 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. (16,39) However, limited reporting indicates that, in some cases, school directors have denied children without identity documents access to education. (36) Moreover, 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. (40) The Ministry of Education also requires that students have a birth certificate on file in order for them to receive a high school diploma or school transcript after graduation, leaving those children without identity documents unable to prove that they have completed high school. Thus, limiting their ability to access university and vocational education or the formal job market. (20,39,41,42)

Teacher shortages and a lack of school infrastructure also create barriers to accessing education in the Dominican Republic. (17) In addition, a high percentage of students drop out at the primary and secondary levels. (2,29,43) These issues particularly affect children living in rural areas and in communities predominantly of Haitian descent. Sources 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. (2,29,43)

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.

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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 (37,44,45)
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 (45,46)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 1–3 of the Resolution on Hazardous Work for Persons Under Age 18 (46)
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 System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents; Articles 40, 41, and 62.2 of the Constitution (37,44,47)
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 (37,44,47)
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 (37,44,47,48)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 85 of the Law on Drugs and Controlled Substances (49)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes*	18	Articles 26, 96, and 97 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (50)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Articles 96, 97, 231, and 232 of the Organic Armed Forces Law (50)
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 (44,51)
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 System and Fundamental Rights of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents (37,38,44,51)

* Country has no conscription (50)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (44,51)

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. (37,47)

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 operations 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 Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor. Refers children found in exploitative conditions to social services, mainly the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI). (17,52)
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, which receives notifications of alleged violations related to the worst forms of child labor through a hotline. (4,22,24,53,54)
National Police	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. (13,22,24,31,53)
Tourist Police (POLITUR)	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. (17,20,22)
Local Vigilance Committees	Prevent child labor at the local level by alerting law enforcement of activities linked to child labor; directing survivors of child labor to social services, and working closely with the National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor to raise awareness of child labor. (15,55) There are a total of 49 Local Vigilance Committees nationwide. (17,31,56-58)
National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI)	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 the Ministry of Labor through the National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor to protect children against labor exploitation and enforce labor laws. (17,29,31)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Labor (MT) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of authority of labor inspectors to assess penalties.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3.9 million (17)	\$4.4 million (20)
Number of Labor Inspectors	215 (17)	212 (20)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (45)	Yes (45)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (17)	Yes (20)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (17)	N/A (20)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (17)	Yes (20)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	41,953 (17)	56,938 (20)
Number Conducted at Worksite	41,953 (17)	56,938 (20)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	15 (17)	45 (20)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	15 (17)	Unknown (20)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (17)	Unknown (20)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (17)	Yes (20)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (17)	Yes (20)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (45)	Yes (45)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (17)	Yes (20)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (17)	Yes (20)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (20)

In 2021, the MT reported that a total of 31 training sessions were held for the staff of the Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the inspection corps. Trainings included courses on child labor prevention, reporting and investigation techniques, health and safety, and equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. (20) MT hired one Creole-speaking staff member to assist with translation during inspections. Furthermore, training in the Creole language for labor inspectors is being programmed. In addition, MT hired 23 new technicians specialized in addressing child labor issues for the Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor, to work in the offices of the Local Labor Representations (RLT) in the interior

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of the country. (20) These technicians accompany inspectors during worksite inspections and to the orientations inspectors provide to different civil society groups. (31)

During the reporting period, labor inspectors carried out orientation sessions at sugarcane plantations to educate workers on their rights and responsibilities. These sessions emphasized that child labor is forbidden in the cultivation and harvesting of sugarcane, and that if seen, violations must be reported to the relevant authorities. (20) These sessions were translated into Creole and reached thousands of sugarcane workers in the country, including 2,000 sugarcane workers on the Central Romana sugarcane plantations. (20)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of the Dominican Republic's workforce, which includes more than 4.6 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 need to employ about 312 labor inspectors. (59,60) In 2021, a total of 56,938 worksite inspections were conducted, representing approximately 269 worksite inspections completed by each inspector. This is a high number of inspections conducted by each inspector, and it is likely that this high number negatively impacts the quality of such inspections. (20)

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. (45) Labor inspectors do not have authority to assess labor penalties; instead, they write infraction reports which are sent to prosecutors in the Office of the Attorney General (AG) for enforcement action if prosecutors determine it is necessary. The collection of civil penalties is also the responsibility of the judicial system. (17) In 2021, MT referred 45 cases of child labor violations to the AG for further enforcement action. (20,31) MT reports that they only have oversight of work situations with an employer-employee relationship, leaving children engaged in work in informal activities outside MT's purview. In such cases, CONANI is the agency with authority and jurisdiction to intervene. (20)

The Labor Inspection Manual instructs inspectors to assess child labor violations by reviewing workers' identity documents and employers' records, making observations, and conducting interviews. (61) However, 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. (13,20)

Research indicates that inspections are not always conducted in a timely manner after complaints or requests for inspections that are based on compliance abnormalities or violations are made. In addition, evidence suggests that inspection reports often contain errors and contradictions that undermine the credibility of these reports. (13) Research also indicates that substandard labor inspections, incomplete labor inspection reports, and a lack of prosecutorial resources have hindered the ability of the AG to pursue prosecutions on criminal matters involving child labor issues. (13) A formal referral mechanism allows MT to refer child labor victims found during labor inspections to CONANI. (15,19) During the reporting period, MT reported that 468 children and adolescents were identified through labor inspections in rural and urban areas and were removed from child labor, while another 506 were warned and made aware of the consequences of child labor, with 204 of these being referred to institutions to receive services. These referred children include 157 to CONANI, 17 to the SUPERATE program, and 5 to the AG's Office. (20)

MT reports that its budget is insufficient for the maintenance of the required offices, transportation, fuel, and other resources needed to carry out adequate inspections. In 2021, employees and unions complained that an insufficient number of inspections were taking place, and that there was a lack of follow-through on the inspections that were carried out. (20,62)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Dominican Republic took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (17)	Yes (20)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (17)	N/A (20)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (17)	Yes (20)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (17)	Unknown (20)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (17)	Unknown (20)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (17)	Unknown (20)
Number of Convictions	3 (63)	Unknown (20)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (17)	Unknown (20)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (17)	Yes (20,31)

The government did not provide comprehensive information on its criminal law enforcement efforts during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, 155 trainees of the National Migration Institute received training on anti-human trafficking, while 25 trainees of the Tourist Police received training on child labor and human trafficking. In addition, members of the AG's Office received training on the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking. (20)

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. (4,13,24,30,64) The lack of an appropriate case tracking system also limits coordination between MT and the AG. Reports also indicate that some cases referred to the AG by MT are not subsequently investigated and prosecuted by the AG, which is partially due to this lack of coordination. (4,7,65) Moreover, research finds that CONANI does not have the resources, facilities, and institutional capacity to meet the demand for services nationwide. (1,2,4,66)

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 address child labor in the Dominican Republic. Overseen by MT and comprises ministerial representatives, labor unions, private sector representatives, and NGOs. (29,67) 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 6 times during the reporting period, while the steering committees carried out 665 meetings, and the Local Vigilance Committees held 117 meetings. (20) In these meetings they plan, organize monitoring, present complaints, and establish follow-ups for the prevention and eradication of child labor in each territory. All the institutions of the National Steering Committee to Eliminate Child Labor (<i>Comité Directivo Nacional</i>) participate, including governmental and non-governmental institutions such as neighborhood boards (<i>juntas de vecinos</i>), social and community organizations, clubs, associations, and others. (20) The sessions are held with the municipal boards of CONANI in each territory. In 2021, a total of 1,283 people (803 women and 480 men) participated in these meetings and orientations. (20) Meanwhile, 1,380 people participated in the 92 follow-up meetings held by the Directorate for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor. (20)

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Agency Commission Against Trafficking in Persons (CITIM)	Coordinates efforts to address 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. (24,68) Held two in-person meetings during the reporting period, and helped organize a high-level conference focused on comprehensive attention to survivors for World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on July 30, 2021. (69)
Social Policies Coordination Cabinet	Coordinates all social policies and conditional cash transfer programs, such as the SUPERATE program. Led by the Vice President. (13,31) In 2021, signed an agreement with the National Institute of Drinking Water and Sewage (INAPA) to join efforts to mitigate structural problems that hinder access to improved sanitation and basic services for communities in conditions of vulnerability. It also inaugurated technical-professional training centers as part of its <i>Oportunidad</i> 14–24 program. (31,70-72)
Cabinet for Children and Adolescents	Aims to provide effective protection for the rights of children and adolescents and promote their full personal and social development. (20,73) Chaired by the First Lady and coordinated by CONANI, it also coordinates and cooperates with civil society. (20) In 2021, together with CONANI and the National Institute for Comprehensive Care for Early Childhood (INAPEI), delivered to the Senate for the consideration of the legislature a draft of a law that seeks to guarantee comprehensive early childhood care. (74)
Cabinet of Women, Adolescents, and Girls*	Seeks to ensure the effective application and design of comprehensive public policies to prevent, address, prosecute, punish, repair, and eradicate violence, in its different types and spheres, against women, adolescents, and girls. (20) Established on January 5, 2021, it includes representation from government ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of the Presidency, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Education, the AG's Office, National Police, and CONANI. It also has representation from civil society organizations, and the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo. (20)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the Dominican Municipal League, the Dominican Federation of Municipalities (FEDOMU), and MT undertook a new inter-institutional cooperation agreement. Its purpose is to develop awareness and training programs for local government personnel to strengthen capacities for prevention and response to child labor. (20,75) It seeks to identify spaces and modalities of child labor in the municipalities, including the worst forms of child labor, to then execute programs and policies to address the issues identified. It is a means of integrating local governments in the efforts to address child labor throughout the country. (20,75) This initiative focuses on preventing the presence of minors in activities that pose any danger to their physical, mental, and emotional health, within public spaces such as: dumps, markets, cemeteries, parks, squares, and traffic lights, among others. (20,75)

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. (16)

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 a lack of implementation of key national policies.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Education Pact (2014–2030)	Includes strategies to address 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. (76) Implemented by the Ministry of Education and supported by the World Bank. (20,76) 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 to address child labor, provide universal education to all children, and expand access to secondary school, including for students without identity documents. (19,77) During the reporting period, and for the ninth consecutive year, the government continued to allocate 4 percent of the nation's GDP to primary and secondary education as indicated by the National Development Strategy. The purpose of this continued funding is to improve the national education system. (3,7,17-20,78) Within the framework of this policy, the government announced on February 27, 2021, that it was, in partnership with Save the Children and the European Union, finalizing the standards for a new Certification Program for Child Labor Free Companies (ELTI-RD), for which MT will have responsibility. The government anticipates beginning a pilot of this program in 2022. (20)

On June 22, 2021, MT published the Institutional Strategic Plan 2021–2024, which aims to provide institutional strategies for the medium term in response to the current challenges facing the labor market. The plan includes objectives, lines of action, goals, and priority public policies that will guide the agency’s work, including on the issue of the prevention and eradication of child labor and its worst forms. (31,79)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, 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 inadequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
SUPERATE†	Main poverty eradication strategy by the government that serves as the primary line of social protection actions. Focuses on social intervention through the integration of conditional cash transfers, socio-educational support, and links with other government programs and services. (80) Eight components help articulate its actions: educational inclusion; health, food security, and support in emergencies; economic inclusion; housing; identify yourself; care; woman overcome; and socio-familiar accompaniment. (80) 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. (80) During the reporting period, officials of SUPERATE met with the Permanent Commission on Childhood, Adolescence and Family of the Chamber of Deputies to identify opportunities for collaboration that can be articulated between SUPERATE and the Chamber of Deputies to benefit the vulnerable populations of children, adolescents, and women. (81,82)
<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. Provides adolescents and young people between ages 14 to 24 who have limited resources access to technical professional training, scholarships, a monthly provision of raw food, and transportation to study centers. (83-86) In 2021, opened more than 20 technical-professional training centers in different parts of the country to benefit socially vulnerable adolescents and young people to prepare them to enter the labor market or entrepreneurship. (87,88) The government also began administering the economic incentive for the youth who are participating in the program, which includes a monthly subsidy deposited in the accounts of participants receiving training for technical-professional careers. (89)
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) Due to the pandemic, the program largely lapsed for the 2020–2021 school year. (20) According to NGO reports, the school buildings remained open and were a distribution center for meals, which parents could collect for their families by turning in their children's homework notebooks. But the supervised instruction or mentoring that was previously available from the extended day programs was absent because teachers and students were engaged in virtual instruction. (20)
Line 700 Hotline†	Office of the First Lady's free hotline to enable citizens to report cases of the worst forms of child labor. (90) Reports indicate it was still active in 2021. (31)
Project to Reduce Child Labor and Improve Working Conditions in Agriculture in the Dominican Republic (FORMITRA) (2017–2022)	\$5 million USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO. Aims to support the efforts of the Government of the Dominican Republic to address child labor and strengthen labor law enforcement in agriculture. (91) In 2021, supported the government in launching the Labor Inspection Manual, a systematization of good practices for labor inspections accumulated by the government. It collects in a single document the protocols and instruments of labor inspection used by MT currently, and all current and applicable regulations in employment relationships. (61) It provides guidance to labor inspectors on the actions they should take while carrying out labor inspections and specific guidance on which elements they should consider to determine whether violations related to child labor or forced labor are taking place. (61) During the reporting period, carried out 2 regional workshops on Child Labor for local MT representatives with 96 participants. (20) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.

† 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. (2,83,92-94)

In 2021, MT reported that together with the International Justice Mission and other institutions, it developed a project for labor insertions for labor and commercial sexual exploitation survivors. The plan is expected to be implemented in 2022. (20) In addition, the government opened 15 new shelters for victims of gender violence, with facilities for children as well, and a separate specialized shelter for victims of human trafficking. (69) The Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor also carried out awareness campaigns on child labor, specifically involving the tourism and agricultural sectors, educational counselors and psychologists,

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and employers, unions, and commerce associations. The Directorate reported a total of 380 awareness, training, and roundtable meetings in which 7,447 people participated. (20)

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)

NGOs report that child victims of human trafficking go to CONANI temporary homes until they are reunited with their families; survivors are not offered additional services. (20)

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 I I).

Table I I. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion as elements of the crime.	2019 – 2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2021
Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 212 to 312 to meet the ILO's technical advice to provide adequate coverage of the workforce, especially in remote rural areas.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that the number of inspections conducted by each inspector is appropriate to guarantee the quality and scope of inspections.	2020 – 2021
	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 – 2021
	Establish a system to verify the age of young workers to better protect children without birth certificates or other legal documentation from exploitation.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure that labor inspectors interview workers, in a safe environment, and that they are able to communicate with Creole-speaking workers, including those who may be underage, to adequately conduct inspections for child labor violations.	2012 – 2021
	Improve training of inspectors to increase the quality of interviews with employers and workers, gather consistent documentation, conduct timely re-inspections to ensure compliance, and use inspection data to enable prosecution.	2012 – 2021
	Publish comprehensive information on the number of child labor penalties imposed and collected, as well as on the number of criminal law enforcement investigations conducted, violations found, prosecutions initiated, number of convictions, and penalties imposed.	2009 – 2021
	Increase human and financial resources to ensure adequate criminal and labor law enforcement related to child labor.	2009 – 2021
	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 – 2021
	Ensure that the National Council for Children and Adolescents has sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for survivors of child labor.	2015 – 2021
Coordination	Provide legal authorization to allow labor inspectors to conduct inspections in the informal sector.	2021
	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 – 2021
Government Policies	Take steps to implement the policies related to child labor on an annual basis and publish information about these efforts.	2020 – 2021
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2021
	Increase efforts to issue identity documents to all children to reduce their vulnerability to labor exploitation.	2011 – 2021
	Address the specific educational needs of vulnerable populations, including unaccompanied migrant children, children of parents who have been deported, and undocumented children.	2011 – 2021
	Increase school infrastructure and teacher availability, especially in rural areas, remove supply and school-related fees, and expand efforts to reduce racial or nationality discrimination in schools.	2011 – 2021

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Social Programs	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 – 2021
	Expand social protection programs, particularly for child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and harmful agricultural work, and ensure that programs also provide services to vulnerable children without regular identity documents.	2010 – 2021

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