



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
12 July 2023
English
Original: Spanish
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Ninety-fourth session

4–22 September 2023

Consideration of reports of States parties

Replies of the Dominican Republic to the list of issues in relation to its sixth periodic report*, **

[Date received: 5 July 2023]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Reply to paragraph 2 (a) of the list of issues in relation to the sixth periodic report of the Dominican Republic (CRC/C/DOM/Q/6)

1. The National Development Strategy has 90 indicators.¹ The last evaluation report (2021) evaluated 69 indicators. The two indicators selected to show progress in the area of children and adolescents are 2.47, “Percentage of children aged 6 to 14 who work”, and 2.48, “Percentage of young people aged 15 to 19 who are not in education and not in work”. Both show progress compared to 2015, although the challenge remains to redouble efforts to achieve the planned goals for the year 2025. The percentage of children who work fell from 1.06 per cent in 2015 to 0.56 per cent in 2021, while the percentage for those not in education and not in work was 4.82 per cent in 2020.² It should be noted that the increase in 15–19 year olds who are not in education and not in work is associated with the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
2. Indicator 2.8, which measures the initial enrolment rate and for which the target for 2025 is 100 per cent coverage, shows moderate progress in all its disaggregated forms. The coverage rate for the basic level of education (indicator 2.9) shows better results in urban areas (92.4 per cent) than in rural areas (93.9 per cent). The coverage rate for middle or secondary education (indicator 2.10) shows moderate progress towards the target in all parts of the country. Coverage in urban areas (72.7 per cent) is very similar to that in rural areas (71.7 per cent); the national average is 72.5 per cent. As regards the illiteracy rate (indicator 2.19), there has been moderate progress towards the target at the national and local levels.
3. Indicator 2.22 (Mortality rate in under-fives) has fallen slightly from 34.4 per 100,000 live births in 2020 to 33.8 to 2019. As for indicator 2.23 (Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births), the rate was 169.3 in 2021.

Reply to paragraph 2 (b) of the list of issues

4. The National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) has a countrywide presence at different administrative levels, with a national office and 10 regional offices providing 100 per cent coverage; 28 municipal offices; and 127 municipal directorates and 129 local boards for the protection and restitution of rights, representing coverage of 80.3 per cent and 81.6 per cent, respectively.³ The opening of two new municipal offices is planned for 2023.
5. A plan designed to strengthen the National Protection System is currently being formulated. It seeks to address the structural causes of vulnerability and respond to the specific challenges of protecting children and adolescents from a systemic perspective.⁴

¹ The number of indicators rises to 96 when the data are disaggregated.

² Ministry of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development (2022). Ninth annual progress report on the implementation of the National Development Strategy for 2030 and on the achievement of the objectives and goals of the National Multi-Year Public Sector Plan for 2021. Santo Domingo: Ministry of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development. Available at: <https://mepyd.gob.do/publicaciones/10mo-informe-end>.

³ National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) (2022). Institutional Report 2022. Available at: <https://conani.gob.do/transparencia/index.php/plan-estrategico-institucional-pei/memorias-institucionales>.

⁴ The National Council for Children and Adolescents currently has a countrywide presence at different levels of development, with a national office and 10 regional offices providing 100 per cent coverage; 28 municipal offices; 127 municipal directorates providing 80.3 per cent coverage; 129 local boards for the protection and restitution of rights, providing 81.6 per cent coverage. The opening of two new municipal offices, one in the south and one in the south-east of the country, is planned for 2023.

Reply to paragraph 3 (a) of the list of issues

6. The Office for Children and Adolescents (GANA), headed by the First Lady,⁵ has been set up as an inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination body to ensure a multidimensional approach in government policies, programmes and actions concerning children and adolescents.⁶ The Office and the National Council for Children and Adolescents are working together to strengthen the National Protection System and, in particular, the highest inter-institutional coordination body, the National Directorate.

7. In 2021, the National Council for Children and Adolescents adopted a new organizational structure that was more functional and in line with Act No. 136-03 on the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents. It also introduced a competency-based personnel management approach and a programme to improve technical skills by offering scholarships and other incentives for personnel to take diploma courses, workshops and courses. At the same time, the National Council's budget has been increased by 87.2 per cent, from \$RD 1.1 billion in 2019 to \$RD 2.06 billion in 2023. These changes have radically improved the quality of institutional planning, by aligning strategic and operational processes and clearly defining programme priorities to ensure the effective protection of children and adolescents.

8. A policy of coordinating with strategic players of the National Protection System has also been pursued, particularly within the general network of public services, through cooperation agreements.⁷

Reply to paragraph 3 (b) of the list of issues

9. In 2013, the country adopted the “Quisqueya Empieza Contigo” (Quisqueya Starts With You) programme, the first national policy aimed at guaranteeing the rights of children under the age of 5. As a result, the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services (INAIFI) was established in January 2015 as the government institution responsible for running comprehensive care services for children under 5 years of age and their families and for implementing the programme.

10. The Institute was set up pursuant to Decree No. 102-13, as supplemented by Decree No. 498-14, which declared 2015 the “Year of integrated early childhood care”. Act No. 342-22 was passed in 2022. It established the National System for Early Childhood Protection and Integrated Care and granted the Institute the authority to set up agencies in other parts of the country, according to the needs of the system and budgetary availability. At present, the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services runs a network of services covering the entire country, comprising early childhood centres (CAIFI), childcare and family centres (CAFI), and the childcare centres previously managed by the social security system. There are currently 149 early childhood centres; 374 directly managed and 29 jointly managed childcare and family centres; and 41 childcare centres. In total, the

⁵ Established by Decree No. 498-20 of 23 September 2020 and Resolution MAPRE-001-2021 of 10 March 2021, modifying the organizational structure of the Administrative Ministry of the Presidency and amending Resolution No. 2-2020 of 13 March 2020. Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcgkclefindmkaj/https://www.sismap.gob.do/Central/uploads/evidencia/s/637813845609501083-MAPRE-Res.-modif.-2021.pdf.

⁶ Guidelines of the Office for Children and Adolescents of the Dominican Republic. Unpublished internal document.

⁷ The institutions concerned include: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the National Council on Disability (CONADIS), the National Institute for Vocational Training (INFOTEP), the Dominican Telecommunications Institute (INDOTEL) and the Get Ahead Programme. They also include academic institutions such as the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo, the Ibero-American University, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences and the Technological Institute of the Americas, with a view to improving the quality of the analysis of information on children. Agreements have also been reached with cooperation agencies of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

network comprises 635 facilities for a population of 158,894 beneficiary families throughout the country, covering 196,952 children.⁸

Reply to paragraph 3 (c) of the list of issues

11. Since 2020, the Ombudsman has unofficially registered six cases involving issues directly related to the fundamental rights of children and adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 3 (d) of the list of issues

12. Act No. 5578 of 19 July 1962 requires individuals or legal entities organizing any public meeting or demonstration to notify the Minister of the Interior and the Police in writing of any demonstration or protest on the public highway. The Act requires the State to take all necessary measures to provide demonstrators with all the protection necessary for the planned event to go ahead, as well as to avoid illegal street demonstrations or other breaches of the peace.

Reply to paragraph 4 (a) of the list of issues

13. Article 56 of the Constitution and Principle IV of Act No. 136-03 guarantee the right to equality and non-discrimination. In addition to this legislation, attention is drawn to the following:

- Act No. 1-21 prohibits marriage for persons under 18 years of age.
- Act No. 135-11 on HIV/AIDS, which protects the right to non-discrimination and dignified treatment. In the regions, the following are used: the Guide to Early Diagnosis in Infants and Clinical Care for Children with HIV/AIDS⁹ and the National Guide to the Care of Paediatric Patients with HIV/AIDS;¹⁰ and, since 2021, the National Guide to Pre- and Post-Test Counselling on Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV and Their Links to Gender-based Violence.¹¹
- The Health Act declares children and adolescents a priority group, which implies greater investment in their health (art. 30). In 2017, the Ministry of Health adopted the guide to care for child and adolescent victims of violence in the Dominican Republic; in 2018, the protocol for the care of children and adolescents with depressive disorders; and in 2019, with the support of UNFPA, the guide to integrated health care for adolescents in the Dominican Republic.¹²
- The Ministry of Education has various policies in place, such as the late enrolment programme for school-age children, to ensure that headteachers and management teams are aware that no child's right to education, regardless of the child's nationality, social status, gender, religion, special educational needs or other characteristics, may be violated.
- Ministry of Education Ordinance No. 04-2018 regulates the services available to students with special education needs.

⁸ National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services (INAIFI). Transparency Portal. Available at: <https://www.inaipi.gob.do/transparencia/index.php> (accessed on 26 May 2023).

⁹ Ministry of Health (2016). Guide to Early Diagnosis in Infants and Clinical Care for Children with HIV/AIDS. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/735>.

¹⁰ Ministry of Health (2010). National Guide to the Care of Paediatric Patients with HIV/AIDS, 2nd ed. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/734>.

¹¹ Ministry of Health (2021). National Guide to Pre- and Post-Test Counselling on Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV and Their Links to Gender-based Violence. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/2253>.

¹² Ministry of Health (2019). Guide to Integrated Health Care for Adolescents in the Dominican Republic. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/1512>.

- Diversity resource centres, which can be found in the 18 regional education directorates, are there to guide, support and accompany education districts and schools in guaranteeing the right to a quality education for students with disabilities.
- The National Strategy on a Culture of Peace was launched by the Ministry of Education, together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in 2018 and will continue to be implemented until 2023.
- The integrated care centres for people with disabilities (CAID)¹³ provide a comprehensive and high-quality service in the evaluation, diagnosis and therapeutic treatment of children under 12 years of age with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome and cerebral palsy; the aim is to develop their potential to the maximum and ensure their full integration.
- Improving the Paso Angeles Home, run by the National Council for Children and Adolescents, which specializes in the care of children and adolescents with disabilities and adolescents who have suffered from abandonment, neglect or abuse. The Home is located in the north of the country.

Reply to paragraph 4 (b) of the list of issues

14. Public investment in children and adolescents by the Government in 2021 represented 5.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). That investment represented 55.8 per cent of public social investment – 37.4 per cent of direct and 18.4 per cent of indirect investment.

15. Public investment in children and adolescents in 2021 rose by 0.6 per cent of GDP as compared with 2016. This marks the culmination of a sustained increase since 2011, and a historical high since the surveys and measurements using the current methodology were introduced.

16. In absolute terms, public investment in children and adolescents amounted to \$RD 309,305.7 million in 2021, of which 91.8 per cent came from domestic funding sources and only 8.2 per cent from external funding sources. In per capita terms, the investment reflects an increase of 48 per cent since 2015, from US\$ 2.90 a day to US\$ 4.30 a day per child. In terms of function, public investment in children and adolescents is concentrated in the areas of education, social protection and health.

Reply to paragraph 4 (c) of the list of issues

17. The Equality and Non-Discrimination Bill was first put forward in 2013 by the National Council on HIV/AIDS, but it was not until 2016 that it was submitted to the executive branch and September 2020 that the NGO/AIDS Coalition submitted it to the Chamber of Deputies. In November 2020, the Legislative Review Technical Office submitted its report to the Standing Committee on Human Rights, concluding that the bill, if approved, would dilute and duplicate other norms. This report led the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) movement and its allies to demand the adoption of the law (#YoQuieroUnaLey); the Dominican State heard their demands, and is hoping to build a wider social consensus around this initiative.

Reply to paragraph 4 (d) of the list of issues

18. In 2020, the Strategic Plan for a Life Free of Violence for Women was approved, declaring the eradication of violence against women a national priority.¹⁴ In 2021,

¹³ Decree No. 170-21 of 16 March 2021.

¹⁴ Ministry of Women (November 2020). Strategic Plan for a Life Free of Violence for Women.

Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://dominicanrepublic.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/plan_estrategico_vdb.pdf.

Act No. 1-21 was enacted, prohibiting marriage for persons under 18 years of age, as a first step towards eliminating the harmful practice of child marriage in the country.

19. Decree No. 1-21 established the Office for Women and Girls, a permanent body attached to the Ministry of Women.¹⁵ The Office offers legal assistance and psychological and social support through its network of 56 provincial and municipal women's offices and the Directorate for Preventing and Addressing Violence.¹⁶

20. There are 17 comprehensive care units for victims of gender-based violence, under the responsibility of the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic; each unit is made up of a multidisciplinary team.¹⁷ Within the National Police, priority has been given to the expansion of the Special Directorate for Women and Domestic Violence, which currently has 18 regional offices throughout the country. By the end of 2021, the number of shelters in operation throughout the country had increased from 3 to 12.

21. It is important to highlight the strengthening of the national emergency line 911, whose personnel receive training on this subject on an ongoing basis. The emergency line is supported by the Life Line of the National District Prosecutor's Office and the 24-hour helpline of the Ministry of Women.

22. In 2021, the first financial compensation programme for women victims of domestic violence and the foster families of children orphaned by femicide was launched. To date, a total of 734 families have been beneficiaries of the programme; they receive a monthly allowance of \$RD 10,000, as well as support from social workers and psychologists.

23. This led to a 34 per cent fall in the number of women reported to be victims of femicide in the country, from 150 in 2021 to 99 in 2022.

24. In relation to the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare oversees and monitors the National Alliance for a Rapid Reduction of Maternal and Infant Mortality, which uses 11 indicators.¹⁸ All protocols and guidelines on critical events were also reviewed;¹⁹ the main causes of maternal and infant mortality and adherence to the different protocols are constantly monitored by the morbidity and extreme mortality committees in hospitals.

Reply to paragraph 4 (e) of the list of issues

25. The latest figures for 2022 indicate that the National Council for Children and Adolescents carried out 1,420 awareness-raising activities for the benefit of 50,805 people, of whom 29,471 were women; 30,122 children and adolescents (18,980 girls); and 20,683 adults (13,895 women). The main topics addressed were: the rights and duties of children and adolescents; prevention of teenage pregnancy; the eradication of child labour; parental responsibility; "My body, my choice"; positive parenting; and the prevention of child abuse and child labour.

¹⁵ Office of the President of the Republic. Decree No. 1-21 of 5 January 2021. Available at: <https://presidencia.gob.do/decretos/1-21>.

¹⁶ Ministry of Women. Regional and municipal offices. Available at: <https://mujer.gob.do/index.php/sobre-nosotros/dependencias>.

¹⁷ Public Prosecution Service. Guidelines for the Prosecution and Effective Investigation of Gender-based Violence, Domestic Violence and Sex Crimes. Available at: <https://transparencia.pgr.gob.do/Inicio/DatosAbiertos/25304>.

¹⁸ Ministry of Health (2019). Evaluation of outcome indicators within the framework of the National Alliance for a Rapid Reduction of Maternal and Infant Mortality. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/2259>.

¹⁹ Available in the archives of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/>.

Reply to paragraph 5 (a) of the list of issues

26. The National Institute for Student Welfare is in charge of ensuring student participation by creating spaces for students to demonstrate their leadership qualities. The Ministry of Education supports these efforts through student councils, course guidance and working groups.

27. The Youth Advisory Council features prominently on the agenda of the National Council for Children and Adolescents, and coordination work is under way to launch this forum.

Reply to paragraph 5 (b) of the list of issues

28. The Local Development Agenda for Children and Adolescents, implemented by the National Council for Children and Adolescents, is one of the central initiatives designed to guarantee the participation of children and adolescents in the affairs of their communities. In 2022 and 2023, a total of 248 community dialogues were held, and were attended by some 2,612 key stakeholders (1,591 of them female).

29. At the same time, since 2021, with technical support from UNICEF, the Get Ahead Programme has been setting up girls' clubs, which have enabled 679 girls to participate in a special educational programme aimed at preventing early marriage.

Reply to paragraph 5 (c) of the list of issues

30. The main public campaign is “Take Control, Press Pause”, designed by the Office for Children and Adolescents and the National Council for Children and Adolescents to raise awareness about teenage pregnancy and to reaffirm the right to be a child.

31. The Ministry of Education promotes student congresses which are held at the national, regional and local levels in all educational centres, with 340 students taking part at the national level and 2,657 at the level of the regions and education districts.

32. Since the 2020/21 school year, the Ministry of Education has been promoting the use of the digital platforms E-mentores and E-Pana to teach students about online dangers and facilitate conversations between parents and adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 6 (a) of the list of issues

33. Since the entry into force of Organic Act No. 4-23, on civil status documents, the Central Electoral Board has issued Circular No. 02/2023, which extends the deadline for registering a birth from 60 to 180 days, as well as allowing more authorities to register births. The Act states that when one or both parents are minors, the Unique Identity Number may be used as an identity document if they do not have a minor's identity card.

34. Regarding the children of foreign parents, if the parents do not meet the criteria defined in article 18 of the Constitution, they can only be registered in the Alien Registry. Only the descendants of foreigners admitted as immigrants under the category of residents or when one of the parents is Dominican may obtain Dominican nationality.

Reply to paragraph 6 (b) of the list of issues

35. The purpose of the Organic Act on Civil Status Documents is to organize the National Civil Status Registry System and set the requirements for obtaining citizens' services related to civil status documents. The related regulations are being worked on by the competent bodies under the direction of the Central Electoral Board.

36. Among other things, the Act provides that:

- Each birth is registered and a Unique Identification Number is assigned to each individual.
- Each person has their own electronic and physical record.
- Both the father and mother are entitled to declare births, as are other relatives in the absence of the parents.
- The live-birth certificate issued by the Ministry of Health, which prior to this new legislation was subject to non-unified administrative practices, is now regulated.
- The National Council for Children and Adolescents is now responsible for the registration in the civil registry of abandoned children.

Reply to paragraph 6 (c) of the list of issues

37. The Inter-Agency Coordination Committee has been set up to implement and monitor the Inter-Agency Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Timely and Late Registration of Births in the Dominican Republic. The Committee adopts a yearly action plan, of which one of the main purposes is to monitor the progress of the subcommittees for timely birth registration and late registration of births, as well as the adoption of the implementing regulations of Act No. 4-23 and the formulation of protocols for the referral and follow-up of cases of unregistered children and adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 6 (d) of the list of issues

38. Under the National Plan for the Regularization of Foreigners, a total of 288,467 people submitted applications, of which 249,948 were accepted.²⁰ Of these, 244,364 (97.8 per cent) were from Haitian nationals, while the remaining beneficiaries (2.2 per cent) were of 113 nationalities.

39. According to a study carried out by the National Institute of Migration on the National Plan for the Regularization of Foreigners, the special regime and the process of regularization and registration in the Alien Registry, 90.4 per cent of those questioned said that they felt calmer and safer walking on the street. More specifically, 86.67 per cent of beneficiaries of the National Plan said they were less afraid of being deported, and 42.2 per cent considered that being regularized had given them access to better working conditions.²¹

Reply to paragraph 6 (e) of the list of issues

40. Decree No. 527-21 approved the Digital Agenda 2030 as the national strategy for digital transformation in the short, medium and long term.²² The decree establishes public policies focused on guaranteeing access for all children to information and communication technologies and the Internet, as well as projects to minimize the existing disparity between urban and rural areas.

²⁰ National Institute of Migration of the Dominican Republic (2020). Importance of the special procedures for the regularization of foreigners in strengthening migration governance (technical report). Available at: file:///C:/Users/gleny/My%20Drive/STUDIOS%20DE%20CONSULTOR%C3%8DA/CONSULTOR%C3%8DAS%20ACTIVAS/CONANI_inform%20al%20Comit%C3%A9/Importancia_Procesos_Especiales_Regulaci%C3%B3n_Extranjeros%20FINAL.pdf.

²¹ National Institute of Migration of the Dominican Republic (2018). Summary of the final outcome report. Evaluation of the National Plan for the Regularization of Foreigners, the special regime and the process of regularization and registration in the Alien Registry.

²² Decree No. 257-21 of 26 August 2021. Available at: <https://presidencia.gob.do/decretos/527-21>.

41. The Digital Agenda has a number of components,²³ including the Connectivity and Access component, coordinated by the Dominican Telecommunications Institute, and the Digital Skills and Education component, coordinated by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

Reply to paragraph 7 (a) of the list of issues

42. The National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services has a protocol for handling cases of child abuse.

43. In 2021, the Ministry of Education opened the Psychological and Emotional Support Centre, which began operating on a pilot basis during the 2022/23 school year. The Centre includes a call centre that is responsible for receiving and referring requests for psychological and emotional support, and has a psychological and emotional support network in every education district. The Ministry of Education also applies the protocol for the promotion of a culture of peace and decent treatment in schools when dealing with violence, harassment or bullying in school and when taking action in cases where signs of sexual abuse of children or adolescents are detected or reported in school.

44. In the justice sector, the Council of the Judiciary, in its Resolution No. 009-2020, updated the protocol on forensic interviews of victims and witnesses in a situation of vulnerability.

Reply to paragraph 7 (b) of the list of issues

45. The National Road Map was evaluated and its results analysed according to the following criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, gender equity and cross-cutting approach. The main achievements were as follows:

- 15,241 people were sensitized to the prevention of violence against children and adolescents.
- 4,200 fathers, mothers and guardians were certified in positive parenting techniques nationwide.
- The Positive Parenting Bill was prepared and submitted to the National Congress.
- 1,500 people were made aware of young children's rights, as part of the "Early Childhood, Life Begins" campaign.
- Eight interview centres were set up for vulnerable victims or witnesses of violence, and 4,973 interviews were carried out, including with children and adolescents.
- The National Culture of Peace Strategy was implemented to promote harmonious coexistence in schools and to create an environment conducive to learning.
- 18,943 people were made aware of adolescent health issues by the Centre for the Promotion of Integrated Health Care for Adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 7 (c) of the list of issues

46. The Criminal Code Bill is currently under review by the National Congress. Parliament is debating a ban on the corporal punishment of children, an issue that tends to polarize public opinion. However, the executive branch, through the Office for Children and Adolescents and the National Council for Children and Adolescents, has made clear its position in favour of eliminating corporal punishment and promoting positive parenting through legislation and other public policy tools.

²³ Governance and Regulatory Framework; Connectivity and Access; Digital Governance; Digital Skills and Education; Digital Economy; Cybersecurity (cross-cutting issue); Technological Innovation (cross-cutting issue).

Reply to paragraph 7 (d) of the list of issues

47. The executive branch introduced a new draft of the Comprehensive Organic Law for Prevention, Attention, Prosecution, Punishment and Redress aimed at the Eradication of Violence against Women to the National Congress via the Senate on 12 December 2022. The bill is currently under consideration by the Senate Committee on Family Affairs and Gender Equity.²⁴

48. The Ministry of Women is responsible for conducting all activities to raise awareness and gain acceptance of the bill, with a view to building consensus among the different sectors of society and so speeding up its review and subsequent approval.

Reply to paragraph 7 (e) of the list of issues

49. Since the adoption of Act No. 1-21, which prohibits marriage for persons under 18 years of age, the policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies has been in place;²⁵ responsibility for implementing the policy lies with the National Council for Children and Adolescents and the Office for Children and Adolescents.

50. The policy is applicable nationwide, but is being prioritized in 20 municipalities where national statistics show the highest incidence of early unions and teenage pregnancies. It is organized around five broad themes, which lead to eight strategic objectives and 34 strategic guidelines. At the same time, it clearly defines the institutional roles of the 18 public entities involved in its implementation. The policy is based on 10 guiding principles: the best interests of the child, universality, non-discrimination and affirmative action, progressive autonomy, participation and empowerment, comprehensiveness, equity and equality, reparation and restitution, social commitment, transparency and accountability.

Reply to paragraph 7 (f) of the list of issues

51. The National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity for 2020–2030 makes education for equality the first priority.²⁶ As for its implementation, the Ministry of Women is in charge of the national network of gender equity and development offices, to ensure and monitor gender mainstreaming in every State institution.²⁷

52. In the health sector, the second edition of the Strategic Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in the National Health System for 2022–2030 is available.²⁸ The regulation on comprehensive health care for persons in a situation of gender-based or domestic violence (2022) was also updated: among other things, it promotes the right to a life free of violence and the prevention and reduction of harm caused by violence.²⁹

²⁴ Legislative initiative 01910-2022-SLO-SE. Available at: <http://www.senado.gov.do/wfilemaster/Ficha.aspx?IdExpediente=34445&numeropagina=1&ContExpedientes=2825&Coleccion=53>.

²⁵ Office for Children and Adolescents (August 2021). Policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies. Available at: <https://raquelarabajo.com.do/elementor-2243/>.

²⁶ Ministry of Women. National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity for 2020–2030 (PLANEG III). Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://mujer.gob.do/transparencia/phocadownload/Publicaciones/Planeg/PLANEG%20III%202020-2030.pdf.

²⁷ Decree No. 974-01, establishing an office for gender equity and development in each secretariat. Available at: <https://mujer.gob.do/transparencia/index.php/base-legal/decisos?download=54:decreto-no-974-01-que-crea-las-oficinas-de-equidad-y-gnero>.

²⁸ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (2023). Strategic Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in the National Health System for 2022–2030. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/2285>.

²⁹ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (2022). Regulation on comprehensive health care for persons in a situation of gender-based or domestic violence. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/2282>.

53. The Ministry of Education, within the framework of the policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies, provided training in 30 districts in five regions, impacting 558 schools and 145,958 secondary-school students (76,812 girls and 69,146 boys).

54. In addition, the Strategy for Comprehensive Sex Education in Values is taught under the current curriculum, to help students make conscious and critical decisions in relation to the exercise of responsible sexuality.

Reply to paragraph 8 (a) of the list of issues

55. The country is in the pilot and validation phase of the first protocol on the identification, care and protection of children and adolescents in situations of mobility. The protocol was developed with the assistance of experts on children, protection and human mobility from UNICEF in the Dominican Republic. The technical review and validation was carried out by the National Council for Children and Adolescents.³⁰ The protocol aims to contribute to better and more effective protection of children and adolescents in situations of mobility, especially in border areas, through the creation of pathways to care and protection.

Reply to paragraph 8 (b) of the list of issues

56. The National Special Protection System is based on the principle of keeping children with their families, which supersedes the paradigm of institutionalization, on the grounds that the latter does not guarantee the healthy all-round development of the child. Consequently, residential care measures are only applied as a last resort.

57. The Foster Care Programme has helped to move children out of institutions more quickly and to advance work on the list of adoptive families. It recruits families and evaluates, selects, trains and certifies them as suitable families to take in a vulnerable child or adolescent.

58. For its part, the model for the protection of street children and children in the worst forms of child labour, which is also designed to minimize or avoid institutionalization, is based on a network of protection services, ensuring the intervention of the various institutions in the system on the basis of an assessment of the specific risks in each case and an adjusted and differentiated response.³¹

59. Regarding the Children First software project, the State party reports that this information system was submitted for technical evaluation by the Government Office of Information and Communication Technologies, which warned that “The National Council for Children and Adolescents does not have access to the servers that host this program, nor to the data handled in it”. Consequently, the National Council for Children and Adolescents is now evaluating other alternatives, including the Primero information system designed by UNICEF.

Reply to paragraph 8 (c) of the list of issues

60. The halfway houses run by the National Council for Children and Adolescents follow protocols on the prevention of incidents and crisis management. Under the protocol for a child leaving without consent, the first step is to conduct a search in the neighbourhood; family members, the relevant public prosecutors and the local office of the National Council for Children and Adolescents are informed and the departure is reported to the National Police. The objective of this protocol is to guarantee the protection of the target group and the halfway house staff, through timely and pertinent preventive and contingent actions. The

³⁰ National Council for Children and Adolescents. Protocol on the identification, care and protection of children and adolescents in situations of mobility. Unpublished draft document.

³¹ National Council for Children and Adolescents, Office for Children and Adolescents. Public policy guidelines on the protection of children and adolescents in the worst forms of child labour, in street and/or mobility situations in public spaces. Unpublished internal document.

National Council for Children and Adolescents also actively monitors all residential care programmes run by non-governmental associations to ensure compliance with protection standards in their centres.

Reply to paragraph 8 (d) of the list of issues

61. The 10 halfway houses currently accommodate 615 children and adolescents. Forty-five per cent of the total budget allocated to the National Council for Children and Adolescents is allocated to the operation of the residential care service.

62. The residential services programme is complemented by support for families in order to accelerate the child's reintegration, as long as this is compatible with the best interests of the child. Adoption and foster care are other alternative care measures that are used.

63. Comprehensive care services are organized in four areas: health, psychology, social work and education. Intervention is organized in three stages: diagnosis, an action plan for the stay in the home, and a discharge plan.

64. The multidisciplinary team of the halfway house draws up and implements an individual intervention plan for each child or adolescent in its care. This personalized tool takes account of the complexity and needs of each case, and helps the individual overcome the problems associated with the violation of their rights.

65. As part of the programme, the follow-up with families includes an investigation to verify protective and risk factors, which involves other areas of the National Council for Children and Adolescents.

66. To ensure higher quality services, steps have been taken to raise standards among the personnel of the halfway houses, who are trained to use technical tools that allow them to renew and update their knowledge in their respective fields.

67. The National Council for Children and Adolescents has also made progress in improving its working relationship with non-profit associations that provide residential care services. As of April 2023, 88 non-profit associations have been authorized to develop residential care programmes that operate under its supervision, providing services to 2,375 children and adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 9 (a) of the list of issues

68. Act No. 136-03, on the Code for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, establishes a legal framework for international adoptions in line with the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

69. Adoption is considered an exceptional measure. Every applicant is assigned a file number to follow up on their case, and domestic adoptions are given preference over international adoptions.

70. Act No. 136-03 established the Commission for the Assignment of Children and Adolescents to Adoptive Families, and in 2017 the regulations on the application of the protection phase in the adoption process were drafted and implemented.

Reply to paragraph 9 (b) of the list of issues

71. The State party refers to the information presented in the reply to paragraph 9 (c) below.

Reply to paragraph 9 (c) of the list of issues

72. In 2012, coverage extended to 18,000 children under 4 years of age, or 2 per cent of the children in that age range. At present, in 2023, coverage has been extended to 936,960 children under 4 years of age, or 21 per cent of the children in that age range. This coverage

has been achieved thanks to the opening of a total of 631 integrated care centres in their various forms, in the 31 provinces and the National District.

73. At present, 187 early childhood centres managed directly by the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services are operative; this figure represents 51.37 per cent of the target of 364 such centres set out in the National Plan for Integrated Early Childhood Care.

74. In addition to these centres, 403 childcare and family centres are providing services; 374 of these are managed directly by the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services and 29 are run in partnership with non-governmental organizations. The target established for 2020 was 1,000 childcare and family centres, meaning that 40.3 per cent of the target figure has been achieved. Another type of service is provided under the Family and Communities Programme. A total of 41 pilot projects are currently under way.

75. The slowdown in progress towards the target was primarily due to the impact of the lockdown measures adopted after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reply to paragraph 9 (d) of the list of issues

76. As part of the Attorney General's Plan for a More Humane Prison System, the Najayo Women's Prison was established, with an area set aside for women with babies.³² Children born to mothers deprived of their liberty are kept in this area with their mothers until they are 1 year old. After the age of 1 year, the children, with the mother's consent, are handed over to the mother's relatives or, if necessary, to the care of the National Council for Children and Adolescents. This initiative is scheduled to be expanded and extended to other women's prisons.

Reply to paragraph 10 (a) of the list of issues

77. The Multidisciplinary Technical Department of the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services seeks the inclusion of children with disabilities following a timely and effective response approach based on the following:

- Collection of information on children with developmental and disability warning signs
- Technical observation and follow-up visits to children with severe disabilities
- Technical support for emotional health officers and education coordinators
- Preparation of personalized plans depending on the nature of the disability
- Application of the protocol for the transition to pre-primary school of children leaving programmes run by the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services
- Continuous monitoring of children's cases using the Developmental and Disability Warning Signs Platform

Reply to paragraph 10 (b) of the list of issues

78. A total of 1,025 children with developmental and disability warning signs have been helped in the integrated care centres for people with disabilities.

Response to paragraph 10 (c) of the list of issues

79. The Ministry of Education reports that 3,566 State schools (49.2 per cent of the total) have at least one student with a disability. In addition, 2,603 centres have teaching staff who

³² Office of the Attorney General of the Republic. Plan for a More Humane Prison System. Available at: <https://pgr.gob.do/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/plan-humanizacion.pdf>.

have received training on disability issues. At the national level, 16,457 teachers, technicians, managers, counsellors, psychologists and others working with students with disabilities have received training on inclusive education.

80. According to the Directorate General of Special Education, during the 2022/23 school year there were 1,545 providers of inclusive education who specialize in the strategies and resources needed for the various types of schooling, providing services in 1,625 schools, of which 50 were special education establishments and 1,575 were mainstream schools. Likewise, there are diversity resource centres located in the 18 regional education directorates to advise and support the education districts and schools.

Reply to paragraph 10 (d) of the list of issues

81. The Ministry of Education, through the Department of Inclusive Infrastructure of the Directorate General of Environmental Risk Management, is working on the elimination of architectural barriers that hinder universal accessibility and inclusion in educational facilities in the country, such as: uneven surfaces, parking spaces, ramps from the street to the school entrance, handrails, lever-type faucets, accessible cubicles in bathrooms, and staggered walkways and sidewalks.

Reply to paragraph 10 (e) of the list of issues

82. In June 2020, the Office of the Vice President of the Republic, together with the Director of Social Benefits and the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme, (now the Get Ahead Programme), received a donation of \$RD 5 million from UNICEF to strengthen the Dominican Government’s Stay Home Programme and address the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

83. UNICEF designated a total amount of \$RD 5,400,000 to be transferred to 2,700 households with children with disabilities, as identified by the Single System of Beneficiaries, in accordance with the strategy of the Dominican Government to focus on the most vulnerable population groups. The incentives were distributed through the complementary cash transfers administered by the Director of Social Benefits.

84. For the selection process of beneficiary households, criteria such as households with children under 5 years of age with severe disabilities or with two or more disabilities at the same time were taken into account; so was the poverty level of families identified by the Single System of Beneficiaries as poor and vulnerable (ICV1 and ICV2 respectively) and with children with disabilities.

Reply to paragraph 11 (a) of the list of issues

Maternal and neonatal mortality reduction measures

Health regulations:

- Guide to the correct use and filling out of the Health Card for children under 5 years of age
- Guidelines for the organization and operation of maternal and infant death analysis and response committees: Technical regulations for the organization and operation of maternal and infant death analysis and response committees, June 2022³³
- Guidelines for the organization and operation of the committees monitoring caesarean sections for non-indicated medical reasons

³³ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare: Technical regulations for the organization and operation of maternal and infant death analysis and response committees. Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/bitstream/handle/123456789/2280/9789945621822.pdf?sequence=1.

- Protocol for the care of premature newborns
- Technical regulations for the care of adolescents
- Protocol for the evaluation and early detection of growth and development disorders in children under 5 years of age
- Protocol for the care of the newborn with persistent pulmonary hypertension

Epidemiological surveillance:

- Organization of the committees monitoring maternal and infant deaths
- Strengthening of mechanisms for timely autopsies in cases of maternal death
- Ministerial decision (000002) establishing the disciplinary regulations for health personnel of the National Health Service and the private sector, non-profit associations and others to prevent maternal and infant mortality
- Formation and/or strengthening of in-hospital committees for the monitoring of caesarean sections for non-indicated medical reasons in compliance with the applicable regulations

Chronic child malnutrition:

- Implementation of the plan to reduce malnutrition in the under-fives, pregnant women and breastfeeding women, in coordination with the National Health Service and in collaboration with UNICEF
- Monitoring the nutritional status of children under 5 years of age and pregnant women at the primary care level
- Vitamin A supplements for children aged 6 months to 4 years
- Supplements for pregnant and breastfeeding women with a multi-mineral, multi-vitamin supplement (Prenatal), in coordination with the Mother and Child Programme
- Training of health personnel in monitoring, preventing and managing various forms of malnutrition

85. Approved budget of \$RD 114,200,000: the funds are intended to support actions for the prevention of teenage pregnancy, as well as the purchase of contraceptive supplies.

86. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare put into effect the technical regulations for the functioning of the citizen health oversight commissions, which promote the social participation of civil society and community organizations in health care oversight and prioritize maternal and child health as subjects of social oversight.³⁴

87. Act No. 8-95 on the promotion of breastfeeding regulates this issue. The National Breastfeeding Promotion Programme, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, has an intersectoral mechanism – the National Breastfeeding Commission – that follows up and monitors compliance with breastfeeding promotion guidelines. In addition, the Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes is applicable. Furthermore, as at May 2023, there are 140 or so “baby-friendly rooms” in operation in both public and private institutions.

88. Another initiative under development is the establishment of breast-milk banks, based on a model already established in hospitals that will be extended to other locations under an agreement with the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services.

³⁴ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Technical regulations for the functioning of the citizen health oversight commissions. Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/bitstream/handle/123456789/2272/789945621617.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

89. Among the measures planned for the elimination of cholera in the country are the following:

- Step up health surveillance when there is a cholera alert, with an emphasis on the availability and use of clean drinking water.
- Update the epidemiological and clinical approach to cholera, with an emphasis on case management and management of the patient's environment. Take action nationwide on training and disseminate and apply the Cholera Diagnosis and Treatment Guide.
- Take preventive measures: consume safe water (boiled or chlorinated); do not eat raw food; follow health and safety guidelines on food preparation; adopt proper hygienic habits; dispose of human waste and toilet paper properly; use effective risk communication methods.
- Ensure effective risk communication, on a national scale and to diverse audiences and sectors.

Reply to paragraph 11 (b) of the list of issues

90. The most up-to-date official data available, provided by the Department of Biostatistics of the Directorate of Health Situation Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation of Results (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare), are as follows:

- Neonatal mortality rate per 1,000 live births (2019): 16.9
- Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births (2019): 22.1
- Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births (2019): 90.7

91. The current incidence of chronic child malnutrition (based on height for age), as reported by the Nutrition Division, is 7 per cent (according to the 2019 National Multipurpose Survey/Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey). An analysis of the trend over time shows no change from the data obtained in the 2013 National Population and Health Census (7 per cent), which was a decrease of 3 percentage points from the figure in the 2007 National Population and Health Census.

Reply to paragraph 11 (c) of the list of issues

92. The policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies was officially launched on 7 December 2021. The most relevant achievements have been:

- The holding of cross-sectoral round tables and discussion groups on topics of interest
- The signing of a letter of intent by the National Council for Children and Adolescents and the European Union cooperation programme EUROSociAL+ to design a planning, monitoring and evaluation system for the policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies
- The design and implementation of the Comprehensive Sex Education in Values Programme
- The establishment of an inter-agency collaboration framework (National Council for Children and Adolescents, UNICEF and agencies of the Office for Children and Adolescents)
- Integration into the Regional Reference Group within the framework of the Latin America and the Caribbean regional programme (2022–2025) of the United Nations Population Fund, for the construction of an integrated intervention model to respond to and prevent child marriages and early unions
- Agreement between the National Council for Children and Adolescents and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences on the design of the critical path for the protection of the fundamental rights of children and adolescents

- Launching of the “Take Control, Press Pause” campaign aimed at reducing teenage pregnancies and early unions

93. At a quantitative level, in 2022–2023, the policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies reached 15,367 parents, caregivers, children and adolescents through the Comprehensive Sex Education, Life Skills and Positive Parenting programmes; and 13 girls’ clubs were set up to help prevent early unions and teenage pregnancies and promote their empowerment, reaching 305 girls with the help of the Get Ahead Programme and the support of UNICEF.

Reply to paragraph 11 (d) of the list of issues

94. The objectives of the National Mental Health Plan of the Dominican Republic for 2019–2022 include a reduction in the morbidity, disability and mortality associated with mental illness and disorders;³⁵ and a reduction in the excessive consumption of alcohol and other psychoactive substances. The plan prioritizes interventions with children and adolescents based on prevention, early identification and intervention, and timely and appropriate assistance through strategies relevant to the different case profiles.

Reply to paragraph 11 (e) of the list of issues

95. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare implements the Programme for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS. The programme has a coverage of 83 per cent and operates in 133 hospitals in the country, of which 90 per cent are able to perform caesarean sections. As part of the programme, antiretroviral drugs and infant formula are available at the integrated care services free of charge. In the period 2010–2020, the percentage of new HIV infections among children and adolescents fell by 27.6 per cent.

Reply to paragraph 11 (f) of the list of issues

96. The National Drugs Council implements policies and programmes focused on the prevention of drug use among children and adolescents through the following programmes:

- The Building Families Programme, which is concerned with the skills a family needs to manage children’s mental health. From 2021 to date (June 2023), 395 facilitators have been trained throughout the country, with the involvement of 14 public and private sector organizations.
- The Parenting Skills Programme, which aims to strengthen the parenting skills of parents and guardians so that they can achieve a caring and responsible parenting style that will help children avoid substance abuse and other risky behaviours. For the implementation of this programme, 589 facilitators have been trained and have made a difference to the families of the beneficiary institutions.
- The Student Social Services Programme, which is focused on raising awareness among fifth- and sixth-grade middle-school students of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and motivating them to become multiplier agents. In the 2021–2023 period, the programme reached 519 students from 11 schools in the country.

Reply to paragraph 11 (g) of the list of issues

97. Strategic Action Line 4 of the National Development Strategy looks forward to “a society with a culture of sustainable production and consumption, which manages risks and the protection of the environment and natural resources with equity and efficiency, and promotes appropriate adaptation to climate change”. Within this framework, the Government has drawn up the National Climate Change Policy, as well as the National Strategy to

³⁵ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. National Mental Health Plan of the Dominican Republic for 2019–2022. Available at: <https://repositorio.msp.gob.do/handle/123456789/1660>.

Strengthen Human Resources and Skills for Green Development. This strategy was established by Decree No. 269-15, with the objective of addressing climate change attributed to human activity and its effects on the population and the national territory.

98. Parliament has also adopted Act No. 94-20 on environmental education and communication, which aims to include environmental education at different levels of the school system, seeking to raise environmental awareness among the Dominican population, and to promote the implementation of policies and measures for adapting to climate change and climate risk management.

99. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources and the National Council for Climate Change and Clean Development Mechanisms are taking initiatives to boost climate change education, with a special focus on children and adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 12 (a) of the list of issues

100. The Ministry of Education is taking action to:

- Assist families in processes related to the schooling of the population up to 18 years of age (Community Participation Directorate)
- Raise awareness among school principals and management teams (Late Declaration of Enrolment Programme)
- Allow students to provisionally enrol in educational establishments while the homologation process is being completed (Homologation of Foreign Studies)

101. The following table illustrates the progress made in school enrolment in the Dominican Republic, providing statistical information on the number of students enrolled from 2019 to 2022, according to nationality.

Number of students enrolled by nationality

Nationality	Period		
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Dominican	2 595 362	2 260 435	2 353 752
Haitian	105 305	105 021	145 106
United States	10 426	7 976	9 685
Venezuelan	8 112	7 490	7 955
Spanish	2 150	1 867	2 178
Puerto Rican	985	794	903
Italian	761	602	708
Colombian	420	378	434
Argentine	397	371	499
Mexican	370	295	386
Panamanian	228	247	376
Chilean	194	199	352
Cuban	244	230	347
French	253	170	224
Canadian	132	122	170
German	165	145	165
Chinese	215	139	156
Costa Rican	159	142	156
Ecuadorian	134	115	143
Brazilian	138	117	136

Number of students enrolled by nationality

Nationality	Period		
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Bolivian	144	115	129

102. As regards care for students with disabilities, special classrooms have been created as a transit space designed for the development of adaptive skills that will allow for the student's subsequent insertion into a regular classroom. For the period August 2020–March 2023, around 16,400 items of educational materials were distributed to schools to support students with disabilities, through the "Olga Estrella" National Resource Centre for Special Educational Support Needs.

Reply to paragraph 12 (b) of the list of issues

103. In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, the Directorate of Counselling and Psychology of the Ministry of Education designed a strategy for the return to school in the 2021/22 school year. The overall aim was to bring its staff up to speed on the different levels of support available to the educational authorities in the process of getting students, especially those from vulnerable families and communities, back to school, in coordination with other State institutions and civil society organizations.

104. This school reintegration strategy involved:

- Support for immediate inclusion, through coordination of the education district and the schools
- Psychological, emotional and social support, according to the needs of each student
- A learning support programme aimed especially at adolescents and young people who are about to finish or drop out of school, to enable them to complete their pre-university studies and find a place in an educational establishment or some other Ministry of Education alternative (in accordance with the regulations)

105. In 2022, the Ministry of Education launched a pilot programme for the reintegration of high-school dropouts. It also has a continuity strategy for pregnant teenagers, within the framework of the policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies, which offers psychosocial and pedagogical support to promote a successful school career.

Reply to paragraph 12 (c) of the list of issues

106. On the basis of Ordinance No. 1-2016, the Ministry of Education has made changes to the national testing system and added national diagnostic assessments in order to find out if students are meeting the goals established in the curricula of the various educational cycles.

107. In addition to the formative assessment applied by the teacher in the classroom, three types of external assessments are applied to the school.

108. National diagnostic assessments are applied at the end of an educational cycle in the form of a survey for diagnostic purposes, without consequences for a student's grades or progress.

109. National standardized tests are applied at the end of the third cycle of basic education for young people and adults, in the fourth year of adult education and in the sixth year of all forms of regular secondary education. These assess the student's acquisition of the competencies and skills prescribed in the curriculum for Spanish, Mathematics, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. They are held every year, and certify the completion of studies by the student.

110. International standardized sample assessments in which the country participates allow an external and comparative view of learning outcomes and provide a reference point. These include the Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS).

111. The latest evaluation of teaching staff was conducted by the Dominican Institute for Evaluation and Research on Educational Quality and the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, and covered the period October 2017 to April 2018.

112. In September 2022, the Performance Evaluation Committee was formed to carry out the regular evaluation of teaching staff scheduled for 2023, which will cover the broader period of 2020–2022.

Reply to paragraph 12 (d) of the list of issues

113. The Directorate of Gender Equity and Development at the Ministry of Education adapted the primary and secondary school curricula to improve the approach to discrimination. In addition, a series of booklets were produced on a culture of peace, citizenship education, “Let’s talk about harmonious coexistence: Inclusion”, respect for diversity and gender equity, and “Let’s talk about integrated education in values and human sexuality”.

Reply to paragraph 12 (e) of the list of issues

114. The Get Ahead Programme (formerly the “Progressing with Solidarity” programme), in coordination with the Korea International Cooperation Agency, implements the project “Comprehensive Action to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy”, with the main objective of educating young people about issues related to the prevention of teenage pregnancy. At the end of the training, youth networks are set up for adolescents to engage in cultural, sports and reading activities, depending on the participant’s interests. To date, 2,073 young people have benefited.

Reply to paragraph 13 (a) of the list of issues

115. The National Commission for Refugees is responsible for evaluating refugee and asylum applications. To this end, it adopted a simple and transparent procedure for the submission and evaluation of applications for refugee status. There were no applications from children or adolescents in the reporting period.

Reply to paragraph 13 (b) of the list of issues

116. The National Council for Children and Adolescents developed the protocol on the identification, care and protection of children and adolescents in situations of mobility, with technical support from UNICEF. The protocol sets out the criteria for determining the provisional protection measures applicable in each case, as well as for the management of the family reunification procedure.

117. In 2022, a total of 2,391 unaccompanied children in situations of mobility were taken care of. Of that total, 701 children were reunited with their families in the Dominican Republic, while 1,667 were handed over to the Social Welfare and Research Institute for family reunification purposes. Only in 27 of all the cases dealt with was temporary residential care the protective measure adopted.

118. As far as the training of migration officials is concerned, during the period 2020–2022, the National Institute of Migration trained approximately 626 migration officers on due process and standards for the protection of children and adolescents in situations of mobility.

Reply to paragraph 13 (c) of the list of issues

119. The Ministry of Labour coordinates the work of the National Steering Committee on Child Labour. As part of the Committee's work, in the period from 2020 to March 2023, several awareness and training campaigns were conducted for social and community stakeholders, employers and workers in the agricultural and tourism sectors, school teachers, parents and students, public servants and religious leaders – from both urban and rural areas – reaching approximately 23,300 people.

120. In the period 2020–2022, the work plans developed by the local steering committees and monitoring units installed in different parts of the country were followed up on and supported. During this period, 21 new local steering committees and monitoring units were established, involving 288 new stakeholders, giving a total of 3,400 local stakeholders.

121. Also, in the period from 2020 to April 2023, acting on complaints, the Ministry of Labour, in coordination with other State institutions of the National Protection System, carried out a total of 418 operations to remove 950 children from child labour situations and restore their rights.³⁶

Reply to paragraph 13 (d) of the list of issues

122. In 2022, the National Council for Children and Adolescents presented the “Intervention model for children and adolescents in street situations and victims of the worst forms of child labour”. The implementation of this model began with a pilot phase conducted from March to December 2022 in the National District, which reached a total of 393 children and adolescents, who were approached at workshops on protection and/or referred by other institutions. Work is currently under way (2023) to expand the model.

123. At the same time, the “Change Your Life” programme is being implemented by the National Council for Children and Adolescents to provide a recreational space that to date has reached 438 children and adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 13 (e) of the list of issues

124. In 2022, the third National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling for 2022–2024 was adopted,³⁷ in response to the lessons learned during the implementation of the second such plan for 2017–2020.³⁸

125. In 2021, a special shelter was opened for survivors of trafficking and smuggling, as part of the project “Protection for women in the context of migration in the Dominican Republic”, implemented by the Ministry of Women together with the International Organization for Migration.³⁹ The Ministry of Women also expanded the services of the *212 hotline.

126. In terms of care, 100 per cent of the children rescued are cared for in the halfway houses of the National Council for Children and Adolescents or by various non-profit associations that provide residential care services.

³⁶ Data extracted from Ministry of Labour inputs and 2021 data extracted from: 2021 Report of the Dominican Republic on Trafficking and Smuggling. Available at: <https://mirex.gob.do/download/informe-de-republica-dominicana-2021-sobre-la-trata-de-personas-y-el-trafico-illicito-de-migrantes/>.

³⁷ Available at: <https://mirex.gob.do/download/plan-nacional-de-accion-2022-2024/>.

³⁸ Report available at: <https://mirex.gob.do/download/informe-de-avance-del-plan-nacional-de-accion-2017-2020/>.

³⁹ Available at: <https://mujer.gob.do/transparencia/phocadownload/ProyectosYProgramas/DescripcionDeLosProyectosYProgramas/2023/Descripcion%20Programa%20OIM%202023%20ocr.pdf>.

127. Attention should also be drawn to the inclusion of a liaison prosecutor for migrant smuggling and human trafficking in each of the prosecutor's offices at the national level; coordination is assured by the heads of those offices.

128. Finally, Act No. 137-03 on migrant smuggling and human trafficking is currently under review by the legislature for amendment, updating and adaptation.

Reply to paragraph 13 (f) of the list of issues

129. The country has six integrated care centres for young people in conflict with the law. The execution and enforcement of sanctions are the responsibility of the National Directorate for the Integrated Care of Young People in Conflict with the Law, which is attached to the Attorney-General's Office. The Alternative Sanctions Coordination Unit monitors the execution of sanctions and alternative measures imposed on adolescents by the country's courts. Jurisdictional control and supervision is the responsibility of the Court for the Execution of Sanctions for Adolescents.

Reply to paragraph 13 (g) of the list of issues

130. The number of inmates in the integrated care centres for young people in conflict with the law is reduced by making use of alternatives to imprisonment. As of January 2023, a total of 176 alternative sanctions were imposed on young people in conflict with the law. These measures are reflected in a significant reduction of 59 per cent in the number of inmates held in pretrial detention in these centres over the last two years.

Reply to paragraph 14 (a) of the list of issues

131. The State party has established a working group for coordination, integration and teamwork to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents; the work is coordinated by the Attorney General's Office. This has made it possible to take preventive action and institution-building measures to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, resulting in 20 commitments by six State institutions: the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; Boca Chica City Hall; the National Council for Children and Adolescents; the Ministry of Labour; Caminante, in Boca Chica; and the Attorney General's Office.

132. In 2023, the Attorney General's Office launched a website for reporting images and videos of sexual abuse of children and adolescents (<https://report.iwf.org.uk/do/>), in coordination with UNICEF and the Internet Watch Foundation, and with the technical support of the National Cybersecurity Centre at the Ministry of the Presidency.⁴⁰

133. See statistical annex 3.

Reply to paragraph 14 (b) of the list of issues

134. With the introduction of specialized prosecutors, the State party has made progress in the prosecution of these crimes. In the period 2021–2022, 281 complaints of commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation were received. As of 2022, a total of 81 cases had reached trial and 108 cases were the subject of an appeal. See annex 3 for statistics on child and adolescent victims of violence.

⁴⁰ Developed by the Attorney General's Office with support from the Ministry of the Presidency, the National Cybersecurity Centre, UNICEF and the Internet Watch Foundation. Available at: <https://report.iwf.org.uk/do/>.

Reply to paragraph 14 (c) of the list of issues

135. At the national level, since 2021 the Ministry of Labour has focused on finding employment opportunities for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.

136. Meanwhile, since 2019 the Public Prosecution Service has been leading a preventive media campaign aimed at those with responsibility for children under the slogan “Watch Them: You Won’t Regret It!” on the consequences of parental neglect.

137. See also statistical annex 3 on child and adolescent victims of violence.

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

138. The State party has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; since it did so, there has been no armed conflict within the country, nor have there been any reports of Dominican children being involved in armed conflicts in other countries.

Reply to paragraph 16 (a) of the list of issues

- Act No. 1-21, banning child marriage
- Act No. 342-22, establishing the National System of Integrated Early Childhood Protection and Care and the National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services
- Organic Act No. 4-023 on civil status documents
- Bill amending Act No. 136-03 of 7 August 2003, establishing the Code for the System of Protection and Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents, which includes the legal concept of bullying at school
- Bill to establish a system that would disqualify sex offenders from exercising professions, trades and jobs related to the education, guidance, care and instruction of minors and persons with special conditions
- Bill to establish the National Council for Children and Adolescents as plaintiff in cases involving the violation of the rights of children and adolescents
- Draft bill to establish an integrated system for the care and protection of victims, witnesses and persons at risk of offences, crimes and human rights violations
- Bill on responsible parenthood

Reply to paragraph 16 (b) of the list of issues

- Get Ahead Programme
- Office for Children and Adolescents
- Office for Women and Girls
- National Institute for Integrated Early Childhood Services

Reply to paragraph 16 (c) of the list of issues

- A comprehensive plan for the strengthening of the National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents is being developed with the support of UNICEF, using the Child Protection Systems Strengthening methodology⁴¹

⁴¹ UNICEF. Strengthening the Special Protection Systems (September 2021).

- Programme for the protection of children and adolescents in the worst forms of child labour, street situations and situations of mobility in public spaces⁴²
- Policy for the protection of children in situations of mobility, based on the implementation of the first protocol on the identification, care and protection of children and adolescents in situations of mobility⁴³
- Strategic Plan for a Life Free of Violence for Women⁴⁴
- Policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies⁴⁵
- National Human Rights Plan for 2018–2024. The National Human Rights Plan, which has been updated and extended until 2024, reaffirms the political will of the Dominican Government to boost the mechanisms for the promotion and defence of the fundamental rights of all persons in the national territory.

139. For data on financing, see reply to paragraph 17 below.

Reply to paragraph 16 (d) of the list of issues

- ILO Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), ratified in 2015
- ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), ratified in 2015
- ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), ratified in 2016
- ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), ratified in 2016

Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues

140. See annex 1 for budget information.

Reply to paragraph 19 (a) of the list of issues

141. See statistical annex 2.

Reply to paragraph 19 (b) of the list of issues

142. See statistical annex 3.

Reply to paragraph 19 (c) of the list of issues

143. According to data from the National Statistics Office, there are 77 births for every 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19.

⁴² National Council for Children and Adolescents and Office for Children and Adolescents. Public policy guidelines for the protection of children and adolescents in the worst forms of child labour, street situations and situations of mobility in public spaces (preliminary proposal for internal discussion). Unpublished internal document.

⁴³ National Council for Children and Adolescents. Protocol on the identification, care and protection of children and adolescents in situations of mobility. Unpublished draft.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Women (November 2020). Strategic Plan for a Life Free of Violence for Women. Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://dominicanrepublic.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/plan_estrategico_vdb.pdf.

⁴⁵ Office for Children and Adolescents (August 2021). Policy on the prevention and management of early unions and teenage pregnancies. Available at: <https://raquelandra.com.do/elementor-2243/>.

144. In 2019, the teenage pregnancy rate was 24.04 per cent; it has been steadily declining since then. In 2020 it stood at 22.4 per cent; in 2021 at 21.24 per cent; and in 2022 at 19.74 per cent.⁴⁶ The challenge to bring it down further is greater in rural areas than in urban areas.

145. Just over half of teenage pregnancies (52.8 per cent, or 13,376) ended in a natural birth, 39.6 per cent in a caesarean section and 7.6 per cent in an abortion.

Reply to paragraph 19 (d) of the list of issues

146. See statistical annex 4.

Reply to paragraph 19 (e) of the list of issues

147. See reply to paragraph 13.(b) above.

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues

148. See statistical annex 5.

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

149. See statistical annex 6.

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues

150. See statistical annex 3.

Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues

151. In line with its rights-based approach, the State party has aligned its National Development Strategy with the Sustainable Development Goals. Two of the seven prioritized Sustainable Development Goals are fully aligned in terms of targets and follow-up and monitoring indicators: Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education) and Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate action). Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) are 89 per cent aligned with the National Development Strategy, while Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reducing inequalities) is 80 per cent aligned. The State party sees an opportunity for improvement in the need to produce more and better statistics to monitor compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals, including by getting children and adolescents to participate in the evaluation of public policies and services aimed at ensuring the effective exercise of their rights.

⁴⁶ National Statistics Office. Teenage pregnancies in the Dominican Republic. 23 June 2023. Available at: <https://www.one.gob.do/publicaciones/2023/infografia-sobre-embarazos-en-adolescentes-en-republica-dominicana/>.