USAID/Dominican Republic Cross-Sectoral At-Risk Youth Assessment

FINAL REPORT

Submitted in response to:

Request for Application No. 517-10-002 for Associate Award under
LWA NO. GDG-A-00-03-00010-00 Equip 3:
Conducting a Cross-Sectoral At-Risk Youth Assessment in the Dominican Republic
for USAID/Dominican Republic

Submitted by:

Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)

EDC

August, 2010

EDC Education Development Center, Inc.

August 30, 2010

To: Claudia Molina, A&A Specialist
    USAID/DR (email:cmolina@usaid.gov

cc : Jana Wooden (jwooden@usaid.gov)
     Amy Walter (awalter@edc.org)

Dear Ms. Molina,

Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) is pleased to transmit the attached final Dominican Republic Cross-Sectoral Youth Assessment Report. The Report is submitted in response to an RFA issued by your office on January 11, 2010 under the EQUIP 3 Leader with Associate Award program (LWA GDG-A-00-03-00010-00). The Report also responds to August 13th USAID technical comments on EDC's draft report.

The Report (a) analyzes the structure and characteristics of the youth cohort in the DR; (b) reviews the issues facing youth and the resources available to address them in four sectors – education, economic growth, health, and democracy and governance; (c) presents the results of 40 youth focus groups that were implemented by the assessment team as a way of articulating what youth themselves see as their main challenges; (d) reviews a first generation of 9 youth projects that have been funded by USAID; and (e) provides recommendations for a new generation of USAID sponsored youth programming.

Youth ages 10-24 constitute just over 30% of the 10 million people living in the Dominican Republic. They represent a valuable human resource and are the keys to their country's future. EDC is pleased to have carried out the attached comprehensive Report on the current status of youth in the DR. We hope our effort will help USAID develop a new generation of youth programming that provides greater windows of opportunity for at-risk Dominican youth.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information.

Best Regards

Ron Israel
Vice President
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**USAID/Dominican Republic
Cross-Sectoral At-Risk
Youth Assessment**

DR CSY Assessment Acronyms

TABLES

FIGURES

DR CSY Assessment Acronyms

AECID (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation)
AED (Academy for Educational Development)
Alianza ONG (Non-Governmental Organization Alliance)
CASCO (Coordinator of Socio-Cultural Animation)
CBSI (Caribbean Basin Security Initiative)
CEAPA (*Aquelarre* Support Center)
CEGES (Center for Governance and Social Management of INTEC)
CESDEM (Center for Social and Demographic Studies)
CIMPA (Research Center for the Improvement of Animal Production)
COIN (Center for Integrated Orientation and Research)
CONANI (National Council for Children and Adolescents)
Consorcio NINA (Consortium for Children and Adolescents)
COPRESIDA (Presidential Council on AIDS)
CRS (Catholic Relief Services)
CV (Curriculum Vitae)
DR (Dominican Republic)
DREAM Project (Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project)
DSTA Dominican Sustainable Tourism Alliance
EAP (Economically Active Population)
EBA (Adult Basic Education)
ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean)
EDC (Educational Development Center)
EDUCA (Action for Basic Education)
ENDESA (National Demographic and Health Survey)
ENCOVI (Survey on Living Conditions)
ENHOGAR (National Multi-Purpose Household Survey)
ENFT (National Labor Force Survey)
EPC (Spaces for Growth)
EPE (Spaces for Entrepreneurship)
FEDOMU (Dominican Federation of Municipalities)
FINJUS (Foundation for Institutionalization and Justice)
FORJA (Training of Youth Agriculturalists at University ISA)
GDP (Gross Domestic Product)
GTZ (German Technical Cooperation)
IDB (Inter-American Development Bank)
IDCP (Dermatological Institute for Skin Surgery)
IDDI (Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral)
INFOTEP (Instituto Nacional de Formación Técnica Profesional)
INTEC (Technological Institute of Santo Domingo)
ILO (International Labor Organization)
IOM (International Organization for Migration)
JADOM (Junior Achievement *Dominicana*)
JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency)
LAPOP (Latin American Public Opinion Project)
LLECE (Latin America Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education)
MDB (Young Men and Women with Don Bosco)
MIF (Multilateral Investment Fund)

MLB-DDA (Major League Baseball Dominican Development Alliance)
MUDE (Women in Development)
NGO (non-governmental organization)
OAS (Organization of American States)
OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)
OIJ (Ibero-American Youth Organization)
OMS (World Health Organization)
PAHO (Pan-American Health Organization)
PANCAP (Partnership against HIV/AIDS)
PJE (Youth and Employment Program)
PREJAL (Promotion of Youth Employment in Latin America)
PREPARA (Adult Secondary Education)
PRONAISA (National Program of Integrated (Health) Attention to Youth)
PSI (Population Services International)
PUCMM (*Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra*)
QL (Quantum Learning)
SEE (Ministry of Education)
SEM (Ministry of Women)
SENAE (National Employment Service)
SESPAS (Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance)
SET (Ministry of Labor)
STI (sexually transmitted illness)
UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Program on AIDS)
UNAP (Primary Care Unit)
UNDP (United Nations Development Program)
UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)
UNIBE (Iberoamerican University)
Universidad ISA (*Universidad Instituto Superior de Agricultura*)
USAID/DR (United States Agency for International Development/Dominican Republic)
USAID RED (United States Agency for International Development Rural Economic Diversification)

I.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) is pleased to transmit the attached Cross-Sectoral At-Risk Youth Assessment to USAID/Dominican Republic. Our Report responds to the scope of work contained in the USAID January 11th program description for this activity, and has been implemented as an Associate Award under the USAID EQUIP 3 Leader with Associate Award (LWA) Program (GDG-A-00-03-00010-00). The EDC Assessment Team was led by Amy Walter (Team Leader and Education Sector Specialist), Sheila Maak (Deputy Team Leader and Economic Growth Specialist), Jenniffer Perdomo Suero and Flor Melendez (Health Specialists), Wellington Martinez Inoa (Civic Participation Specialist), and Sarah Nogueira Sanca (Home Office Manager). Focus groups were conducted by a team of Youth Facilitators.

The Report (a) analyzes the structure and characteristics of the youth cohort in the Dominican Republic (DR); (b) reviews the issues facing youth and the resources available to address them in four sectors – education, economic growth, health, and democracy and governance; (c) presents the results of 40 youth focus groups that were implemented by the assessment team as a way of articulating what youth themselves see as their needs, aspirations and challenges; (d) reviews a first generation of 9 youth projects that have been funded by USAID/DR; and (e) provides recommendations for a new generation of USAID/DR sponsored youth programming.

Youth ages 10-24 constitute just over 30 percent of the roughly ten million people who live in the Dominican Republic.[1] Important stakeholders with whom the EDC assessment team met (youth themselves, the staffs of youth-serving organizations, policy-makers and community leaders across the country) agreed that a sizable percentage of Dominican youth are highly vulnerable and lack access to needed resources.

In the education sector, such vulnerability is most acute in the 22,000 youth ages 10-14 who are out of school, and the 25,000 youth ages 15-19 and 44,000 youth ages 20-24 who characterize themselves as being unable to read and write.[2] Those who are in school participate in an educational system characterized by poor learning outcomes and high rates of repetition.

In the economic growth sector, in 2008 youth ages 10-24 represented a quarter of the total labor force in the DR and 43 percent of the total unemployed population.[3] Job creation for young people primarily takes place in the informal sector where wages are reported to be 44 percent lower than in the formal economy.[4] Those youth seeking to start their own enterprises are faced with challenges in obtaining access to credit and micro-finance. The vast majority of Dominican young people do not own assets and financial systems rarely make loans without collateral.

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[1] Central Bank, National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd Semester 2008
[2] Central Bank. 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[3] Central Bank. 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[4] PREJAL, 2009. *Informe Trabajo Decente y Juventud: Propuesta de Lineamientos para el Plan de Acción Empleo Juvenil en República Dominicana*, versión de borrador 28 septiembre 2009.

In the health sector, reproductive and sexual health are the two priority issues for young people. Risky behaviors, such as multiple sex partners, unsafe sexual practices, and/or the use of drugs and alcohol play a significant role in the health profile of Dominican youth. There is a high incidence of teen pregnancy (26% in rural areas and 18% in urban areas), and a negative relationship has been observed between teenage pregnancy and education and socio-economic status.[5] Health service programs tend to be costly, not focused on the needs of young people, and located in areas that are not always easily accessible to youth.

In the area of civic participation, youth face numerous challenges to participating fully and positively in society. At a fundamental level, many youth lack birth certificates or identity cards, often for reasons of poverty or their own parents' lack of documentation. Not only do youth consequently lack official recognition as individuals, but they also are impeded in their access to services. This lack of connectivity to society may help to explain the growing participation of Dominican youth in gang related activity.

Despite the formidable challenges facing youth in the DR the assessment team identified a variety of policies and programs that are making a difference in youths' lives. The EDC team made a special effort to assess USAID/DR-funded youth projects, interviewing staff and visiting field sites of programs such as the DREAM Project, *Hay Poder en Aprender*, *Consorcio NINA* and *Aprendiendo Juntos*, the La Romana—Bayahibe Tourism and Youth Training Project, *Reinserción Escolar y Fomento a la Incorporación Productiva*, the *Habilidades para la Vida* (Life Skills) Project, the Young Political Leaders Training Program, the Civic Action for Justice and Transparency, and the Batey Community Development Project. In addition, the EDC Team conducted a comprehensive review of the youth policies and programs of government, NGOs, and other donor agencies in each of the four sectors targeted by the assessment.

Recommendations for future USAID/DR youth programming are provided at the conclusion of this Report. It is recommended that USAID/DR establish a single youth program that provides a social safety net for vulnerable out-of-school youth within targeted geographic areas. The core target population for this program would be youth ages 10-13 who are out of school and youth 14-17 who are out of school and unemployed. USAID/DR funding would help enable a single institution or a network of institutions to provide services that enable targeted youth to return to school, connect with economic opportunities, improve their health and well-being, and engage more fully with their communities.

Our rationale for making this recommendation is based on the following: (a) While many activities exist to serve at-risk youth in the DR, fewer programs are available to address the multiple complex needs of highly vulnerable youth, particularly in the holistic way that is needed; (b) The government has established a policy framework to serve highly vulnerable youth. However it has yet to translate its policies into practice in a coordinated, effective manner, which presents an opportunity for a donor organization, such as USAID, to play a supporting role; (c) USAID/DR has gained important experience through its Out-Of-School and At-Risk Youth Programs. The new program would seek to build upon the experience

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[5] ENDESA 2007

base of USAID/DR and its implementing organizations; (d) Among the aims of the program would be to provide positive opportunities for youth already engaged in gangs and/or criminal activity, thus fulfilling a core purpose of the USAID Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, a potential funding stream for the program.

II.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose & Methodology

This Dominican Republic Cross-Sectoral Youth Assessment aims to provide the necessary information for USAID/Dominican Republic to move forward in working with youth in a holistic and effective manner. In pursuit of this objective, the assessment team conducted field work from May 21st to June 14th in the locations of USAID-funded youth projects and related programming, with special emphasis on Santo Domingo, Santiago, and Puerto Plata.

For each sector – education, economic growth, health and democracy & governance – the research consisted of three primary dimensions:

1. the policies articulating the rights of children and youth and addressing their needs;
2. the characteristics and needs demonstrated by youth;
3. a review of existing service providers and other institutions in relevant sectors that may address the stated needs of youth.

The characteristics and needs of youth comprise the "demand side" of the equation in youth policy and programming. The existing providers and other institutions comprise the "supply side," providing programming to implement or complement the policies intended to meet the needs of youth, given the context and market realities in which they operate. A key objective of this research was to identify the gaps between supply and demand. Annex 1 presents the methodology for this research, including the work plan in Annex 1.1.

In order to guide its field work and synthesis of findings, the team identified key research questions for the evaluation as a whole and for each sector, building upon recommended questions provided by USAID/DR. (See Annex 1.2) To provide a foundation for understanding youths' characteristics and needs, the assessment team used quantitative data to develop demographic profiles for the youth cohort. Furthermore, during the field work phase of the assessment, the team illuminated both sides of the supply and demand equation through qualitative research including key informant interviews, youth focus groups, and observational visits. The team is deeply grateful to the interviewees and youth who shared their time and perspectives for this report. The primary assessment methods are identified below:

Document Research: The team identified and conducted background research on scope, reach and effectiveness of the main policies and programs relevant to Dominican youth across and within sectors. The review included government programs, policies, and legislation; institutional and individual research and analyses; and NGO program descriptions and evaluations.

USAID-sponsored programs that were interviewed include:

Education:
- Catholic Relief Services, *Aprendiendo Juntos* Project (five implementing subs; conducted focus groups with *Acción Callejera* and *Caminante**)
- The DREAM Project*
- *Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral* (IDDI), *Esperanza* International, *Hay Poder en Aprender* (implemented by *Hay Poder en Aprender* under auspices of Major League Baseball Dominican Development Alliance (MLB-DDA))*

Employment:
- IDDI, Youth School Reentry and Workforce Development Program*
- Counterpart International, Tourism and Youth Training Project

Health:
- Academy for Educational Development, Life Skills Program

Democracy and Governance:
- *Participación Ciudanana* / Center for Governance and Social Management at INTEC / Center for Research and Social Studies of UNIBE, Young Political Leaders Training Program*
- *Participación Ciudanana* / INTEC / UNIBE / Foundation for Institutionalization and Justice, Civic Action for Justice and Transparency

Cross-Sectoral:
- Save the Children / MUDE, Batey Community Development Project*

* In addition to interviews, Youth Focus Groups were conducted with youth affiliated with these programs.

Documents presenting international best practice and global experience with youth programming were also reviewed, as were news and economic reports. See the bibliography for a full listing of documents and web sites reviewed.

Key Informant Interviews: During the field work phase of the assessment, the team conducted informant interviews with:

- USAID/DR mission personnel on youth and related programming;
- Leadership and staff of USAID/DR youth-serving and related projects;
- Staff charged with youth matters in government ministries;
- Representatives of other donor agencies investing in youth;
- Other stakeholders such as representatives of the private sector and religious groups.

A complete listing of the interviews conducted can be found in Annex 1.3, and the interview protocols used can be found in Annex 1.4.

Youth Focus Groups. A team of youth facilitators conducted a total of 40 focus groups to yield insight into the perspective of at-risk youth. The following three types of youth were targeted:

1. Dominican youth served by USAID/DR projects or other youth-serving organizations;
2. Dominican youth not currently served by any organization;
3. Haitian youth living in the Dominican Republic as a result of the 2010 earthquake.

Within these groups, youth were further segmented by age: 10-13, 14-17, and 18-24, with male and female youth participating together. Focus groups were divided among Santo Domingo, Santiago, and Puerto Plata, as well as bateys and Cotui, where USAID/DR projects are located. The distribution of focus groups across type, age group, and geography is presented in Annex 1.5, and the protocol used to guide the groups can be found in Annex 1.6. In addition, a demographic questionnaire was used at the end of each session to contextualize the findings (see Annex 1.7).

The team employed the following approach to recruit youth not participating in programs and Haitian youth. With regard to the former, youth coordinators leveraged connections with community organizations in the participating communities to identify and recruit participants. Potential participants completed a recruitment form to confirm that they met the profile. The team included a Haitian youth facilitator with experience working at the Jesuit Service for Refugees and Migrants of the *Centro Bonó* and knowledge of communities that had experienced an influx of Haitian immigrants due to the earthquake. Through this facilitator and in coordination with Haitian educators living in bateys and connected with NGOs, the team identified new Haitian arrivals who had been displaced due to the earthquake.

Research Limitations. While the assessment team did have access to many individuals, organizations and target youth cohorts for information gathering, there were limitations to the research. These included:

- Lack of impact data for programs interviewed/observed;
- Limited data at the municipal level;
- Heavy reliance on survey method – mostly self-reporting for organizations and youth;
- Short timeframe for fieldwork, most of which took place over a three-week period.

Structure of the Report. There are two key sections of this report which lead to a set of recommendations for holistic youth programming.

The first and most extensive section (Parts III-VIII) provides an overview and a sector-by-sector view of the current status of youth, examining youth-related policies, indicators that identify youth needs and risks, programs in place to support youth, and identification of any gaps between what exists and what is needed. Also included in this section is a targeted look at the situation of Haitian youth displaced in the Dominican Republic as a result of the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

The second section (Part IX) provides a transition, summarizing the gaps between the supply and demand sides for youth across sectors, as well as highlighting best practices and key elements of holistic youth programming that should be incorporated into future efforts.

The resulting recommendations (Part X) are presented by identifying target youth cohorts and a holistic approach to programming which can be augmented and scaled depending on the level of funding available. An attempt was made to provide both broad conceptual recommendations as well as sector-specific ideas.

In order to keep the report as a digestible document and focus on findings and recommendations, much of the detail on methodology and focus groups, as well as more in-depth information about existing youth programs, was included in the Annex. These documents augment what is included in the report and provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the approach and findings.

III. CURRENT STATE OF YOUTH

While youth ages 10–24 form a significant part of the population of the Dominican Republic (just over 30%), the research, interviews and focus groups conducted for this assessment indicate that a sizable proportion of this group are vulnerable and underserved. These at-risk youth face multiple, interrelated complex challenges. While the country has instituted a number of policies pertaining to youth, and myriad programs exist in an effort to meet their needs, this research demonstrates that the demand for such services exceeds the supply and that the supply should be better coordinated and in some cases adapted to meet these needs, especially among the most vulnerable populations.

Policies Directed Toward Youth

The Dominican Republic has instituted a range of policies pertaining to the rights and wellbeing of youth and promoting their ability to participate fully as citizens and community members. Over the past two decades, the country has more fully developed its body of laws pertaining to education, employment, and health and in many cases has specified the treatment of youth in these areas. It has also recognized that issues affecting youth cut across sectors and call for coordination across government and other actors. Major cross-sectoral policies are discussed below, while sector-specific policies are described in subsequent sections. In addition, an overall list of policies pertaining to youth is presented in Annex 2.

Established in 2003, the Code for the System of Protection and the Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents (136-03) defines and provides comprehensive protection of the rights of children and youth from birth to age 18. It assigns responsibility for coordination and oversight to the government entity, the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI, for its Spanish acronym). In order to facilitate the implementation of this law with regard to youth living and working in the street, CONANI established the Policy Guidelines for Integral Protection of Street Children and Youth (2007-2012). An interview with CONANI indicated that the entity sought to operationalize this law by establishing an integrated network of protection that articulated different actors, which may include the development of a drug rehabilitation center for youth.

Passed in 2000, the General Youth Law (49-00) establishes the legal, political and institutional framework to guide the government and society in defining and implementing policies to meet the needs and expectations of youth more broadly and to promote their effective participation in decision-making. It focuses on six areas: 1) education, 2) health, 3) culture, 4) sports and recreation, 5) civic participation, and 6) employment and job training. Furthermore, it created the Ministry of Youth as the governing entity responsible for overseeing implementation of the law, while also establishing mechanisms for youth participation in policy-making at the national and local levels. (These are described further under Civic Participation.) In order to support the implementation of this law, the National Public Policy for the Development of Dominican Youth 2008-2015 was developed through

a participatory process and outlines objectives and goals for each of the six areas outlined above.

While not directly targeted toward youth, policies aimed at poverty reduction and welfare promotion, particularly those targeted toward families, can benefit youth directly or indirectly. The government has taken important steps to strengthen its social safety net over the past decade, with significant support from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. As a key example, its conditional cash transfer program, *Solidaridad*, which includes an education benefit conditional on children ages 6-16 attending school, covered two million people in extreme poverty as of 2009.[7]

Interviewees indicated that while the goals of this body of policies are worthy and well articulated, implementation is highly variable. Government and other actors often fail to coordinate implementation efforts, or linkages may be informal rather than formalized. In cases such as education and youth civic participation, the government has not assigned the level of funding required by the law to the sector. Interviewees cite the need for stakeholders to work in concert to achieve policy goals for youth, as well as to engage in advocacy to encourage the government to assume greater responsibility.

Demographic, Geographic and Economic Overview

The population of the Dominican Republic has nearly tripled in size and become dramatically more urban over the last fifty years. In 1960, the population was 3.3 million, with more than two thirds living in rural areas.[8] By 2008, the population was 9.5 million, and geographic patterns had reversed, with roughly two thirds living in urban areas.[10]

Youth ages 10-24 comprise a significant proportion of this growing population, estimated at 2.94 million, or 31 percent of the population, in 2008.[11] Youth ages 10-14 and 15-19 each numbered more than one million, while youth ages 20-24 were fewer than 900,000.[12] The lower number of older youth residing in the Dominican Republic suggests that a significant portion may be emigrating in search of economic and academic opportunities.

Like the general population, roughly two thirds of youth live in urban areas (see Table 1). The numbers of rural males and urban females are somewhat lower among those ages 15-19 than those ages 10-14, and sharply lower among those ages 20-24. While it is difficult to account for these differences, both internal migration and out-migration may be at play.

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[7] World Bank, 2007. Project Appraisal Document on Proposed Loan for Social Protection Investment Project; 2009. Project Paper on Proposed Additional Financing for Social Protection Investment Project
[8] World Bank, 2010. "World Development Indicators"
[10] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[11] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd Semester 2008 data
[12] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd Semester 2008 data

Table 1 National and Youth Population, with Gender and Geography Breakdown (millions), 2008

	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total Population All Ages
Total	**1.041**	**1.032**	**.867**	**9.537**
Male	.530 (51%)	.521 (50%)	.412 (47%)	4.737 (50%)
Female	.512 (49%)	.512 (50%)	.455 (53%)	4.800 (50%)
Urban	**.691 (66%)**	**.687 (67%)**	**.619 (71%)**	**6.420 (67%)**
Urban, Male	.344 (50%)	.345 (50%)	.340 (55%)	3.116 (49%)
Urban, Female	.347 (50%)	.342 (50%)	.279 (45%)	3.305 (51%)
Rural	**.350 (34%)**	**.346 (33%)**	**.248 (29%)**	**3.117 (33%)**
Rural, Male	.186 (53%)	.176 (51%)	.072 (29%)	1.622 (52%)
Rural, Female	.164 (47%)	.170 (49%)	.176 (71%)	1.495 (48%)

Source: Central Bank. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd Semester 2008
Note: Rounding error accounts for disaggregated numbers that do not sum to totals.

Despite high economic growth over much of the past decade, a significant portion of the country remains in poverty, including a large percentage of youth. In 2007, the national poverty rate stood at 48.5 percent.[13]   Rural poverty, at 54 percent, was higher than the urban poverty rate of 45 percent.[14] More than 41 percent of young adults ages 15-29 live in poverty, and 17 percent live in extreme poverty.[15]

Context and Characteristics of At-Risk Youth

The assessment identified a range of inter-related factors that pose risks to youths' prospects for well-being and success in life. Specifically, this report examined individual, family, school and community risk factors associated with dropping out of school, being unemployed or working in dangerous conditions, or becoming involved with drugs and crime. These factors are described below and in the sector-specific sections of the report.

In focus groups, youth expressed their aspirations to enter university-level professions, music and professional sports, to undertake technical careers, and to have families. While many youth expressed interest in becoming professionals such as doctors or lawyers, or famous rappers or baseball players, at-risk youth do not necessarily have the knowledge or means to realize these goals. As one interviewee pointed out, youth aspire to careers in which they can make a lot of money, regardless of their own abilities or training. Youths' aspirations are also shaped by what they see in their communities. In some cases, focus group participants cited technical professions such as plumbing or beauty salons. They also noted that some youth in their communities aspire to sell a lot of drugs, since they perceive that those in their neighborhoods who have made a lot of money have done so through drug-dealing.

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[13] World Bank, 2010. "World Development Indicators"
[14] World Bank, 2010. "World Development Indicators"
[15] ECLAC, OIJ, October 2008. Youth and Social Cohesion in Ibero-America, a Model in the Making.

Despite the importance that interviewees and focus group participants alike ascribed to education for realizing youths' aspirations, at-risk youth are often significantly unprepared for higher-level education and employment. Interviewees noted that youth have very low skill levels, including in foundational skills such as literacy. Focus group participants agreed with this perception, noting that even youth who are in school are sometimes unable to read or write. Youth perceived the quality of the education they receive as low and saw a great need to improve schools and teachers. Among interviewees and focus group participants, low skill levels were also cited as a barrier to obtaining employment.

At-risk youth also lack positive role models and supervision. Interviewees noted youth are put at risk by coming from "broken homes," including single- or no-parent households and homes marked by physical or sexual abuse. As noted by one interviewee, youth in single-mother households lacked father figures and sometimes were left unsupervised, which left them more vulnerable. Focus group participants noted that youth also follow the examples of their parents, who often have low educational attainment themselves. As a result, youth lack adult models who have completed their studies, and the adults in their lives are less able to support youth with school.

"… There are people who want to be something in life and have no economic status. And there are many people who trample them, telling them you do not have this or that, you do not have money, people reject them. And there are people, that despite all this, keep moving forward and do what they want to do"

Poverty and the lack of resources pervade the lives of at-risk youth and limit their ability to satisfy their basic needs and foster their own development. In focus groups, participants indicate that there are youth in their communities who do not have enough money to eat or to buy clothes. Participants identified orphans as a particularly vulnerable group, whose needs include housing, food, clothing, education, and recreational opportunities. For lack of funds, youth and their families cannot afford school uniforms or materials, transportation to and from school or work, or medicines when they get sick. For example, they noted that many youth cannot complete complementary or technical education programs because neither they nor their parents can afford the daily transportation costs. In addition, communities lack electricity and adequate streets, which impedes youths' studies and ability to travel safely. Many youth need to help their families in doing housework or earning income, which can detract from the time available to study or engage in activities for personal development and recreation.

Focus group participants expressed a high level of vulnerability and need for protection against crime and drugs in their communities. Participants ages 10-13 and 14-17 emphasized the need to keep youth away from drugs and criminal activities. Youth participating in programs noted that other youth tell them not to waste their time and try to lure them into activities to make money quickly such as drug-dealing. In some communities, the level of crime makes it difficult for youth to do activities outside their

homes. Anti-crime programs such as *Barrio Seguro* are viewed as helpful but insufficient, especially since the police are viewed negatively.

Youth generally lack positive activities and safe spaces, which impedes their ability to occupy their time productively and makes them more vulnerable to negative influences. Focus group participants expressed concern and even indignation that many youth in their communities spend the whole day with nothing to do. Spending time in *el coro* – hanging out with friends on the street corner – was seen as making it difficult for youth to integrate into more constructive activities. Youth also spent time in *colmadones* – establishments with alcohol and dancing – even when the activities there were only intended for adults. In addition, older focus group participants (14-17 and 18-24-year-olds) noted that youth invest their time and money in *juegos de apuestas* – betting games. In addition, youth perceived that the fact that communities lack activities for youth increases the likelihood that they will become involved in crime.

Programming for Youth

Numerous programs, ranging from small organizations serving a single community to large initiatives operating at a regional or national scale, attempt to meet the multiple needs that at-risk youth face in the Dominican Republic. They are implemented by NGOs, youth networks, churches, and the government, among other institutions. Their work is supported financially by private funds, including from individuals, churches and private companies; multilateral and bilateral donors; and the Dominican government.

In order to manage the research scope of this assessment, the team focused on three types of youth programs: 1) those financed by USAID/DR, 2) large-scale programs, and 3) smaller programs that presented compelling models for particular at-risk youth populations. The annexes present a description of the program, including implementing organization and funder, goals, positive features and limitations of each of the programs examined for this assessment and described in the sector-specific sections below.

The programs examined seek to address a broad range of needs, in some cases focusing on a specific area, in others offering a more comprehensive set of services. From an academic standpoint, programs complement and strengthen what students learn in the classroom, or bring overage students up to grade level. In addition to targeting basic literacy and numeracy and thinking skills, programs provide "life skills"[16] training that facilitates youths' personal development and their capacity to successfully navigate in a variety of settings (e.g., school, home, work, and community), including knowledge and skills to promote and protect their health. Programs focused on youth employment develop technical-vocational and entrepreneurship skills and connect older youth with internships and access to micro-credit. In addition, some programs address legal (e.g., documentation),

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[16] Also called "soft skills," these are often broadly defined and may include attitudes and behavioral skills relative to self (self-esteem, self-discipline, perseverance), others (leadership, teamwork, communication, conflict prevention and resolution), job-seeking (CV-writing, interviewing techniques), work (time management, decision-making, problem-solving, quality assurance), and health (hygiene, nutrition, management of risky behavior).

medical, or psychological issues (e.g., arising from abuse), while some provide recreation, such as sports, which draws in youth, keeps them engaged in positive activities, and provides additional opportunities to address their needs.

In some cases, programs provide a holistic set of services to a particularly vulnerable population. Two examples of such programs financed by USAID/DR are the *Aprendiendo Juntos* (Learning Together) project led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Batey Community Development Project led by Save the Children. Using an "alternative education center" as a base from which to provide services, the *Aprendiendo Juntos* project addresses the range of complex needs of out-of-school and other highly vulnerable youth. This project is described further in the Education section below.

The Batey Community Development Project utilizes a community-based approach, in which a concentration of services is provided to eight communities of Haitian migrants and descendents. A local coordinator works in each community to ensure coordination of service delivery. While the project does not have a youth component per se, it works to improve teaching and learning through teacher training and complementary school programming, provides vocational and entrepreneurship skills to youth ages 14-17, addresses sexual health needs (implemented by *Mujeres en Desarrollo*, or MUDE), and provides opportunities for community leadership, including disaster preparedness. These areas have intersected, for example as youth acquiring plumbing skills have become involved in community infrastructure projects.

> *"Here in Puerto Plata we are missing recreational activities, cultural activities … these cultural activities form your character and your personality"*

According to focus groups with youth participating in these and other programs, youth value the opportunities that such programs present and believe they help them to overcome the barriers they face. Youth mentioned that they are seen in their communities as improving themselves by participating in these programs. Many youth reported gaining educational knowledge and skills, both academic and vocational, ranging from jewelry-making and woodworking to English language skills. In addition, they believed programs had helped them to improve their expressive capacity, to develop a vision for the future, and to increase their knowledge of themes relating to health. They enjoyed recreation, particularly sports and computers, but also cultural activities such as cooking and dance. Many also report greater self-esteem, which in turn they value as facilitating them in realizing their goals.

The general perception among interviewees and youth was that the demand for such programs greatly exceeds supply. Youth indicated that, apart from the programs in which they participate, few or no similar opportunities exist in their communities. They believed that existing programs function well, but they lack coverage relative to demand. Youth believe that others who lack opportunities to participate in programs would benefit from them. They see youth outside of programs as envious and wishing they could participate, or vulnerable to involvement in criminal activity.

Youth saw a strong need for educational, employment, health promotion and recreational programs and spaces. They advocated for alternative and vocational education opportunities, apart from traditional schooling, as ways that youth could use their time productively and engage in learning. They expressed a strong need for health programs, especially to address sexual activity and drug use. Youth across age groups and geographic areas also strongly expressed the need for recreational and sports facilities.

Across age groups but particularly among younger youth, focus group participants also indicated the importance of spirituality and the need for emotional support. Both interviewees and focus group participants noted that at-risk youth often suffer from low self-esteem, associated with poverty, lack of success in school, or abuse and violence. Youth participating in programs with a spiritual component identified God as a need in their lives. Other youth ages 10-13 and 14-17 who participated in programs emphasized the need for emotional support. Youth ages 10-13 who did not participate in any program expressed the need for a person or organization who could provide guidance, whom they could trust, and who could communicate with them discreetly and effectively. Additional recommendations made by youth are included under Key Success Factors.

IV. EDUCATION

The interviewees and youth alike who participated in this assessment recognize the importance of education for improving youths' opportunities in life. However, despite the progress of the Dominican public education system in increasing access, academic progression and literacy, many youth are not obtaining the opportunities or the knowledge and skills they need. While basic education enrollment is fairly high (89% in 2008-09[17]), at least[18] 22,000 youth ages 10-14 remain out of school.[19] Secondary enrollment is dramatically lower (50% in 2008-09[20]), as youth face a number of constraints to accessing education at that level. Impediments to access are a function of both family and community context, and the school system itself. Those youth who are enrolled in school are often inadequately prepared for work, which contributes to their particularly high rate of unemployment. While many programs exist both within and outside of the formal education system to address youths' educational needs, they fall short of the considerable demand.

The Education System and Education Policies

Over the past two decades, the government has engaged in important reform efforts to improve the education level of its citizens. Starting with the first 10-Year Education Plan in

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[17] MINERD, 2010. "*Boletín de Indicadores: Año Lectivo 2008-2009.*"
[18] Given that overall basic education enrollment stands at 89% according to MINERD, it is likely that more than 22,000 youth agesaged 10-14 are out of school. Otherwise, a net enrollment rate of roughly 9899% for that age group would be implied.
[19] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd Semester 2008 data
[20] MINERD, 2010. "*Boletín de Indicadores: Año Lectivo 2008-2009.*"

1992, the government has taken steps aimed at expanding education coverage and increasing efficiency, improving literacy, and modernizing the curriculum. In 2008, the government established a new 10-Year Education Plan (2008-2018) and, to guide its implementation, the Education Management Plan (2008-2013). The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID, for its Spanish acronym) and the European Union provide significant budgetary support in line with these Plans, while other donors such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) fund specific, related projects.

Passed in 1997 as part of the education reform process, the General Law on Education (66-97) guarantees the right of all inhabitants of the Dominican Republic to education. The final year of initial education and all eight years of basic education are compulsory and to be provided free of charge. Secondary education is also to be provided free of charge, though it is not compulsory. Children with special needs are to be educated with their own age group and special education integrated in regular programs, adapting the curriculum as necessary.

The table below describes the structure of the education system.

Table 2 Structure of Dominican Education System by Intended Ages

Agency	Level	Cycle	Ages	Grades and Ages			
				1-4	5-8	9-10	11-12
Ministry of Education	Initial	Preschool	0-5				
	Basic	First			6-9		
		Second				10-13	
	Secondary	First					14-15
		Second					16-17
	Adult	Basic					
		Secondary					
Min. of Higher Education, Science and Technology	Tertiary						
INFOTEP	Technical-Professional						

Adapted from OECD. 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic"

The government entities with primary responsibility for education include the Ministry of Education (Initial, Basic, Secondary and Adult Education), the National Institute for Technical-Professional Training (INFOTEP, for its Spanish acronym), and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The Ministry of Education administers public schools as well as supervises private and "semi-official"[21] schools. INFOTEP, which provides training courses and continuing education through accredited centers, will be discussed further under Youth Employment.

Basic and secondary education are each divided into two cycles, with the second cycles culminating in a National Examination. Basic education comprises two four-year cycles.

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[21] Publicly subsidized schools operated by private (e.g., religious) entities

Secondary comprises an initial two-year cycle, with a common curriculum for all students, and a second two-year cycle, allowing for electives and specialization through three modalities: general academic, technical-vocational, and arts. Students are required to pass National Examinations at the conclusion of basic and secondary education in order to progress to the next education level.

In addition to these levels, the subsystem of Adult Education promotes literacy and professional training, as well as offers equivalency programs in basic and secondary education for those who have not completed those levels. These programs, known as Basic Education for Adults (EBA, for its Spanish acronym) and Secondary Education for Adults (PREPARA, for its Spanish acronym), offer older youth and adults important second-chance opportunities to complete their education. Since 2007, the World Bank has invested to expand the coverage and improve the quality of these two programs.

Education Indicators and Perceptions of Education

Access

The Dominican Republic has made commendable progress in expanding education access, though challenges exist for increasing access further. In 2008-09, net basic education enrollment was 89.2 percent. Net enrollment was much lower for secondary (50.9%),[22] though this represented a doubling in enrollment since 2000. Education services are predominantly publicly provided (accounting for 84% of enrollment), though private entities serve a higher proportion of youth at the secondary level (25% compared to 19% for basic education).[23]

The growth of public education infrastructure has not kept pace with rising enrollment,[24] which has diminished learning and limited further expansion of access. Many schools, especially in urban areas, are overcrowded: in public schools with 500 students or more (accounting for 68% of total enrollment), the student-teacher ratio is 78:1, which severely hampers teachers' capacity to address individual student needs. A significant portion of public schools (29%) hold classes in three shifts, which decreases learning time (especially for night classes) and creates administrative challenges. In addition, secondary classes are held in primary schools that often lack adequate materials or equipment (e.g., science laboratories). In order to accommodate the rising demand for secondary school, the system has resorted to renting classrooms in private schools or using improvisational space. Remedying this situation through the construction of new secondary schools and rehabilitation of existing schools is a major focus of a new loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).[25] While urban schools are disproportionately affected by

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[22] MINERD, 2010. "*Boletín de Indicadores: Año Lectivo 2008-2009.*"
[23] OECD, 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic"
[24] IDB, 2010. "Conditional Credit Line and First Individual Loan for the Program to Support the 10-Year Education Plan." Data on class size and school shifts also from this document.
[25] IDB, 2010. "Conditional Credit Line and First Individual Loan for the Program to Support the 10-Year Education Plan." Data on class size and school shifts also from this document.

overcrowding and inadequate space, many rural areas simply lack secondary schools for students to attend. Interviewees noted that such students often must commute or leave their communities to continue studying.

Interviewees and youth participating in this study further observed that access is hindered by requirements for identity documents and school personnel's discriminatory behavior against certain youth populations. Students are required to show identity documents to take the National Examinations and to enroll in secondary school. As will be discussed further below, focus group participants indicated that lacking a birth certificate is sufficient reason for youth to drop out or not enroll. School personnel may ask pregnant youth to leave school, though the youth are not required to leave by law. In addition, school personnel may not allow Haitian youth to enroll, even at the basic education level. Furthermore, some teachers were said to be "afraid" of street youth and not know how to incorporate them effectively into the classroom, which cause some to drop out.

Academic Outcomes and Relevance

Despite the country's significant progress in increasing the literacy rate among its population, with the greatest progress among youth, a substantial number of illiterate youth remain (see Table 3). In 2008, more than 23,000 youth ages 10-14 and nearly 25,000 youth ages 15-19 characterized themselves as unable to read or write. The number was far greater among those 20-24: more than 44,000. Male youth are disproportionately likely to be illiterate, constituting between 59 and 69 percent of those unable to read and write depending on the age group. Rural youth were also disproportionately likely to be illiterate across all age groups though the absolute number of illiterate urban youth ages 10-14 exceeded the number of illiterate rural youth.

Table 3 Number of Illiterate Youth, Gender and Geography Breakdown, by Age, 2008

	10 -14	15 – 19	20 – 24
Total	23,383	24,817	44,267
Male	65%	69%	59%
Female	35%	31%	41%
Urban	53%	43%	48%
Rural	47%	57%	52%

Source: Central Bank. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd Semester 2008

Interviewees and focus group participants signaled that school quality and learning outcomes are very low, a perception corroborated by assessment results. Focus group participants indicate that classroom space and the quality of teachers need to improve, believing the latter in particular limits youths' development. They note that much of the time, even youth who are in school are unable to read or write due to the low quality of the teaching staff. Interviewees perceive significant deficiencies in reading and writing, as well as mathematics. Aligning with this perspective, a recent regional assessment showed that a significantly higher percentage of 3rd grade students in the Dominican Republic scored below basic than any of the other 16 countries: 41 percent in mathematics and 31 percent in reading. According to the Dominican Republic's National Examination results for 1999-

2005, the average scores for 8th graders in all four subjects generally fell below the passing grade (65).[26] Both the IDB's new loan mentioned above and USAID/DR's basic education project seek to improve learning achievement in language and mathematics in the first cycle of basic education. Moreover, the World Bank is investing to improve the quality and expand the coverage of initial education, which should positively affect later learning achievement.

Interviewees and focus group participants perceived that schools offer education that is of little relevance and insufficient to enable youth to progress. Interviewees described the academic experience as impersonal, in part due to high student-teacher ratios in many schools. Further, they noted that the content and pedagogy was seen as boring to students. Schools were said not to equip youth for the workplace or self-employment. Youth leave school lacking job search skills, an understanding of what employment opportunities are available, and the knowledge and skills required to attain the jobs they want. Focus group participants emphasized the importance of not only what you know but whom you know. Although they believe it is necessary to complete their education and be skilled in order to realize their goals, they also consider it critical to have relationships with people of influence who can help them. Youth ages 18-24 indicated that given the degree of *clientelismo politico* in the country, sometimes it is not even worthwhile to study, because it is difficult for those who are not members of the governing party to find employment.

Academic Progression

Poor learning outcomes contribute to high repetition rates, which are most acute in the transition years between education levels. In 2008-09, the repetition rate for basic education was 7.0 percent overall and 8.4 percent for the public system. Eighth grade constitutes a particular bottleneck, with a repetition rate of 10.8 percent in public schools. At the secondary level, the first and fourth (final) year show the highest repetition rates, at 11.7 and 18.6 percent respectively. This suggests that youth may face particular challenges in successfully making the transition from one education level to the next.

As a result of late entrance, repetition, and temporary drop out[27],[28] the percent of students who are delayed (1-2 years behind grade level) or overage (2 or more years above the intended age for the grade) is high. These delays both reflect and exacerbate low learning outcomes, given that classrooms of widely divergent ages can be challenging to teach. In 2008-09, the proportion of delayed and overage students grew with each successive grade, from 17.2 percent delayed and 4.6 percent overage in 1st grade, to 29.6 percent delayed and 10.6 percent overage in 8th grade.[29] In addition, more than 40 percent of secondary school students were either delayed and overage for their grade.[30]

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[26] OECD, 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic."
[27] OECD, 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic."
[28] OECD, 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic."
[29] MINERD, 2010. "*Boletín de Indicadores: Año Lectivo 2008-2009.*"
[30] MINERD, 2010. "*Boletín de Indicadores: Año Lectivo 2008-2009.*"

Although many children continue attending school, even after being required to repeat, others simply drop out. In 2008-09, the annual drop-out rate was 3.1 percent overall for basic education and 4.8 percent for the public system. Completion of 8th grade, as measured by persistence from entry in 1st grade, remains low despite considerable improvement (from 23% in 1988 to 53% in 1998[31] to 64% for boys and 74% for girls in 2007[32]). For those who continue on to secondary, a significant percentage drop out in the first year (9.3% in the public system in 2008-09). Again, this may suggest the difficulty in making the transition between education levels.

Out-of-School Youth

In 2008, roughly 22,000 youth ages 10-14 were not enrolled in school, despite the fact that primary school is compulsory[33]. As with illiteracy, boys were disproportionately represented among those out of school, accounting for roughly two thirds of the total. The geographic breakdown between urban and rural areas essentially mirrored that of the population for the age group as a whole.

A substantial number of youth ages 15-19 and 20-24 are out of school (264,899 and 535,209 respectively). This aligns with the perspective of focus group participants, who state that youth tend to drop out of school around age 14. Focus groups indicate that male youth leave school to work, while female youth leave school because they marry or become pregnant. In addition, they note that in some cases youth are lured by those who are in the street and have material things that those in school do not. Reasons for drop-out are discussed at greater length below.

A smaller but still sizable number of youth in these age groups are both out of school and unemployed (see Table 4) and may present greater vulnerability than those who are simply out of school. Many of the latter are employed, though the quality and degree of employment may vary. However, those who are out of school and unemployed lack the educational and income-generating opportunities that would enable them to advance and may lack the skills or other means to access these opportunities. Female youth are disproportionately represented among those who are out of school and unemployed, which aligns with higher female unemployment in general (to be further discussed later).

Table 4 Number of Out-of-School and Unemployed Youth, Gender and Geography Breakdown, by Age, 2008

	15-19	20-24
Out of school & unemployed	54,667	99,056
Male	42%	37%
Female	58%	63%
Urban	66%	69%
Rural	34%	31%

Source: Central Bank. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd Semester 2008

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[31] OECD, 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic."

[32] World Bank, 2010. "World Development Indicators."

[33] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data

According to *Foro Socioeducativo*'s "*Niños, Niñas, y Adolescentes Fuera del Sistema Educativo en República Dominicana*" (2009), which reviewed nationally representative surveys administered in recent years,[34] youth cite a range of motivational, economic, and circumstantial reasons for not attending school, with variation by age group and gender. Interview and focus group findings corroborate many of these factors.

Attitudes toward School. The most consistent reason across age groups for not attending school is that youth do not like it. This includes nearly 63,000 15-19-year-olds (24% of those out of school for that age group). While the survey data do not permit a more fine-grained analysis of this point, related themes that emerged from interviews and focus groups include low-quality teachers or schools, lack of academic success, overage, uninteresting content or pedagogy, lack of personal attention, and conflict with or mistreatment by teachers or other students.

Socioeconomic and Family Characteristics. Youth across age groups also cited a lack of economic resources as a reason for not attending school. In 2004 and 2006, among youth ages 6-13,[35] simply not having resources was the most commonly specified reason. In 2008, roughly 14,000 youth ages 15-19 (5% of the total out of school for that age group) stated as the reason for not attending that school was very expensive. These data align with the data showing that poor children (ages 5-17) are nearly twice as likely not to attend school as non-poor children (11% versus 6%).[36]

Interviewees perceive that at-risk youth come from dysfunctional homes, and data corroborate the relationship between family characteristics and school attendance. While 6.5 percent of children whose parent is the head of household do not attend school, that figure rises to at least 12.3 percent in cases when another relative (other than a grandparent) or non-relative is the household head. In addition, there is a positive relationship between a child's school attendance and the head of household's age and education level. Nearly 28 percent of children whose household head is less than 20 years old do not attend school, while nearly 16 percent of children whose household head has no education do not attend.

Child and Youth Labor. Older youth (ages 14-24), especially the oldest age group, commonly cited work as a reason for not attending school. Among youth ages 14-17, this reason was much more prevalent among males than females.

Although very few 10-14 year-olds cited work as a reason for not attending school,[37] those who currently work were more than twice asas likely to be out of school (28%) as in school (13%).[38] It is not clear whether working youth do not attend school because they work, or

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[34] ENHOGAR 2006 (6-13 and 14-17), ENCOVI 2004 (6-13 and 14-17), and ENFT 2008 (10-14, 15-19, and 20-24)
[35] ENHOGAR 2006 and ENCOVI 2004
[36] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[37] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[38] ENHOGAR 2006

work because they do not attend school. Working youth are more likely to be overage,[39] which may suggest that work has delayed or interfered with their studies. In addition, working youth are more likely to attend night classes,[40] which are often of lower quality.

Identity Documents. Youth ages 6-13[41] and 10-14[42] also cited the lack of identity documents as a reason for not attending school. While this problem is said to be diminishing, a large number of youth are impeded in enrolling for this reason, despite the Ministry of Education's Ordinance stating that the lack of documentation should not restrict access. In 2008, more than 2,000 youth ages 10-14 and more than 7,000 youth ages 15-19 reported not attending school for reasons of documentation. The extent of this issue and efforts to remedy it will be discussed in greater detail under Civic Participation.

Pregnancy and Health. As indicated by the focus groups conducted for this assessment, pregnancy is a major factor in school drop-out among female adolescents. In 2004, 18 percent of female youth ages 14-17 cited getting pregnant as a reason for not attending school.[43] While more recent disaggregated data are limited, the more than 31,000 female youth ages 15-19 who cited "family reasons" in a 2008 survey likely includes a large percentage of pregnant youth and young mothers. Nearly half of this group (47%) lives in rural areas.

"… There are young people who marry at such an early age and that makes them leave school."

A concerning percentage of youth cite health problems or disabilities as reasons for not attending school, though the survey data do not permit insight into the nature of these issues. In 2008, more than a quarter of youth ages 10-14 cite having a physical disability as the reason for not attending school,[44] while in 2006 sevenseven percent of youth ages 14-17 cite health reasons for not attending.[45]

Key Education Programs for At-Risk Youth

Two fundamental goals of education programs targeting at-risk youth are: 1) reentry into school among out-of-school youth, and 2) academic success and progression for at-risk youth who are in school. This report highlights four models of education programming for at-risk youth which aim to meet these goals: 1) alternative education centers; 2) complementary education programs, 3) leveling programs; and 4) alternative schools serving at-risk youth. Many of these models integrate program elements from other sectors, particularly psycho-social support, health promotion, and vocational training. In

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[39] Guzman, R. and Cruz, C. 2009. "*Niños, Niñas, y Adolescentes Fuera del Sistema Educativo en República Dominicana.*" *Foro Socioeducativo.*
[40] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[41] ENHOGAR 2006 and ENCOVI 2004
[42] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[43] ENCOVI 2004
[44] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[45] ENHOGAR 2006

focus groups with youth participating in these programs[46], youth perceived that they gained a range of benefits from them, including better academic performance, emotional support, a greater sense of spirituality and responsibility toward others, and opportunities to learn languages and engage in activities such as arts and computers. The report discusses key examples of each type briefly below and in greater detail in Annex 3.

Alternative Education Centers

Alternative education centers provide a space in which a range of services may be delivered to at-risk youth on an ongoing or as needed basis. These centers can perform critical services for youth in crisis by addressing their most immediate needs (e.g., medical attention, protection from abuse, housing) and developing and implementing a plan to address their needs going forward (e.g., drug treatment, reentry into school, job training). They provide academic support, often with a particular focus on fostering literacy and numeracy. In focus groups, youth participating in such programs indicated that they offer an important opportunity to improve and that many "street youth" (those living and working in the street) need such opportunities and the benefits they bring, such as food, clothing, education and health care.

USAID/DR's *Consorcio* NINA and *Aprendiendo Juntos* projects, under the Out-of-School and At-Risk Youth program, comprise a central example of center-based programs that target the most vulnerable youth. Led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and implemented by five local partners[47], *Consorcio* NINA provided holistic support to 4,040 vulnerable children and youth[48] ages 5-17 from 2005 to 2008. USAID/DR continued funding the initiative through the follow-on project, *Aprendiendo Juntos,* which served 2,260 children and youth from May 2008 to May 2010.[49]

In addition to providing critical services to vulnerable youth, the project made important contributions to systematizing inter-institutional referrals, intervention, and organizational monitoring. Police and district attorney's offices refer cases to the local partners on a systematic basis, and local partners that do not offer residential services in turn refer to partners that do. The project developed and instituted a uniform process of diagnostic, intervention and follow-up for youth across partners. The CRS Design, Monitoring and Evaluation department worked to build the capacity of local partners to develop tools such as logical frameworks and annual operating plans, to define and monitor indicators through basic instruments, and to verify data. While interviewees noted that all partners had the capacity to "transform cases," they identified two partners, *Acción Callejera* and *Caminante,* as serving the largest number of youth and having fulfilled the criteria to manage USAID funds directly.

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[46] Focus groups were conducted with *Acción Callejera, Caminante*, The DREAM Project, *Espacios Para Crecer* of the Batey Community Development Project, and *Hay Poder en Aprender*
[47] *Acción Callejera* in Santiago, *Caminante* in Boca Chica, and *Niños del Camino*, *Quédate con Nosotros*, and *Yo También* in Santo Domingo
[48] Catholic Relief Services (CRS): http://crs.org/dominican-republic/projects.cfm#education
[49] Catholic Relief Services (CRS): http://crs.org/dominican-republic/projects.cfm#education

Muchachos y Muchachas con Don Bosco (MDB) comprises another important example of this program type. MDB consists of a network of 10 centers (including one under the USAID/DR project) that currently serves 2,000 youth in Santo Domingo and the interior of the country.

Complementary Education and Reinforcement

Complementary education and reinforcement programs provide enriching, engaging activities outside of the school day to support at-risk youths' academic success and personal development. Programs may foster reentry among youth out of school, as well as academic progression for those in school. Some programs also address high-risk behaviors or practices, such as child labor or teen pregnancy. Key examples include the U.S. Department of Labor's *Espacios para Crecer* program; the USAID/DR-supported DREAM Project and *Hay Poder en Aprender;* and the Ministry of Education's *HabilitaciónHabiliación de Verano* program.

Since 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor has funded *Espacios para Crecer* (EPC), a large-scale program that seeks to combat child labor by fostering school reentry and persistence through educational and recreational activities. USAID/DR has financed EPC in the Save the Children Batey Community Development Project and the *Hay Poder en Aprender* program described below. Using the Quantum Learning (QL) methodology, EPC provides daily academic reinforcement and life skills during the school year and recreation during the summer over a 15-month period. From 2003 to 2007, the project benefited 5,574 children. Its successor project aims to serve 7,500 children ages 6-13 from 2007 to 2011. EPC was widely viewed by interviewees as a successful program in engaging youth and reducing child labor, and an evaluation showed that a sample of participants had higher secondary enrollment and completion rates than the national average. Interviewees describe the QL methodology as motivational for both students and teachers, and applauded its work with multiple intelligences. Furthermore, focus group participants indicated that the program has improved their performance in school, enabled them to pass their classes, and helped them to have a vision for their future. Some interviewees perceived that the program could be strengthened (e.g., by making it more holistic in addressing youths' needs and increasing its focus on literacy and basic skills) and adapted to allow for participation in other activities.

"I would create a program to encourage young people to study"

The DREAM Project in Cabarete provides Montessori preschool to over 400 children ages 3-6 in four communities and offers a Young Stars afterschool program for adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18 designed to offer educational reinforcement and leadership training. The program benefits 150 at-risk youth in two communities. The DREAM Projects'Project's 4-week educational summer camp program for at-risk youth in Cabarete offers reinforcement courses in reading, writing, English, and math, in addition to camp-related activities like swimming, art, sports, music and dance. There are also mini-courses for the adolescents that focus on employability skills. The camp benefits 150 youth ages 10-

12, and 100 adolescents ages 13-18 yearly. Academic assessments in reading, writing, and math on the Young Stars and camp program participations showed significant improvements in their test scores.

Hay Poder en Aprender (There is Power in Learning) provides integrated, complementary programming to 225 at-risk children and youth in the densely populated neighborhood of Manoguayabo, just outside Santo Domingo. The organization was established in 2007 by Major League Baseball Player, Pedro Martinez, and his wife, Carolina Cruz, in his hometown with the primary goals of reducing teenage pregnancy and promoting positive values. It provides 25 4-6-year-olds and 200 youth ages 7-17 with spiritual and values development, academic reinforcement, psycho-social support, and recreational and cultural activities in the mornings and afternoons at its center located next to a public school. In addition, it administers EPC for youth involved in or at risk for child labor. Values development was seen as a critical component by both interviewees and youth participating in focus groups. One interviewee stated that 100 percent of participating 8th graders passed the National Examination this year, and that approximately 95 percent of them will enroll in secondary school. During the 2009-2010 school year, three youth became pregnant and were asked to leave the program. An interviewee indicated that in order to combat teenage pregnancy more effectively, the organization will incorporate adolescent reproductive and sexual health programming, to be piloted during the summer of 2010.

Hay Poder en Aprender represents an important example of a project benefited by USAID/DR's Major League Baseball Dominican Development Alliance (MLB-DDA). Administered by the *Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral* (IDDI), the MLB-DDA leverages the strong connection between the Dominican Republic and Major League Baseball and the resources of the MLB. Under the MLB-DDA, USAID/DR matches US$1 million in donations from MLB players and fans to carry out community development projects. USAID/DR has vetted six NGOs, including IDDI, that serve as umbrella organizations to project implementation, thereby giving donors confidence that their resources will be well spent. A monitoring framework for the Alliance is in development.

The Ministry of Education administers the Summer Skills Training (*Habilitación de Verano*) program to facilitate the transition from 8th grade to secondary among struggling students, thereby reducing repetition and ultimately overage. Strengthening academic skills in Spanish, mathematics, and social and natural sciences, the program targets students who have performed at the minimum level required to complete eighth grade during the summer before they enter secondary. An interviewee noted that the program reduced repetition by increasing students' skill levels and thereby their success at the secondary level.

Leveling Programs

In order to remedy the high overage , the Ministry of Education has pursued several initiatives since 2002. These include Accelerated *Bachillerato* and the more recent Leveling Program, both noted in the OECD. Accelerated *Bachillerato* enables students to complete their secondary degree in two, rather than four years, by combining instruction with

weekend tutorials. According to an interviewee, it served approximately 18,000-24,000 students annually. An evaluation of the program found no significant difference in performance on the National Examinations between program participants and students completing the regular four-year program.[50] Launched in 2006-07, the Leveling Program enables students to complete the second cycle of secondary in one year, rather than two, provided they have good qualifications and make the required effort.

Alternative Schools Serving At-Risk Youth

Interviewees emphasized the importance of appropriate education modalities for at-risk youth. As an alternative to traditional public schools and the accelerated programs described above, youth may attend "semi-official" schools (key examples of which are described below), Adult Education programs, or vocational-technical courses. Key examples include *Fe y Alegría,* polytechnic schools, the Ministry of Education's EBA and PREPARA programs, and INFOTEP's vocational courses for vulnerable populations.

Under an agreement with the Ministry of Education, private entities such as religious orders receive public funds to administer semi-official schools serving low-income students. The Ministry supervises the schools, but the implementing entity may select its teaching and administrative staff. Interviewees noted *Fe y Alegria,* an international network of schools with national operations in the DR, as a large-scale and effective example of this type.

At the secondary level, polytechnic schools offer alternatives to the regular public school system and in many cases benefit low-income students. They are provided under three organizational auspices: 1) administered by the Ministry; 2) administered by private entities such as NGOs or religious orders, but subsidized by the Ministry; and 3) administered and financed privately but certified by the Ministry. The schools have autonomy not available to the regular public schools: to select their teachers based on character, motivation, and competence independent of political considerations, and to select and retain students based not on family income but on their commitment to learn and abide by basic expectations regarding discipline and social behavior.[51] While not all polytechnic schools target low-income students per se, they are obliged to serve students without regard to family income. In addition, they must develop strategies to work with vulnerable youth, for example co-locating public health services on-site, and many are located in low-income neighborhoods.

For older youth who have dropped out of school, the Ministry-run Adult Education programs, EBA and PREPARA, offer second-chance opportunities to further their studies. According to an interviewee, EBA (which is offered in the evenings) and PREPARA (offered evenings and weekends) are important alternatives for youth who want or need to work or attend to household responsibilities. Under support from the World Bank since 2008, the EBA program has been streamlined from five days per week to three, and newly installed

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[50] OECD, 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic."
[51] OECD, 2008. "Review of National Education Policies: Dominican Republic."

generators were said to have increased coverage. Current reforms to EBA are focused on incorporating more "education for life" and the development of basic competencies such as reading and writing well, and reforms to PREPARA are focused on diversifying its offerings, including specialized coursework.

INFOTEP is described further under Youth Employment. Also included in that section are programs incorporating INFOTEP courses, such as the Youth and Employment program, *Espacios para Emprender* (including Save the Children Batey Community Development Project and IDDI) and Counterpart International.

Conclusions / Gaps between Supply and Demand in Education

While the government has engaged in important efforts to reform the education system over the past two decades, and many nonformal programs exist to strengthen youths' education level, in general there exists a wide gap between the quantity and quality of education opportunities and the needs and interests of youth. This gap is particularly wide beyond basic education, when many youth are left unable to pursue further education, but inadequately prepared to join the workforce. Key gaps include:

Lack of Supply

The supply of schools, school spaces, and nonformal education programs is insufficient to meet the demand among youth. Particularly at the secondary level, schools are overcrowded (in urban areas) or nonexistent or distant (in rural areas). In addition, while many nonformal programs exist such as those described above, the general perspective among interviewees and youth was that the demand greatly exceeded the supply.

Impediments to Access

While many vulnerable youth value education and see it as a critical means to realize their goals, they face a number of barriers in accessing educational opportunities. Formal barriers include the requirements to hold a birth certificate or other identity document to enroll in secondary education and INFOTEP courses. In addition, the length of some programs (e.g., *Espacios para Crecer* or *Bachillerato Accelerado*) inhibit youth from participating. Informal barriers include prejudices that school personnel may have against particular groups, such as street youth, Haitian youth or pregnant youth, which prevent these groups from enrolling or contribute to their drop-out. In addition, parents may not place value on education, particularly if their children are not succeeding or if they consider it preferable or necessary for their children to help out at home or earn extra income. While primary and secondary education are to be provided free of charge by law, the cost of books or transportation limit poor youths' ability to attend school.

Low Quality and Relevance of Academic Offerings

Interviewees and youth alike perceived the quality and relevance of education as generally low. While literacy rates in the country have improved, the Dominican education system

fails to provide many youth with basic academic knowledge and skills, let alone the higher-level skills required for many jobs. Interviewees noted major deficiencies in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, youth do not see a connection between school and success in life. The education system does not provide youth with knowledge and skills for employment or civic participation. In part owing to large class size, it is difficult to personalize educational content for students' needs and interests.

High Personnel Turnover within Ministry of Education

A number of interviewees noted that the Ministry of Education has experienced considerable turnover. This poses challenges to the successful implementation of the programs that are carried out both directly by the Ministry and by NGOs working in collaboration with the Ministry.

V. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Access to adequate livelihood opportunities is one of the most critical issues that youth face in the Dominican Republic. Research, interviews and focus group discussions demonstrated that key challenges for youth in this regard include difficulty in obtaining a first job, under-employment and job quality. Programs related to entrepreneurship education (credit, business skills, entrepreneurial spirit), skills development and training (vocational/hard skills), and employment services (counseling) attempt to address youth needs. However, significant gaps still exist between the needs and the services available to youth, including:

- Unbalanced market supply and demand – limited number of jobs available for youth in the market;
- Skills gaps between opportunities available and youth seeking them;
- Youths' lack of experience;
- No links between formal and informal markets (youth tend to start working in the informal market);
- Little or no counseling services to help direct youth.

Further study of existing and pending youth employment policies, the key challenges facing youth and the programs that seek to support youth led the assessment team to identify these gaps which have informed programming recommendations at the end of this report.

Youth Employment Policies

According to Decree No. 774-01 the Secretary of Labor (SET, for its Spanish acronym) is the government entity with primary responsibility for labor matters in the Dominican Republic. The SET is responsible for ensuring compliance with the laws and decrees regarding youth employment as well as promoting policies designed to improve the employability of young people and reduce barriers to the labor market.

Dominican legislation provides that as of age fourteen minors are allowed to work, however employment is conditional and restricted to certain types of work until age 18. In the context of protection, the SET is responsible for detecting and removing children from child labor, combating child and adolescent exploitation, monitoring and detecting violations of the minimum age law, ensuring compliance with labor rights and social security for adolescent workers.

In addition to regulating youth employment, SET policies are also designed to improve the employability of young people and reduce barriers that limit their access to the labor market. The Ministry has been implementing initiatives over the last several years aimed to create favorable conditions for youth to obtain their first job through training and the implementation of structures that facilitate the job search. The SET is also strengthening institutional capacity to develop and implement national policies to promote youth employment specifically with the development and consolidation of the National Employment System which includes a job bank and the Dominican labor market observatory. More information about these initiatives is provided below and in Annex 4.

As a complement to the Ministry of Labor, the National Institute for Technical-Professional Training (INFOTEP) was created by Law 116 of 1980 with the purpose of governing non-formal technical and vocational training. Its basic objective is to provide professional technical training to workers of all economic activities and employment levels, as well as organize training, improvement, specialization and retraining programs for adult workers, and provide financial and technical support to public and private training institutes.[52]

It is also important to note that a bill (law), entitle "My first job" *(Mi Primer Empleo),* is being discussed to create a legal and operational framework for apprenticeship contracts that provides incentives to companies to provide the first employment experience to young people. The bill did not pass into law when it was voted on in 2009 as many felt that the labor conditions it offered to young people were not sufficient, however the bill continues to be discussed between labor unions and sectors that drive the proposal.

Youth Employment Indicators

In 2009, the working age population (age 10+)[53] of the Dominican Republic totaled 7.8 million people, of which 53.8 percent participated in the labor force.[54] Underemployment and unemployment are high. Rapid economic growth rates helped to reduce the rate of unemployment from nearly 20 percent in 1990 to 13.8 percent in 1999; however, the economic crisis of 2003-04 pushed the rate back up to 19.7 percent in October 2004. A strong GDP recovery in 2006 has not been able to counteract the effects of the world

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[52] PREJAL, 2009. *Informe Trabajo Decente y Juventud: Propuesta de Lineamientos para el Plan de Acción Empleo Juvenil en República Dominicana*, versión de borrador 28 septiembre 2009.
[53] The legal minimum age for employment is age 14, however the National Labor Force Survey and other national and international data sources include youth from age 10 in their statistics.
[54] Overall participation rate: The ratio of the economically active population and the population of working age, this ratio measures the level of economic activity.

financial crisis and the rate of unemployment has remained high, ending 2009 at 15 percent.[55]

Youth face even greater difficulties than adults in entering the labor market and have unemployment rates considerably higher than adults. In 2008, youth ages 10-24 represented a fourth (24%) of the total labor force in the DR, and 43 percent of the total unemployed population.[56] Youth in urban areas face even greater difficulties than their rural counterparts with an urban unemployment rate of 27.5 percent as compared to 21.5 percent in the rural areas. There is also a gender dimension to labor markets. Labor force participation is much lower among women and young women also have the highest unemployment rates. Table 5 shows a breakdown of employment characteristics by age, geography, and gender. Trend data on youth unemployment rates is available in Annex 5.

Table 5 Youth Employment Characteristics, 2008

	Total	Urban	Rural	Women	Men
Participation Rate (%)					
Age 10 – 14	3.3%	2.2%	5.7%	1.6%	5.1%
Age 15 – 19	33.7%	34.8%	31.5%	24.5%	42.7%
Age 20 – 24	72.7%	72.0%	74.3%	59.0%	87.8%
Unemployment Rate (%)					
Age 10 – 14	8.1%	6.6%	9.2%	10.7%	7.3%
Age 15 – 19	29.7%	31.3%	26.2%	47.7%	19.5%
Age 20 – 24	24.4%	26.1%	20.0%	36.9%	15.1%
% Formal Sector Employment					
Age 10 – 14	13.2%	8.7%	16.6%	3.1%	16.3%
Age 15 – 19	25.3%	29.1%	16.9%	24.5%	25.7%
Age 20 – 24	42.1%	45.2%	34.6%	41.5%	42.6%
% Informal Sector Employment					
Age 10 - 14	86.8%	91.3%	83.4%	96.9%	83.7%
Age 15 - 19	74.7%	70.9%	83.1%	75.5%	74.3%
Age 20 - 24	57.9%	54.8%	65.4%	58.5%	57.4%

Source: Central Bank, National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008

Economic activity in the DR is relatively diversified considering the size of the economy. According to Central Bank data, services account for just over one-half of aggregate output, industry for one-third and agriculture for one-tenth. Within industry, manufacturing is the main component, accounting for 85 percent of activity. Communications has been the most dynamic sector, increasing its share in total GDP from 4.3 percent in 2002 to almost 10 percent by 2007, driven by mobile telephony. Despite a contraction in the past few years, production in the free-zone industrial sector still accounts for around 4 percent of GDP. Tourism is the main earner of foreign exchange and one of the largest employers. Workers'

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[55] Economist Intelligence Unit, May 2010. Dominican Republic Country Profile.
[56] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data

remittances (mainly from the estimated 1m Dominicans living in the US and Europe) also play a significant role in the economy, accounting for 7.5 percent of GDP.[57]

Economic activity also identifies the areas where work is concentrated. In the Dominican Republic about 25 percent of the economically active population (EAP) is active in trade, hotels and service, followed by manufacturing, social services, community and personal services and agriculture. Over 75 percent of the youth labor force is concentrated in five activities: wholesale and retail trade, other services, manufacturing, hotels, bars & restaurants, and agriculture. Agriculture is the primary source of employment in the rural areas while wholesale and retail trade is the primary source of youth employment in the urban areas. It is also important to highlight the gender divide in employment. Young men are much more likely to be employed in agriculture (17.8%) and manufacturing (18.2%) while young women are more likely to be employed in other services (32.5%) and domestic labor (10.7%). An overview of youth employment by activity type is provided below in Table 6 and a detailed view of youth employment by activity, age, geography, and gender can be found in Annex 5.[58]

Table 6 Youth Employment by Activity, Ages 10-24, 2008

Activity	Ages 10 – 24				
	Total	Urban	Rural	Women	Men
Agriculture	12.3%	4.0%	29.8%	1.8%	17.8%
Mining and Quarrying	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%
Manufacturing	16.0%	17.3%	13.4%	12.0%	18.2%
Electricity, gas and waterworks	0.5%	0.7%	0.0%	0.9%	0.3%
Construction	5.7%	5.7%	5.9%	0.9%	8.3%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	25.5%	27.8%	20.6%	22.9%	26.8%
Hotels, Bars & Restaurants	5.8%	6.3%	4.8%	8.6%	4.4%
Transportation & Communication	5.7%	6.1%	5.0%	1.9%	7.7%
Financial & Insurance Establishments	2.5%	3.4%	0.6%	4.9%	1.2%
Public Administration & Defense	3.2%	3.8%	1.9%	2.8%	3.4%
Other Services	18.2%	20.7%	12.8%	32.5%	10.6%
Domestic Labor	4.2%	3.9%	4.9%	10.7%	0.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Central Bank, National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008
Other Services includes: Real Estate; Machinery, equipment and personal & household effects rental; Computer and related activities; other business activities; education; activities related to human health; Waste & Sanitation; Association activities; leisure, sports & cultural activities, other service activities.

Underemployment and job quality are also concerns, as job creation for young people is primarily in the informal sector where wages are reported to be 44 percent lower.[59] As seen in Table 5 above, the vast majority of youth employment is in the informal sector. Furthermore, approximately 30 percent of youth are self-employed and this rate increases substantialy for the rural area. (Figure 1).

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[57] Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008. Dominican Republic Country Profile.
[58] Central Bank, 2010. National Labor Force Survey database, 2nd semester 2008 data
[59] PREJAL, 2009. *Informe Trabajo Decente y Juventud: Propuesta de Lineamientos para el Plan de Acción Empleo Juvenil en República Dominicana*, versión de borrador 28 septiembre 2009.

Figure 1 Youth Employment (Ages 15-24) by Occupational Category, 2006
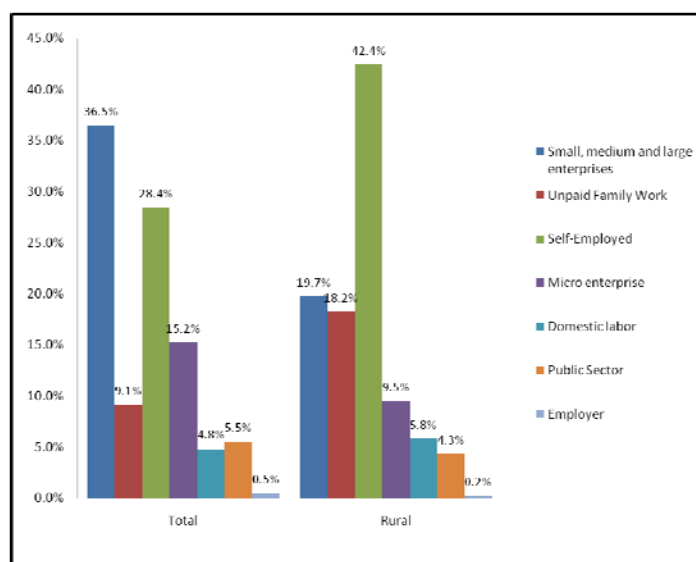
Source: PREJAL, 2009. *Informe Trabajo Decente y Juventud: Propuesta de Lineamientos para el Plan de Acción Empleo Juvenil en República Dominicana*, versión de borrador 28 Septiembre 2009.

Focus group participants indicated that the lack of employment opportunities leads young people to enter in activities which are harmful to themselves and to society, but often do so for survival. Young people in tourist areas like Puerto Plata and Boca Chica, emphasized that youth are involved in economic activities linked to drug trafficking and child prostitution. They mentioned that girls in Boca Chica are integrated into the sex trade as young as age 13. Youths' involvement in drug-dealing is described further under Civic Participation.

Key Employment Programs for At-Risk Youth

This report highlights three types of youth employment programming for at-risk youth: 1) entrepreneurship; 2) skills development & training programs; and 3) employment services for youth. The report discusses key examples of each type briefly below and in greater detail in Annex 4.

Entrepreneurship Education

The promotion of youth entrepreneurship constitutes an important strategy of youth employment promotion. Especially for marginalized youth, business creation offers a chance to participate in income generating activities. There are three important elements that must be taken into account when implementing youth entrepreneurship programs.

1. **Financing & Access to Credit**: In order for youth microenterprises to grow and get beyond the subsistence level, youth need access to credit. The vast majority of young people do not own assets and financial systems rarely make loans without collateral.

Credit should be made available, through microcredit loans, to youth not based on their financial assets, but rather based on the quality and sustainability of their entrepreneurial initiatives. Microcredit for young people can be provided through a local cooperative, a community bank, or a microcredit fund administered by a local NGO.

2. **Business skills training**: To start and successfully run a business young people need entrepreneurial skills and backstopping as well as access to credit. Development projects and training courses to promote youth entrepreneurship should cover the development of business ideas, market analysis, the development of business and finance plans, training in project and financial management, communication skills, constructive conflict resolution, and marketing. Ideally, a support team would also be established with representatives from the business sector to give the young people advice in implementing their business plans.

3. **Development of entrepreneurial spirit/thinking**: The above actions will have limited success if youth entrepreneurship is not encouraged. The way to address the issue of entrepreneurship varies by age and educational/employment status (i.e., is the young person still in school or already in the labor market.)). For young people still in school, the academic curriculum (or after school program) could include an entrepreneurship component to promote youth entrepreneurship from the beginning of the learning process. For out of school youth, programs could support productive "hands on" initiatives and business plan competitions. Whatever the intervention, risk taking, initiative, and long term vision are important attitudes that need to be encouraged and taught.

Key examples of entrepreneurship programs include the U.S. Department of Labor's *Espacios para Emprender* program, Junior Achievement programs and in the rural areas *FORJA* and Plan International and Peace Corps *Construir tu Sueño* program.

The U.S. Department of Labor funds Espacios para Emprender (EpE) as a complement to the Espacios para Crecer program mentioned above. The program is designed to equip 14-17 year old adolescents with the strategies required to find a job or establish a micro-enterprise and aims to reach 2,500 adolescents between 2007 and 20102010. EpE is a 450-hour program taught over a 30-week period that trains adolescents in lifelife and leadership leadership skills, vocationalvocational job-entry skills, and financialfinancial and basic managerial skills. The EpE "Vocational Job-Entry Skills" component is implemented through INFOTEP (described below under Skills Development and Training). Interviewees suggested that the program was promising but not as well developed as Espacios para Crecer. One interviewee also noted the challenge of finding staff who are effective in working with adolescents.

USAID/DR has financed the EpE program through two projects: 1) IDDI's School Reentry and Productive Incorporation program (*Reinserción Escolar y Fomento a la Incorporación Productiva*) in Cotui and 2) the Save the Children Batey Community Development Project. The former project aimed to reach 200 at-risk youth over a two-year period. In the case of

the latter project, USAID/DR and Save the Children have worked with INFOTEP to offer courses appropriate for the very low skill level among most batey youth.

Since 1995, Junior Achievement *Dominicana* (JADOM) has been partnering with the business community, educators and volunteers to teach the key concepts of work readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy to young people from first grade to university level. JADOM offers 17 different programs that reached over 12,000 young people during the 2008-2009 school year. JADOM has a strong connection to the private sector and has worked closely with Plan International and World Vision in the rural areas.

For young people in rural areas, access to skills trainings is often low, but highly important in order to acquire practical competencies, knowledge and attitudes to perform a trade or occupation in the local and regional markets. The FORJA (Formation of Young Farmers/ *Formación de Jóvenes Agricultores*) program focuses on providing young people in rural areas with the skills necessary to engage in productive activities as rural entrepreneurs. The three part training lasts at least one year and consists of intensive basic education, hands-on training /apprenticeship on a rural farm, and entrepreneurship/ project development. The program was initially developed by Helvetas and is (was) implemented by CIMPA and ISA University in the Santiago area. Interviewees noted the importance of this type of program for youth in the rural area due to the lack of formal employment opportunities and also because of its focus on the whole agriculture supply chain, which is the primary source of employment for youth in the rural area (Table 6 above). The FORJA program could be an effective model for providing entrepreneurship and vocational skills to rural youth participating in the USAID RED agriculture clusters.

Skills Development & Training

Skills development and training may be based in a classroom, on the job, in workshops, through community service or a combination of the four. It teaches youth work-related competencies and prepares them to get a credential, pass industry/trade standards or obtain an entry level job. There is a variety of programs currently available to develop youths' competencies and technical skills including technical high schools, INFOTEP and private vocational institutions, universities, and on the job training. According to interviewees and focus group participants, youth participating in such programs value the opportunities to acquire practical skills. Some youth elect to pursue technical courses if they cannot afford traditional schooling and perceive that such courses enable them obtain employment more quickly.

By far the largest and most extensive skills development program in the DR is INFOTEP, which provides training courses and continuing education through accredited centers. Interviewees regard the quality of INFOTEP courses to be high. In addition, youth in focus groups suggested that INFOTEP courses enabled youth to obtain first employment more easily and thereby to finance further studies. However, most INFOTEP programs require participants to have completed at least 8th grade, have an identity card, and be at least 16 years old, which make courses inaccessible for most at-risk youth. Since 2007, INFOTEP has begun to address this issue by offering courses requiring lower skill levels to

vulnerable populations. The Youth and Employment Program (below & Annex 6) is the main mechanism through which vulnerable populations can access INFOTEP programs. In some cases, such as with Save the Children and Counterpart International (described below), INFOTEP even waived the 8th grade completion requirement. Interviewees highlighted the need to work closely with INFOTEP to help them adapt to and accommodate the needs of at-risk youth.

The Inter American Development Bank and the World Bank have been supporting the Government in improving the employability of poor at-risk youth through the Youth and Employment *(*PJE, for its Spanish acronym*)* program. The Youth and Employment Program provides life and technical skills training combined with private sector internships, managed by the Secretary of Labor. The World Bank loan also supports "second-chance" educational programs that offer night classes toward obtaining a primary or secondary school diploma, provided by the Secretary of Education, as described under Education. Youth completing their degrees are consequently able to take advantage of higher-level training courses. The World Bank is conducting an extensive impact evaluation on the program and initial results were presented in June 2010. A preliminary impact evaluation report will be available soon through the World Bank or the SET. Detailed information about the Youth and Employment program is included in Annex 6. Interviewees noted the importance of the life skills component that was incorporated into the PJE program in 2007 and stated that employers perceive youth who have received life skills training as more "trainable". Interviewees also noted that one of the primary drawbacks of the program is that it rarely reaches rural areas due to the dearth of formal employment options there and the inability of training centers to secure internships for participants. In response to this challenge, the program will be piloting an entrepreneurship component in the rural area.

The USAID/DR funded *Training, Mentoring, and Job Placement for Disadvantaged Youth for the Tourism Sector* program in La Romana – Bayahibe is another example of reaching at-risk youth through vocational and job skills training, through INFOTEP and other course providers. Led by Counterpart International the program provided support to vulnerable youth, including orphans, ages 17-25 through vocational training and internships. Counterpart International

"I aspire to be a pediatrician, like some people working in this area."

established "itineraries" or sets of courses that developed youths' skills more comprehensively but fit within their skill level. Interviewees noted the difficulty of negotiating with INFOTEP and securing internships at local businesses as two important challenges in providing training to at-risk youth.

The Partners of the Americas *"A Ganar"* program, new in the DR, utilizes team sports to help youth, ages 16-24, find jobs, learn entrepreneurial skills, and/or re-enter the formal education system. ENTRENA is the Dominican based lead organization and they will work with Save the Children, Children International, *Educa*, and *Associación de Samanenses Ausentes* to implement the program in different parts of the country. The program targets economically disadvantaged youth, both in and out of the school system, and expects to

train 500 youth in 2011. The program is primarily funded by the Multilateral Investment Fund of the IDB and USAID/DR.

Employment Services For Youth

Given the high opportunity cost of vocational/technical training for young people and for society in general, it is important to provide a functional system of employment information, and career orientation and counselling to young people earlyon. Young people need to know what employment opportunities are available, which fields of activity the individual professions involve, and what qualifications (technical and social) are necessary. Furthermore, young people should get advice on adapting their interests and capabilities to the demands of different occupational areas. It can be helpful to develop an employment strategy with each young person, which defines clear and realistic steps on the way to productive employment.

An important component of the above mentioned entrepreneurship and skills training programs mentioned above are the networking opportunities that they provide to young people. Interviewees and youth alike noted the importance of personal connections to obtaining employment, as did the ILO Decent Work and Youth Latin America report which found that 33 percent of youth in the DR found work through family and friends.[60] Approaches that prepare young people better for the job market and bring them into contact with potential employers include career advice workshops, job application training, internships, school visits of company representatives, and job fairs. The media and modern information and communication technologies can also be used to provide employment information and career orientation.

Employment services for youth, particularly vulnerable youth, are scarce in the DR. One program that is important to highlight is the National Employment Service (SENAE, for its Spanish acronym) started in 2007 by the SET to develop a national job placement system. As of May 2010 the SENAE had opened nine regional employment offices, two of which were located inside INFOTEP training centers (one in Santiago), and had established an online job placement service (*www.empleateya.net*). On a limited basis the regional offices also offer career orientation and job search training, but the SENAE representative indicated that this was an area that needed expanded and improved. The SENAE is also creating an "employment observatory" to monitor market needs and trends in part to inform INFOTEP courses and provide guidance to job seekers.

Conclusions/ Gaps in Supply & Demand of Youth Employment

A complex mixture of individual, economic, demographic, cultural, and political factors influence the success or failure of young people to find decent first-time employment. This

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[60] ILO, 2008. "Decent Work and Youth: Latin America."

report in no way attempts to list all the causes and factors that influence youth unemployment, but rather focuses on the primary factors highlighted in research, interviews and youth focus groups. Some important causes and factors influencing youth unemployment in the DR are:

Mismatch between labor supply and demand

A significant mismatch exists between the sheer number of young people seeking employment and the limited number of jobs offered in the Dominican labor market. This problem is particularly prevalent in the lower-skill segments of the labor market. Unemployment was indicated by focus group participants of all ages as a problem in their communities due to a lack of employment opportunities. Young people ages 18-24 emphasized that, due to the lack of employment, it is necessary to develop programs to support micro enterprises for young people so they can prosper based on their own efforts. Interviewees also observed that youth entrepreneurship is an important component of any youth employment program due to the lack of vacancies available to youth.

"… The first hurdle in achieving goals is that a young person when he wants to get a job cannot because they ask for a cedula, they ask for other requirements, they ask for many things that are difficult for that person and so that person will desist from the idea and go another path…youth are never given opportunities, they are always given obstacles, and then one loses his energy and desire."

Skills Gap

It is not only the quantitative mismatch between supply and demand of labor that hampers youth employment. Even more detrimental is the qualitative mismatch between supply and demand. As in many developing countries, basic education and vocational training in the DR fail to respond adequately to the demand of the labor market and thus young job seekers cannot offer the skills that employers require. Curricula are often outdated and do not reflect the realities of the modern labor market and modern society. Furthermore, both interviewees and youth themselves noted that young people are inadequately informed about the requirements and opportunities of the labor market and do not possess the necessary technical and social skills. It was also noted that the formal education system and INFOTEP only prepared youth to be employees and not entrepreneurers. Young people ages 18-24 were particularly concerned with needs associated with employment and the lack of educational opportunities needed to obtain a good job and become economically independent.

Lack of Work Experience

Interviewees and youth alike highlighted the difficulting of obtaining the first employment experience. First-time job seekers tend to encounter more barriers to employment due to a lack of work experience and an inability to compete with skilled and experienced workers as a consequence of inadequate education. This is particularly true in times of economic recession. Youth mentioned the contradiction they encountered when seeking employment: employers require work experience but youth are unable to obtain experience because employers will not hire them. Interviewees emphasized the need to facilitate youths ability to gain the first employment experience through internships, apprenticeships, or volunteer service. At a policy level, there is a lack of incentives for businesses to hire inexperienced youth. While the "My First Employment" bill sought to address this issue, it was not passed by congress and is still under debate.

Missing Linkages Between the Formal and Informal Labor Markets

For many young people, especially disadvantaged or marginalised youth, the informal economy is the main entrance to the labor market. (As shown in Table 5 above, the vast majority of youth are employed in the informal sector.) Unfortunately, in many cases this involves poor working conditions and the young people have no opportunities for further development and training. Therefore it is very difficult to advance from the informal to the formal labor market.

Weak, or Non Existant, Employment Services for Youth

Youth need access to a functional system of employment information, and career orientation and counselling. Youth focus groups revealed a striking lack of information regarding employment opportunitites outside of the informal sector they were directly exposed to. Asked about their aspirations, they highlighted jobs that they saw in their community, or professions with which they were familiar in a general sense, such as medicine, nursing, engineering, baseball, and music, but which they might not know the steps to attain them. Furthermore, interviewees highlighted youths lack of job search skills, including their lack of knowledge regarding CV preparation, interview techniques and job search strategies. Interviewees noted that youth leave school and vocational education programs confused and with little direction on market trends and sectors that are hiring. Interviewees highlighted the importance of strengthening local market employment mechanisms in order to disuade migration and meet local demands.

Gender Discrimination and Teenage Pregnancy

Gender descrimination is prevelant in the DR labor market. Despite the higher average educational achievements of women in relation to men, young women show much lower labor force participation rates and higher unemployment rates. "Women also earn less than men on average across all sectors of the economy. In 2007, the average wage for women

was 87 percent of the average wage for men."[61] There continues to be strong gender stereotypes which drive young women to perform traditionally female occupations or stay at home as full time homemakers. Furthermore, according to the "Decent Work and Youth Latin America" report, "teenage pregnancy is one of the main factors restricting access to productive and decent jobs, particularly among poor women with little education."[62] Teen pregnancy can have long-term effects since often girls are forced to interrupt their studies, which hinders their academic, personal and social development, thus limiting their future job opportunities and earning potential. They also may lose their autonomy, having to seek help from parents or other persons. These longer term consequences only serve to reinforce gender inequalities.

VI. HEALTH

While youth ages 15-24 are documented as the healthiest segment of the Dominican population, they still face significant challenges to receiving care and health-related education. This assessment found that reproductive and sexual health emerged as the priority issue for youth, although drug and alcohol use and environmental health were also raised as issues of importance during youth focus groups. High alcohol use, early sexual activity, low knowledge and use of methods of protection, vulnerability to disease and abuse and the lack of good education programs about these topics combine to create a high-risk environment for many youth.

Programs related to adolescent reproductive and sexual health and life skills attempt to address challenges facing youth, and USAID/DR and other donors have been investing to expand these. According to interviewees, the most significant gap between needs and programmatic responses, though, is that programs are not reaching the most at-risk youth, especially with educational programming. Other findings include the need for more youth-friendly health services and more programs focused on reproductive health and pregnancy prevention (rather than solely sexual health). In addition, youth raise serious concerns on the issue of environmental health, but indicate that there is a lack of educational programming in this area.

Health System and Policies

The Code for the System of Protection and Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents (Law 136-03) guarantees the rights to health and health services for children and adolescents. The General Law of Health (42-01) regulates all actions required to ensure these rights are preserved and, for the purposes of health, defines priority sub-population groups as, children under 14, women, those living on and under the poverty level, senior citizens and the disabled. A higher investment in health care and services is expected for these priority groups. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (SESPAS, for its

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[61] Lambert, V. September 2009. "Gender Assessment: USAID/Dominican Republic." DevTech Systems, Inc.
[62] ILO, 2008. "Decent Work and Youth: Latin America."

Spanish acronym), in coordination with other institutions of the National Health System is responsible for enforcing Law 42-01.

The Law of Social Security (87-01) facilitates access to health care. It establishes national health insurance, including a publicly subsidized scheme for the indigent, unemployed, disabled and their dependents, and those who are employed but whose family income is not salaried or is less than the average national minimum wage. Given that the Dominican Republic's public spending on health is low by global standards (34% as a percent of total health spending in 2007[63]), combined with its high proportion of out-of-pocket expenditures (65% of private health spending in 2007[64]), the subsidized scheme aims to facilitate access to health services and reduce the burden imposed by health care costs.

The Article on Sectoral Health Policy for Youth Development of the General Youth Law 49-00 establishes four major areas of action:

"… I would change everything at the hospital … I would change the nursing services so that they treat you well and gently… for they are like animals …wild ones… also, in one room there are 4 beds … I would take out the equipment and put new equipment in the hospital … they do not have all the equipment at the hospital needed for emergencies … there are many people who go with wounds and they are there for hours and leave late and still they have not been attended because there are not enough doctors …"

- Develop and promote a public agenda for integrated youth health policy adapted to youth needs and with youth participation.
- Recognize youth as a unique group with particular health-related needs.
- Ensure national coverage of integrated services including sexual and reproductive health, confidentiality, and professionalism of high quality, without discrimination and gender-focused, that promotes youth development.
- Create and promote a support and follow-up system for youth with special needs, which allows them to be reintegrated into society in an appropriate way.[65]

Youth Health Statistics and Perceptions

According to the 2007 Health and Demographic Survey (ENDESA 2007)),[66] youth ages 15-24 were healthier than all other age groups with fewer incidences of sickness in the past 30 days (23.4% for the total population compared to 17.1% for this age group) and lower

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[63] World Bank Health, Nutrition and Population Statistics
[64] World Bank Health, Nutrition and Population Statistics
[65] Ministry of Youth.*"Ley 49-00 del 26 de junio del 2000 que crea el Ministerio de la Juventud".*
http://juventud.gob.do/SobreNosotros/MarcoLegal/tabid/103/Default.aspx
[66] ENDESA 2007

prevalence of chronic diseases.[67] Accordingly, consultations to any outpatient health care provider during the past 30 days were also lower among the younger youth. Among the reasons for not seeking consultation, only a very low percentage (2% or lower) of 15-24-year-old youth mentioned quality of care-related issues such as bad care and waiting time being too long. Almost half mentioned that the consultation was not necessary, or the condition resolved by itself, as reasons for not seeking care.

In focus groups, however, youth cite numerous obstacles to receiving adequate medical attention and care. Youth are mainly attended through the public health system, which they perceive as very low-quality. They believe the infrastructure is inadequate and the staff are not *amigable* (friendly) to those seeking services. Youth indicate that access to high-quality health care services is limited, and what is available is very costly. They further state that health insurance only covers services at public hospitals, not at private clinics. In addition, youth do not have access to medicines, because they are also very costly relative to what people can afford.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Youth focus groups indicated that youth use alcohol, drugs, and to a lesser extent tobacco in their communities. Many youth start using alcohol from an early age, and youth also smoke tobacco. Drug use has gone from being a discreet activity to being totally visible in their communities. In addition, the focus group segment outside of programs note that youth who are involved with drug-dealing and other criminal activity are more likely to become addicted to drugs. While the use of substances was cited across geographic areas and age groups, it was more pronounced in the tourist areas of Puerto Plata and Boca Chica.

"I think that nowadays the young people who are involved in alcohol and drugs want to get out, but they cannot find anyone who can guide them."

Survey data bear out these concerns, showing alcohol to be the most commonly used substance, drug use to be more prevalent in urban areas, and substance use to be higher among males. In 2007, 82 percent of males ages 15-19 and 73.5 percent of females reported having consumed alcohol sometime in the prior three months, with heavier consumption (6+ times) more common among male users (25%, versus 16% for female users).[68] Alcohol consumption increases among the 20-24 age group for both sexes. Data show different levels of current tobacco use, ranging from 18 percent of males and 12 percent of females ages 13-15 in 2004[69],[70] to only 3 percent of males ages 15-19 and 1 percent of females ages 15-19 in

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[67] ENDESA 2007 included three indicators to determine the health status of the population: Recent morbidity (having a health issue during the past 30 days prior the survey), being diagnosed with a chronic disease (cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, hypertension, heart or circulatory system condition), and having a deficiency or disability.
[68] ENDESA 2007
[69] ENDESA 2007
[70] ENDESA 2007

2007.[71] Drug use is higher among males, more prevalent in urban areas, and higher for older males but not older females (see Table 7).

Table 7 Youth Ages 15-24 Who Have Used Drugs in 3 Months Prior to Survey, 2007

	Male	Female
15-19	3.0	1.3
20-24	6.0	0.8
Urban	5.5	1.1
Rural	3.8	0.7

Source: Center for Demographic and Social Studies CESDEM, 2007

Reproductive and Sexual Health

In focus groups, youth expressed strong concerns about youths' sexual activity, knowledge, and use of protection against sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. They indicated that sexual health education is needed because youth start having sex at a very young age. Youth in tourist areas such as Puerto Plata and Boca Chica perceive that many youth engage in commercial sex work but few use methods of protection against HIV/AIDS. All groups expressed concerns about HIV/AIDS.

Interviewees stressed the issues related to STIs and HIV/AIDS and perceived a high degree of vulnerability among youth with regard to health. Like focus group participants, they suggest there is a need for better education services and information about HIV in order for youth to make informed decisions about sexual behavior and provide opportunities for addressing the issue of sexual responsibility and sexuality.

Presented below is a selection of key indicators pertaining to these issues, generally focused on youth ages 15-19 and 20-24 and often disaggregated by gender and urban/rural.

Age of First Sexual Relation. On average, youth in the Dominican Republic begin their sexual life at an early age. In 2007, 15 percent of females and 24 percent of males ages 15-24 reported having their first sexual relation before age 15.[72] More than half of female youth and nearly three quarters of male youth ages 20-24 reported having had sex before age 18 (see Table 8).[73] The proportions of youth ages 18-19 who report having had sex before age 18 have increased steadily from 1996 to 2007 for both male and female youth. In addition, 2007 data show that the proportion of youth who have sex at an early age was inversely related to both education level and income.

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[71] Pan-American Health Organization, Health in the Americas, 2007. Volume II- Countries. Dominican Republic.
[72] ENDESA 2007
[73] ENDESA 2007

Table 8 Age of First Sexual Relation

Age group	Females	Males	Females	Males
	Percentage who had sexual relations before **15 years** of age	Percentage who had sexual relations before **15 years** of age	Percentage who had sexual relations before **18 years** of age	Percentage who had sexual relations before **18 years** of age
15-19 y/o	14.0	21.1	n/a	n/a
20-24 y/o	16.2	26.9	51.0	71.8
Area	**15-24 y/o Females**	**15-19 y/o Males**	**18-24 Y/o Females**	**20-24 y/o Males**
Urban	13.6	24.9	48.4	73.2
Rural	29.6	20.3	57.1	63.1

Source: Center for Demographic and Social Studies CESDEM, 2007

Geography plays a different role for male and female youth. A greater proportion of urban male youth had their first sexual relation before age 18 than rural male youth. For female youth, the opposite was true: the percentage of rural female youth ages 15-24 (29.6%) that had their first sexual relation before age 15 is more than twice the percentage for urban female youth (13.6%).

In an important proportion of cases, female youth report their first sexual relation as forced. In 2007, 7 percent of girls less than 15 years old, 3 percent of 15-19-year-olds, and 3 percent of 20-24 year-olds reported their first sexual relation was against their will.

Contraception and Protection against STIs and HIV/AIDS. While data on contraception usage are not available for male youth, data from the 2007 Demographic and Health Survey indicate that usage among female youth is fairly low. In 2007, fewer than half of female youth ages 15-19 who were either married (46%) or not married but sexually active (49%) reported currently using any contraception. Among the former group the most common methods were modern methods such as birth control pills and injections, among the latter group, condoms and birth control pills. Traditional

"… there are cases of girls who get pregnant at a very young age so I think they need education first …"

methods such as withdrawal and periodic abstinence were less commonly used. While the survey did not disaggregate data by income level, a 2008 report by the National Statistics Office on adolescent motherhood indicates that as few as 5 percent of the poorest female youth use modern methods of birth control.[74]

Most of the contraception methods cited do not protect against STIs and HIV infection. Only one percent of female youth ages 15-19 who were married reported using condoms, while roughly one in five who were not married but sexually active reported using them. This low level of condom usage is of concern given the high proportion of youth ages 15-24

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[74] National Statistics Office, 2008. "*Madres Adolescentes en la República Dominicana."*

(51% of males and 21% of females) who reported having a sexual partner other than their husband/wife/partner over the past 12 months. An interviewee noted *confianza en la pareja* – confidence that one's partner will be faithful – as one of the chief obstacles to HIV prevention among youth.

Adolescent Pregnancy. Despite a slight decrease in the fertility rates among female youth ages 15-19 from 2002 to 2007[75], adolescent pregnancy remains an important issue due to its prevalence and subsequent consequences. In 2007, 20.6 percent of female youth ages 15-19 were pregnant or already mothers.[76] This figure increases steadily with age (6.6%, 11.0%, 19.6%, 31.4% and 39.3% for female youth ages 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 respectively). While the proportion of female youth ages 15-19 who are or have been pregnant is substantially higher in rural areas (26.0%) than in urban areas (18.3%), it is important to note that the absolute number of such youth is higher in urban areas than rural. A strong negative relationship exists between adolescent pregnancy and education and socio-economic levels, as shown in Figure 2.[77]

Figure 2 Percentage of Pregnant Teenagers by Education and Socioeconomic Levels, 2007
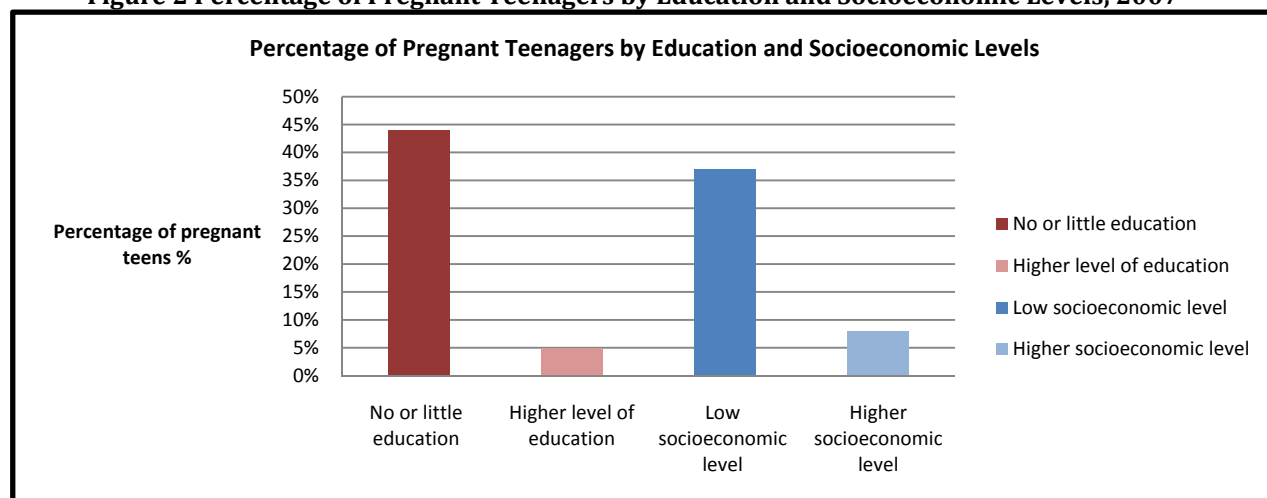
Source: Dominican Republic National Demographic and Health Survey (ENDESA). 2007

HIV/AIDS. The Dominican Republic is one of the countries most affected by HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean[78], with youth, particularly females, considered a vulnerable group. In 2007, HIV/AIDS prevalence was 0.1 percent among youth ages 15-19, which rose to 0.5 percent among youth ages 20-24. In the 15-19 age group, HIV prevalence was double among females (0.2%) than among males (0.1%); in the 20-24 age group, it was nearly double (0.7% for females versus 0.4% for males). Interviewees indicate that female youth are more vulnerable to HIV infection given that they are more likely to engage in commercial sex work or transactional sex. Indeed, HIV incidence is highest among female youth, with approximately 71 percent of new infections in females ages 15-24.[79]

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[75] ENDESA 2007
[76] ENDESA 2007
[77] ENDESA 2007
[78] Academy for Educational Development website: http://coach.aed.org/Projects/International/DR.aspx
[79] Academy for Educational Development website: http://coach.aed.org/Projects/International/DR.aspx

Youth ages 15-24 generally exhibit low levels of comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS, though female, urban and older (20-24) youth show higher levels of knowledge than male, rural and younger youth (15-19) (see Table 9).[80] Comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS is also positively related to education level and income.

Table 9 Comprehensive Knowledge of HIV/AIDS among 15-24 y/o males and females, CESDEM 2007

Age Group	Females — Percentage with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS	Males — Percentage with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS
15-19	39.3	32.6
20-24	42.6	35.2
Area of residence		
Urban	42.4	35.8
Rural	36.7	26.8

Source: Center for Demographic and Social Studies CESDEM, 2007

It should be noted that a much higher percentage of youth ages 15-24 believe that specific methods such as condom use, being faithful to one partner, and abstinence, can reduce the risk of HIV infection when explicitly asked. Male youth report believing in these methods at a slightly higher rate than female youth. For example, 77 percent of female youth and 81 percent of male youth in that age group believe that using condoms and being faithful reduces infection risk.

Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

Although domestic violence was mentioned by interviewees as an issue for youth, limited data disaggregated by age exist, and they tend to focus on spousal rather than child abuse and exclusively on violence against females. According to the Demographic and Health Survey, nearly 1 in 10 women ages 15-49 stated that they experienced physical violence in the last 12 months in both 2002 and 2007 (9.5% and 9.7% respectively).[81] Physical violence was higher among those with lower education levels and income.

Among women ages 15-49 who were never married and who had experienced physical violence since age 15, most reported that the violence was committed by a relative, most commonly their father (28.9%) or mother (26.7%). Among those who were never married and who had experienced sexual abuse, most reported that it was committed by someone they knew, such as a male friend or person they knew (34%) or boyfriend (22.6%), with fewer reporting a stranger (14%).

While the survey does not include data for girls younger than 15, the proportion of female youth ages 15-19 and 20-24 reporting physical violence in the past 12 months were 8 and 11.4 percent respectively in 2007. Roughly a third of female youth ages 15-19 and 20-24

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[80] ENDESA 2007
[81] Pan-American Health Organization, Health in the Americas, 2007. Volume II- Countries. Dominican Republic.

reported experiencing emotional, physical or sexual abuse by their spouse or partner once they were married. For approximately 1 in 5, the abuse was either physical or sexual (see Table 10).

Table 10 Percentage Reporting Violence by Spouse/Partner After Marriage by Type and Age Group

Age Group	Emotional	Physical	Sexual	Physical or Sexual	Emotional, physical or sexual
15-19	27.3	18.1	3.5	18.3	32.5
20-24	27.7	20.2	5.8	22.2	33.7

Source: Center for Demographic and Social Studies CESDEM, 2007

While the proportion of female youth ages 15-19 who have ever experienced sexual violence is not presented, the survey sheds light on the ages at which it occurs. In 2007, among female youth ages 15-19 who had ever experienced sexual violence, 17.3 percent experienced it for the first time before they were 10 years old; 21.6 percent at age 10-14; and 31.6 percent at age 15-19. (Another 12.3% reported not knowing, and there was no information for an additional 17.1%.)

When confronting any type of domestic violence, 35.6 percent of women ages 15-49 requested support from people who are close to them and 19.8 percent sought assistance from institutions. Among the latter group, women tended to seek help from the police, the state attorney's office, or public institutions that provide protective services, in that order.[82]   (Almost none sought help from NGOs.) Women living in urban areas were somewhat more likely than those in rural areas to seek help from people they knew or institutions. Seeking assistance was less common among younger women: 13.7 percent of youth ages 15-19 and 17.8 percent of youth ages 20-24 who were victimized by domestic violence sought assistance. Knowledge about available services for female victims of domestic violence was directly related to socioeconomic status and was higher among women from urban areas (70.7%).

Environmental Health Concerns

Youth in focus groups expressed strong concern regarding environmental health and communicable diseases. While illnesses associated with environmental pollution concerned youth across age groups and geographic areas, such concerns were most pronounced in Santo Domingo, Santiago and Cotui, particularly among those living near trash dumps in Santiago. Youth across age groups, particularly those ages 10-13, worried about dengue, and to a lesser extent influenza and leptopirosis (generally carried by rats). Youths' concern was linked to poor garbage services in their communities, which in turn increased their susceptibility to these types of illnesses.

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[82] ENDESA 2007

Key At-Risk Youth Health Programs

The report highlights three youth health programming focus areas; 1) youth-friendly health services and adolescent reproductive and sexual health, 2) life skills, and 3) gender violence (Drugd programs are described briefly under Civic Participation.) The current programs addressing these health concerns are briefly described below and in greater detail in Annex 7.

Youth-Friendly Health Services and Reproductive and Sexual Health Programming

Research from service users has stressed the need to create better health services for those who attend health centers. Friendlier personnel, improved quality of personnel and ample supervision of personnel are some of the needs identified in youth focus groups. The existing services are costly and do not specialize in youths needs. The physical environment for health services is also a concern and youth suggest there should be an increase in community centers as well as the provision of visits to communities by health care practitioners. Interviews with health professionals also highlight the need for friendlier and participatory youth services. Information from youth focus groups found that there are very few or no services that allow youth participation.

Youth focus groups also revealed that unplanned teen pregnancy and STIs, including HIV/AIDS, are key issues that need to be addressed. Interviews with health professionals from various health organizations in the Dominican Republic draw attention to the neglected youth groups in the existing reproductive health programs. According to interviewees, adolescents ages 10-14 are less commonly or effectively by prevention and care programs, as they are considered a sexually inactive population despite evidence that adolescents in this age group are sexually active. Interviewees also mentioned that youths' sexual and reproductive rights are not being respected as they are being discriminated against based on their appearances, styles, needs and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, interviewees noted that the number of young people who need information and services is enormous, yet the existing services are generally small, fragmented or absent.

An effective youth health programming model would improve accessibility to youth-friendly services and provide integrated care and reproductive and sexual health services to adolescents and youth by means of information dissemination, education, counseling and referrals to clinical services, to reduce teen pregnancy and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Placing great emphasis on affordable and youth-friendly environments increases the number of individuals served through these programs. Youth are encouraged to be active participants of health programs which serve as a guide for youths' informed and autonomous decisions about their own sexuality and reproductive health. Examples of these models in health care facilities, schools, and other settings are provided below.

The Ministry of Public Health's National Integrated Health Care Program for Adolescents (PRONAISA) aims to supply youth-friendly services addressing the health needs of 10-19

year olds. PRONAISA offers family planning, gynecological services, and integral primary care to adolescents, among other services. PRONAISA operates approximately 1,180 Primary Care Units (UNAP, by its Spanish acronym) nationwide with the aim of serving as many youth as possible.

USAID/DR has taken important steps toward expanding sexual health programming for youth, particularly HIV prevention, through two programs. First is *Habilidades para la Vida* (Skills for life), an HIV/AIDS prevention program implemented by a joint collaboration between the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and Tulane University. Launched in February 2008, this program aims to reach a broad set of high-risk groups, including youth, by creating friendlier spaces through the use of innovative counseling and/or group activities of no more than 25 individuals. A rationale behind this program is that in order to diminish high-risk behavior in youth, the approach has to allow them express themselves and their needs honestly.

The youth program is school-based and works closely with the Ministry of Education to ensure that life skills will become a part of the nationally approved curriculum. It reached 77,244 students in grades 1-10 with HIV messaging during the 2009-10 school year. An impact evaluation has not yet been done, but initial feedback within schools has been positive and pre/post testing reveals evidence that both teachers and students have a greater understanding of HIV risks.

In addition, USAID/DR recently entered into an agreement with Population Services International (PSI) to implement STI/HIV prevention programs, through local implementation partners for youth living in bateys and other high-risk youth, including those out of school. PSI will use peer-to-peer communications and condom social marketing to ensure that sexually active youth have accurate knowledge of STIs and HIV, access to affordable condoms, and correct knowledge of how to use them. Programming will build on PSI's prior experience focused on increasing personal risk perception among youth and raising their awareness of STIs and HIV, delaying sexual debut among 10-14-year-olds, and addressing trusted partner barriers and condom use among 15-24-year-olds. A study of behavior change among a sample of youth ages 13-24 participating in PSI's programs indicated an increase in condom use and a decrease in the belief that suggesting condom use indicates a lack of trust in your partner.

"Youth in the Real World Project" (YurWorld) comprises an HIV/AIDS prevention program that also targets marginalized youth groups. This program uses a peer-to-peer methodology, which was selected by the Partnership Against HIV/AIDS-PANCAP to be replicated in six other countries. This program was funded by UNAIDS and the German Development Cooperation (GTZ) through 2008-2009 and implemented by the Integrated Orientation Center (COIN). This organization places special emphasis on evidence-based practices and has extensive experience in participatory evaluation.

While the above programs focus mainly on HIV/AIDS prevention, the "Community Program of Sexual and Reproductive Health with Adolescents and Youth," implemented by the *Asociación Dominicana Pro-Bienestar de la Familia* (Profamilia), addresses adolescent

pregnancy and domestic and gender-based violence, in addition to HIV. Trained peer health educators inform and educate youth ages 10-14, 15-17 and 18-24 through a participatory peer-to-peer approach. Peer educators use the Profamilia manual, "*Hablemos*" (Let's talk), as well as strategies such as theatre, singing, and more traditional discussion formats.

In addition, AED manages USAID/PEPFAR/DR funding to enable local NGOs such as COIN and *Profamilia* to implement HIV/AIDS programming.

Youth Life Skills Programming

These types of programs provide youth with alternative perspectives and are targeted towards broader behavior change. While sharing many aspects of the reproductive and sexual health programs described above, such as reducing high-risk sexual practice, they also aim to improve the conditions of high-risk youth and promote healthy lifestyles. They provide support for individuals to assume responsibility for their health and wellbeing, creating the ability to make informed decisions and to reduce violence, and increase integration of youth in education and employment.

Interviews with health professionals highlight the gaps in the existing life skills programs noting the programs are not reaching the young populations at highest risk. Programs are provided in middle and lower class communities, but no or few programs exist for adolescents and youth in the poorest neighborhoods.

The new "Youth for My Living Neighborhood Project" ("*Proyecto de Muchachos/as Nuevos/as por mi Barrio Vivo*"), is a program created in joint collaboration between COIN and the United Youth Network Foundation of Guachupita, and funded by COPRESIDA. Some of the positive outcomes observed among participants are: setting and pursuing educational and professional goals, leaving gangs, and spending quality time with family members.[83] Strong components of this program are: peer-to-peer leadership and education, a community-based foundation, and the capacity to establish working partnerships within the community to leverage resources.

"My Young Neighborhood" *("Mi Barrio Joven")* program is implemented by the Ministry of Youth and intends to promote healthy lifestyles, aid the integration of youth in education or employment, and reduce youth violence. Health is a key component of the programs' comprehensive approach to a healthy development and lifestyle.

The Peace Corps *Escojo Mi Vida* (I Choose my Life) program provides life skills and positive decision making among at-risk youth in the communities where Peace Corps Volunteers serve. The Peace Corps/DR launched the program in 2004 in response to increasing rates of teenage pregnancy and HIV infection among Dominican youth. The program uses a peer education approach to provide at-risk youth with the tools to make healthy sexual decisions. Guided by a culturally and age-appropriate curriculum, Peace Corps volunteers

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[83] COIN, 2010. Proyectos. New Youth for My Living Neighborhood Project. Available at :
http://www.coin.org.do/Idioma/espanol/proyecto_de_muchachos_nuevos_por_mi_battio_vivo.html

lead a 6-8 week training of youth peer educators in their respective communities. The curriculum focuses on basic aspects of STI/HIV/AIDS, family planning methods, values, self-esteem, and dissemination of information. Upon graduation from the program, peer educators develop and implement community health outreach initiatives as well as train a new group of peer educators.

Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

This assessment did not identify many programs primarily aimed at addressing domestic or gender-based violence, and only two which included an explicit focus on youth. In describing the supply of programs aimed at preventing gender-based violence, one interviewee identified the challenges of poor coordination among organizations, lack of a country-wide network, and weak organizational capacity to reach out to funding sources.

Three institutions address domestic and gender-based violence though not with an exclusive focus on youth: the Ministry of Women's Provincial and Municipal Offices, Women and Health Collective (*Colectiva Mujer y Salud),* and *Aquelarre* Support Center (CEAPA, for its Spanish acronym). They provide direct services, capacity-building and advocacy. The latter two organizations have a strong focus on Haitians and Haitian migrants.

The "Aura of Hope" program implemented nationally by COIN under the three-year project "Establishing Public Policies and Local Prevention Models and Integrated Care for Trafficking of Youth and Women" targets youth highly vulnerable to trafficking and violence. The project has an educational and capacity-building component with school teachers and staff, as well as community mobilization, and advocacy. Direct services range from prevention to medical care, social work, and legal counseling for victims. The program utilizes ongoing assessment to build its knowledge of the problems facing victims and those at risk. Short-term outcomes include: the creation of a self-help group and home-based follow-up to women previously served; education and awareness activities with almost 5,000 people; the initiation of community mobilization processes; and the systematization of data collection.[84]

Learn Without Fear, an international campaign led by Plan International, seeks to prevent school-based violence. It provides summer camps for youth with behavior problems, low academic achievement or who are otherwise at risk for drop-out. The camps and other awareness-raising activities focus on preventing sexual violence, corporal punishment and bullying in schools. The program has served 5,000 students in 60 schools since its launch in the Dominican Republic in 2009.

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[84] COIN, 2010.Proyectos. Aura of Hope Program. Available at:
http://www.coin.org.do/Idioma/espanol/proyecto_aura_de_esperanza.html

Conclusions/ Gaps in Supply & Demand of Youth Health

Several factors are brought to light through research, interviews and youth focus groups in relation to the supply and demand of youth health in the Dominican Republic. These are briefly summarized below.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Interviews with health professionals highlight the fact that most of the existing programs are not reaching the young populations at highest risk. The need to focus on adolescents ages 10-14 years seem to be neglected from prevention and care programs due to the misconception that this age group is sexually inactive. However, data show that first sexual experiences under age 15 are not uncommon. In addition, the pregnancy rate among 15-19-year-olds remains significant, and rates are higher among youth with lower educational and socio-economic levels and those who live in rural areas. Intervention programs addressing sexual and reproductive rights need to ensure that they are reaching out to the highest-risk segments.

Accessibility of Health Services

The need for youth-friendly services is critical as few existing programs focus on youth participation. Focus groups identified few or no programs that encourage youth participation. Focus groups stressed the need for approchable health environments, adequate times and less costly services. This can potentially increase the number of youth served in the different health services provided.

HIV/AIDS Comprehensive Knowledge

The overall level of comprehensive knowledge on HIV/AIDS within the youth populations is still relatively low (30%). Considering there are several exisiting programs that address the issue of HIV/AIDS comprehension and focus groups place enormous weight on their vulnerability to STIs including HIV/AIDS in their community enviornments, the percentage of comprehensive knowledge should be much higher across the youth population. This indicates a significant gap between information dissemination and understanding within youth groups. Interviews with health professionals stress that if young people only receive information and are not integrated into the search for knowledge and service delivery impact will only be minimal. Furthermore, differences were also observed between the percentage of comprehensive knowledge between rural and urban areas. A need to increase the the level of comprehension should be higher amongst the youth populations regardless of their geographical area, socioeconomic level or education.

Environmental Factors

Youth focus groups place serious concerns regarding their health around communicable disease which arise from enviornmental factors, such as Dengue, Influenza virus and

rodent-borne illnesses. Their perception about the identification of diseases is strongly related to the contamination of the environment (garbage, mosquitos).

VII. CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Youth in the Dominican Republic face numerous challenges to participating fully and positively in society. At a fundamental level, many youth lack birth certificates or identity cards, often for reasons of poverty or their own parents' lack of documentation. Not only do youth consequently lack official recognition as individuals, but they are also impeded in their access to services. Youth perceive that they lack a voice in society, while they also distrust authority. Laws promoting the participation of youth in policy development thus far have been unevenly implemented, though important efforts are underway to increase civic participation at the local level. In the 2008 presidential election, young adults exhibited dramatically lower voting rates than older age groups, which is shown to be correlated with the higher rate at which they are victimized by corruption. In turn, youth exhibit high rates of crime, and gang involvement is increasing.   Poverty and unemployment have been found to correlate strongly with juvenile crime, while other related factors include dysfunctional family environments and school drop-out. Youth with criminal records or involved in gangs face additional barriers to participating in society, since employers or youth-serving organizations may not accept them. A number of programs exist to address all of these needs, though they tend not to focus on minors or highly at-risk youth (with the exception of rehabiliation programs).

Youth Civic Participation Policies

Article 55, point 13 of the Dominican Constitution: "recognizes the value of youth as strategic actors in the development of the nation. The State guarantees and promotes the effective exercise of their rights through policies and programs that ensure permanent participation in all spheres of national life and in particular training and access to first employment."[85]

Birth Certificates or Identity Cards

The potential to fully exercise one's rights often depends on having a birth registration or identity card, a right preserved in the Constitution in Article 55, point 8: "All persons have the right from birth to be registered for free at the registry office or in the official registration of foreigners and to obtain public documents that prove their identity, in accordance with the law."[86] This right is also recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child,[87] which the Dominican Republic ratified in 1991 and which states in Article 7: "the child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be

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[85] Accessed at http://www.suprema.gov.do/codigos/Constitucion.pdf
[86] DR Constitution, article 55, point 8. Accessed at http://www.suprema.gov.do/codigos/Constitucion.pdf
[87] Accessed at http://www.unicef.org/republicadominicana/politics_10193.htm

cared for by his or her parents." Youth born of Dominican parents are considered to have Dominican nationality. The organization authorized by the Constitution to regulate the civil registration and the issuance of identity and electoral cards is the Central Electoral Board.[88]

Right to Vote

All Dominican citizens, independent of their sex, race, beliefs or social condition, are endowed with the Constitutional right to vote for their governing officials. According to Article 21 of the Constitution, youth acquire citizenship, and therefore this fundamental right, upon turning 18 years of age or once they marry (if earlier than 18).[89] Youth born of Dominican parents are considered Dominican Nationals and, upon turning 18, may become citizens if they have an identity card.

Youth Civic Participation

Youth public policies in the Dominican Republic are regulated by the General Youth Law 49-00. This law establishes a participatory mechanism at all levels of government, from municipal youth councils to the National Youth Council. The Municipal Youth Councils are intended to be participatory mechanisms in which members of youth organizations in each municipality contribute to the creation, application and supervision of public policies in health, education, employment, sports and civic participation of youth.[90]

"Most young people feel like objects to be used by people … they do not feel that they are developing by themselves … We, the young people, are the future of this country, in our hands will fall the responsibilities and we are destined to hold important positions although that is not valued now."

The Ministry of Youth has not succeeded in creating the youth participatory mechanisms (Youth Municipal Councils, Provincial Youth Councils, and National Youth Council) to implement the policies mentioned above. Recently, the Ministry of Youth, with the support of the Organization of American States (OAS), launched the program "Development of Democratic Institutional Capacities for the Participation of Youth in Youth Public Policies" to initiate youth participatory mechanisms in the Enriquillo region and in the municipalities of El Valle and Hato Mayor. There have also been other successful experiences undertaken by nongovernmental organizations,[91] and international agencies,[92] which have succeeded in initiating municipal youth departments and started the process of integrating youth decision-making into political and social situations that affect youth.

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[88] Dominican Republic Constitution, article 212, paragraph II.
[89] Dominican Republic Constitution, article 21.
[90] General Youth Law 49-00, Dominican Republic.
[91] The National Youth Network has formalized agreements with 14 city councils to constitute the Municipal Youth Councils. World Vision has managed the incorporation of the youth city councils in 8 municipalities.
[92] UNICEF has managed the incorporation of the youth city councils in 115 municipalities.

Another important legal framework for this process is the Law 176-07 on municipalities, which states that "the city councils will promote the collaboration of citizens in municipal management in order to promote local democracy and allow active community participation in decision-making processes on issues pertaining to them."[93]   The law establishes five mechanisms to incorporate active community participation, which are: 1) the right to petition; 2) the municipal referendum; 3) the municipal plebiscite; 4) town meeting and 5) participatory budgeting.[94]

There is an incongruity between the youth law and the municipal law related to the financing of youth processes. The first one denotes that the municipal city laws will allocate four percent of their budget to finance youth policies and the second one does not indicate youth as an area of investment. This has generated confusion between the youth organizations and the municipalities. Recently the Dominican Federation of Municipalities carried out a "Youth and Municipality" meeting aimed at defining new guidelines and adjusting proposals to create mutual understanding in the approach of both laws.

Youth and the Criminal Justice System

The Law for the System of Protection and Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents (136-03) regulates the treatment of minors (from birth to age 18) within the criminal justice system. This law states that children under the age of 13 are not criminally liable, but youth between the ages of 13 and 18 are. The penalties that apply to the latter population include the alternative non-custodial sanctions and custodial sanctions with an integrated rehabilitation process. This system includes private liberty and non-private liberty sanctions, with the latter stipulating that you must participate in community work, programs and classes. Presently, there exists a debate regarding the legal responsibility of those under age 13, between those who advocate for the reform of this legislation based on the high number of crimes committed by adolescents and those who believe this legislation provides important protection for these youth.

Youth Civic Participation Indicators

Identification Documents

As mentioned above, birth certificates and identity cards are a fundamental right for Dominican children and youth. The lack of registration at birth implies that youth do not have proof of age or identity that enables them to access services and affords them minimum protection from abuse and exploitation. As they grow older, undocumented youth are unable to do common things such as obtain an identity card, hold a driver's license, cash a check, or vote.[95]   The lack of registration poses a barrier to receiving

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[93] Law 176-07 concerning Municipalities and the National District. Article 226.
[94] Law 176-07, concerning Municipalities and the National District. Article 230.
[95] ENHOGAR 2006

healthcare, education, and social assistance and puts youth at greater risk of abuse and exploitation.[96]

Table 11 below shows that while a lack of birth certificates only affects 5 percent of the total population, for the 0-4 and 5-9 age groups the percentage is significantly higher. Twenty percent of 0-4 year olds and 11 percent of 5-9 year olds do not have birth certificates, only a slight decrease from 2002. While the percentage of youth without birth certificates decreases with age, there is still a no percent of older youth who did not have birth certificates (see below). The situation is more pronounced in rural areas and in particular in the provinces of Bahoruco, Pedernales, and Elias Piña. [97]

Unregistered children are primarily poor, from parents and caregivers with insufficient financial resources to go to the registration offices and/or lack knowledge of the importance of birth registration. Also, the lack of identification tends to happen between generations and in boys and girls of unregistered parents. Parents cited the lack of identification documents (*cédulas*) as the primary reason for not registering their children (55.3% in the rural areas and 47.3% in the urban areas).[98]

Table 11 Possession of Birth Certificates in the Dominican Republic, percentage, 2002 and 2007

Age	No Birth Certificate 2002	No Birth Certificate 2007
0-4	22.3	19.6
5-9	11.7	10.9
10-14	6.1	6.1
15-19	n/a	3.6
20-24	n/a	3.0
25-34	n/a	1.9
35-44	n/a	1.3
45-54	n/a	1.3
55-64	n/a	1.6
65+	n/a	1.6

Source: ENDESA 2002 and 2007. Note: Information for
2002 was only collected on the first three age groups.

The legal age for receiving an identity card (*cédula*) in the Dominican Republic is age 18, though it is possible to receive this document at age 16 or 17 if the person needs to work, obtain a drivers license, or for other needs. It is not common for youth to obtain a minors identity card as most youth wait until they are 18 years old to obtain this document.

Table 12 below shows that 35.5 percent of 18 to 19 year olds and 10.5 percent of 20 to 24 year olds do not have identity cards. As with birth certificates, this is more prominent in rural areas (15%) in comparison with urban areas (9.9%). Furthermore, the provinces

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[96] ENHOGAR 2006
[97] ENDESA 2007
[98] ENHOGAR 2006

more affected by a lack of identity cards are Bahoruco, Elias Piña and El Seibo, where 20 percent of the population is without identity cards.[99]

Table 12 Possession of Identity Cards in the Dominican Republic, percentage

Age	Have Identity Card	Do not have Identity Card	Don´t Know/ No Information	TOTAL	Number of persons
16-17	15.0	80.4	4.6	100	5,302
18-19	63.2	35.5	1.3	100	4,583
20-24	89.1	10.5	0.5	100	10,060
25-34	94.5	4.9	0.7	100	17,531
35-44	96.6	3.1	0.3	100	14,923
45-54	96.9	2.9	0.5	100	10,871
55-64	97.4	2.1	0.5	100	7,066
65+	97.1	2.5	0.4	100	7,598

Source: ENDESA 2007. Note: Information not available for ENDESA 2002.

Voting Among Youth

Figure 3 Voting Rates by Age, 2008

Gráfico VII-6. Impacto de la edad en participación electoral
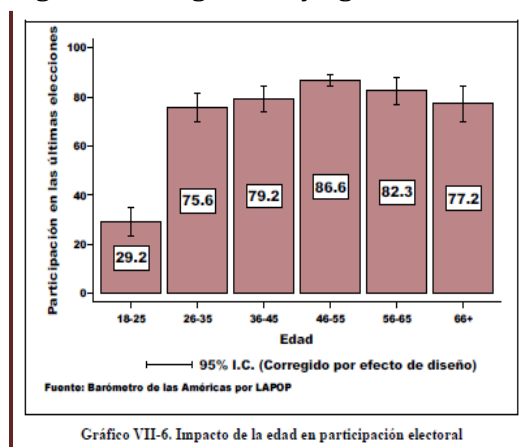
Source *Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). 2008. "The Americas' Barometer."*

The electoral participation rate in the Dominican Republic is higher than the Latin American average; 77.3 percent indicated they had voted in the last election.[100] Nonetheless, the electoral participation of 18 to 25-year-olds is dramatically lower than for older population segments. Figure 3 shows the percentage of youth ages 18-25 that voted in the 2008 election, showing a significant difference in comparison with the rest of the population.

There is the perception among interviewees that innovative mechanisms like the "VOTE FOR NO ONE"[101] movement could stimulate the electoral participation of young people.

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[99] ENDESA 2007
[100] Morgan, J. and Espinal, R. March 2009. "Political Culture of Democracy in the Dominican Republic: The Impact on Governability." Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), Americas Barometer.
[101] Movement of citizens that requested to the Central Electoral Board to add NO ONE in the electoral ballot, as a mechanism for the citizens to express their dissatisfaction with the participating political candidates, and thus ensure that they will vote.
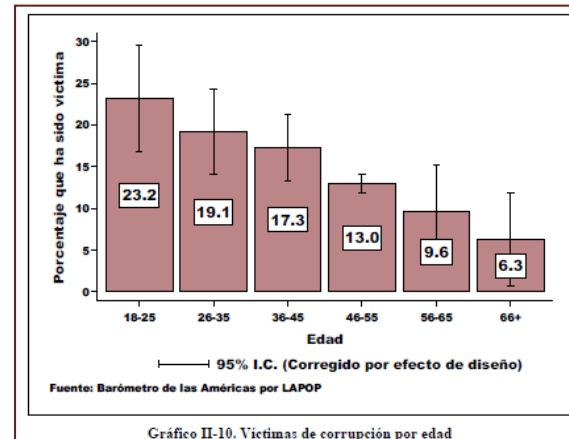
The Effect of Corruption on Youth

Corruption negatively affects the credibility of political systems and erodes civic participation due to increasing distrust among citizens.[102]

Developing youth into active citizens and bringing about positive change in youth is challenging due to the corruption they face. Young adults who have been victims of corruption have a tendency not to trust political institutions and even to distrust other people, which can lead to a weakening of social capital.[103] Figure 4 shows that youth ages 18-25 are more commonly affected by acts of corruption than older age segments.

Figure 4 Percentage of Population Who are Victims of Corruption, by Age

Source *Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). 2008. "The Americas' Barometer."*

Youth Involved in the Criminal Justice System

The involvement of youth in criminal acts is directly related to other economic and social factors. According to the World Bank 2006 study on youth violence in the Caribbean, the primary motivation identified for committing a crime was a desire to escape poverty. Other common factors include: growing up in dysfunctional households, having been abused and mistreated, consuming illegal drugs, and having dropped out of school.[104] Being raised in poverty has been found to contribute to a greater likelihood of involvement in crime and violence.[105] Studies show that there is also a direct relationship between unemployment and juvenile criminal offenses. During the deep economic and financial crisis of the Dominican Republic in 2003-2004, extreme poverty doubled from 7 percent to 14 percent.[106] As can be seen in Figure 5 below, juvenile arrests also rose substantially during that same time period. When the unemployment rate decreased, it was also reflected in the number of arrests.

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[102] Morgan, J. and Espinal, R. March 2009. "Political Culture of Democracy in the Dominican Republic: The Impact on Governability." Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), Americas Barometer.
[103] Morgan, J. and Espinal, R. March 2009. "Political Culture of Democracy in the Dominican Republic: The Impact on Governability." Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), Americas Barometer.
[104] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.
[105] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.
[106] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.

Figure 5   Trends in Juvenile Arrest in the Dominican Republic
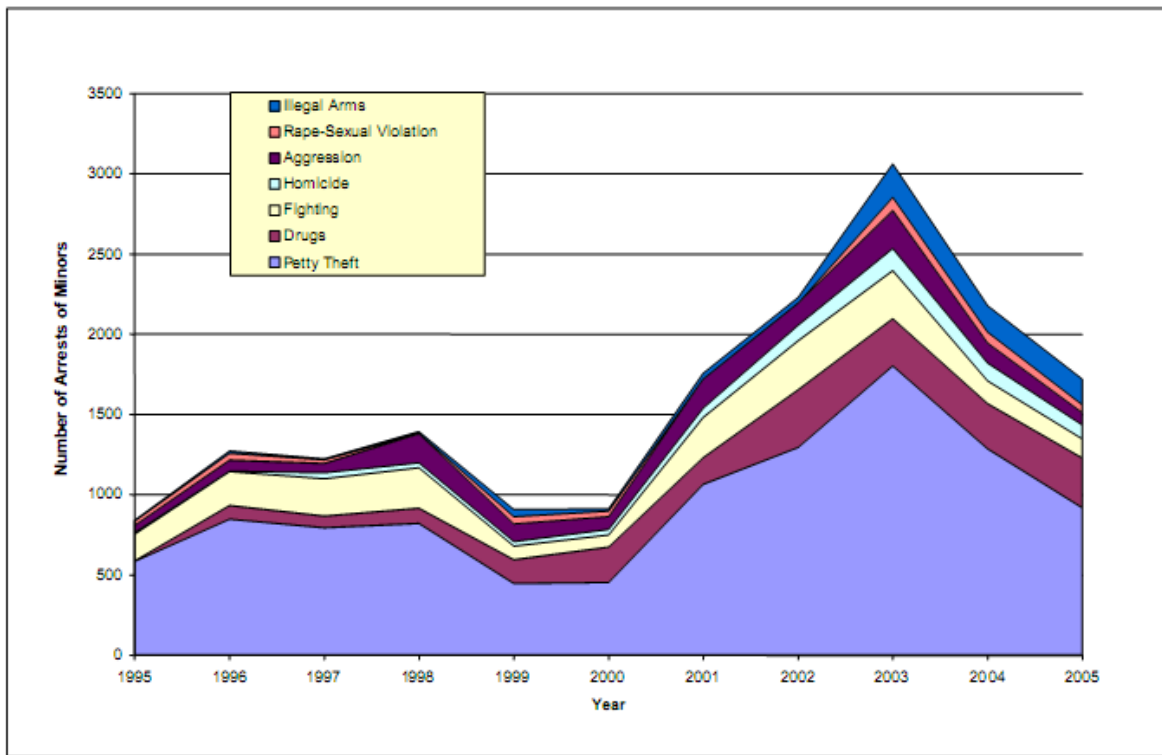
Source: Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic

Data indicate that youth (ages 16-29) represent a greater percentage of arrests for homicide than the rest of the population, and this rate is growing. Of the current prison population in the Dominican Republic, 62 percent of those arrested for homicide were ages 16-29 at the time of their arrest.[107] The study indicates that this is a growing trend. The main causes for detentions in minors are theft, followed by homicide, then sexual offenses, and finally, drug dealing.

For lack of economic resources, positive activities and legal income-generating options, focus group participants report that many youth engage in *micro-tráfico* – low-level drug-dealing – and other criminal activity. Youth become involved with drug-dealing as young as age 9. Dealing is seen as a way to overcome youths' economic difficulties, especially since the rich people in their communities have made their money through drugs. As one interviewee put it, youth may see drug-dealing and gambling as ways to make a lot of money now, without having to complete or succeed in school. Echoing that sentiment, focus group participants noted that drug-dealing doesn't require an identity card or CV and is an easy way to make money.

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[107] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.

According to a World Bank study, the participation trends of youth in violent acts related to gangs and drugs is a significant and growing problem.[108] Gang leaders exploit the fact that children under age 13 are not held criminally responsible and therefore involve them from a young age in theft, assault, murder and other criminal offenses.[109] Studies show that minors who are involved in criminal acts maintain more aggressive and violent conduct when they grow older.[110]

According to survey data from the Caribbean Youth Development report, 20 percent of male students and 12 percent of female students surveyed throughout the Caribbean reported having belonged at one point to a gang.[111] This echoes the marked increase in the number and influence of gangs cited in youth surveys in the Dominican Republic, including one conducted with youth ages 14-17 currently participating in remedial programs in which half admitted to belonging to gangs.[112] In the town of Guachupita alone, 16 gangs were active, while the town of Los Guandules had 7 gangs (with four operating in both towns).[113]

For many young people, a gang is a social participation space, a system of values in which individual and group identities are affirmed through new communication codes and forms of authority that are different from those that exist in the world of formal institutions.[114] UNAIDS conducted a study in the towns of Guachupita and Los Guandules with members of gangs[115] which revealed that the search for companionship, affection, and social acceptance were the primary motives for joining the street organizations.[116] The *"barrio"* (neighborhood) was cited as the primary point of recruitment for youth, followed by school (particularly for girls) and jail. Of the study participants, 54.5 percent of youth involved in gangs reported being members for 2-5 years while only 19 percent reported being a gang member more than 5 years. [117]

The young gang members expressed interest in being incorporated into educational and productive processes. In the study, 99.5 percent of youth involved in gangs said they want to participate in educational processes to develop their skills and capacities, while 98.6

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[108] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.
[109] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.
[110] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.
[111] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.
[112] World Bank, 2006. Youth Violence in the Caribbean: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic.
[113] UNAIDSONUSIDA, January 2008. *"Evaluación y documentación participativa de las Estrategias para el cambio de comportamiento implementadas con jóvenes miembros* de organizaciones de la calle."
[114] ECLAC, OIJ, October 2008. Youth and Social Cohesion in Ibero-America, A Model in the Making.
[115] In Guachupita*: Los Cilindros, Los Chicos Benetton, Los Bad Boys, Los Pelles, Los Comejoyetes, Los Ñuñi, El Amor Dorado, Los Federales, Los Intocables, Los Vato Locos, Los Anárquicos, Amor y Paz, Los 45, Los Latin Kings, Los Elisma and Los 42.* In Los Guandules*: los Latin Kings, Amor y Paz, Amor Dorado, Los 42, Los Blood (Amor de Sangre), Los Trinitarios and Los Panteras*.
[116] UNAIDS, January 2008. "*Evaluación y documentación participativa de las Estrategias para el cambio de comportamiento implementadas con jóvenes miembros de organi*zaciones de la calle."
[117] UNAIDS, January 2008. *"Evaluación y documentación participativa de las Estrategias para el cambio de comportamiento implementadas con jóvenes miembros de organi*zaciones de la calle."

percent said they were willing to work in a micro-enterprise *("grupo de producción")* with other young people in their towns.[118]

Youth Civic Participation Programs

Youth Civic Participation Programs in the Dominican Republic seek to foster youths' positive civic participation and reduce negative and illegal behaviors. Such programs include: 1) initiatives directed toward facilitating birth registration and identity documents; 2) political training and democracy programs; and 3) local policy and leadership development programs. Key examples of these program types are described below and in greater detail in Annex 8.

Birth Registration and Identity Cards Programs

The research encountered three initiatives aimed at helping youth and others to obtain birth certificates and identity documents. These programs are affiliated with: 1) the World Bank "Social Protection Investment Project"; 2) the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), working in concert with the Central Electoral Board; and 3) Centro Bonó.

The World Bank's "Social Protection Investment Project" includes a component to provide late birth certification and national identity cards for poor Dominicans. The project also includes a sub component to stimulate demand for identity cards through nationwide information, education and communication campaigns; targeted legal assistance to undocumented families; simplification and standardization of procedures to obtain identity documents; modernization of civil registry offices; and incentives to civil registry offices to process late birth certification. The project aims to reach 170,000 family members and an estimated 50,000 children and youth under age 16 by June 2012.

Between 2007 and 2009, the UNDP provided support to the Central Electoral Board in the process of issuing birth certificates to children and adolescents under age 16 who are enrolled without birth certificates in public schools. To date, 17,000 children and youth who were identified in the SEE 2006 census have been issued birth certificates. The program is currently in the process of being renewed.

The *Centro Bonó*, a program of the Jesuit Service, provides legal support to people without birth certificates. The program provides support to people of Haitian descent born in the Dominican Republic in the process of obtaining birth certificates, as well as support to Dominicans with late birth declaration processing. Currently the *Centro Bonó* only offers service in Santo Domingo and the National District, with an approximate annual coverage of about 1,200 people.

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[118] UNAIDS, January 2008. "Evaluación y documentación participativa de las Estrategias para el cambio de comportamiento implementadas con jóvenes miembros de organizaciones de la calle."

Political Training and Democracy Programs

UNIBE / INTEC/ Citizen Participation

These three organizations conduct a political training and management program financed by USAID/DR, which consists of the incorporation of young adults, ages 18-45, into political parties and civil society in six regions of the country. The program consists of a learning process that seeks to strengthen young political party participants in the areas of democracy, values and culture, institutionalization of democracy, and political management tools, with the aim of bringing about changes in the country's political processes. The program intends to train about 3,000 young adults by 2012. Presently, 1,500 young adults have been trained, 37 percent of which are women.

Friedrich Ebert Foundation

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation implements the "Social Leadership and Political Program" in the Dominican Republic. Each year they train 30 young adults, ages 18-30, in democracy, leadership, and civic participation. The aim is to give these youth analytical tools and a sense of political inquiry. An important characteristic of this program is that it incorporates Haitian youth into the training process. Interviewees noted that although the educational process they employ uses a curriculum and pedagogical approach, it is not a purely academic process, which creates a more favorable environment for the work of these young people.

PUCMM Link with Civitas Program

The *Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra* is part of the "CIVITAS" international initiative under which it is implementing the "Citizenship Project," a training initiative incorporating concepts such as citizenship, public policies, community work and democracy into basic and secondary education. The program is aimed at 4 to 7th graders with the objective of motivating youth to be civically engaged. The project has developed two manuals: a) manual which provides teachers with the necessary theoretical and methodological information to implement the program, and b) manual for students, which incorporates theoretical information and exercises to implement civic actions in their communities. The project is working with twenty public schools managed by *Fé y Alegria* and two private schools in Santo Domingo (Lux Mundi and Babeque).

Local Policy and Leadership Development Programs

UNICEF City Youth Councils

The City Youth Council initiative has grown over the past 20 years to encompass 115 city youth councils and 21 municipal districts declaring themselves Child Friendly Municipalities today.[119] The electoral process for the youth councils stimulates community participation. This process seeks to teach young adults about exercising citizenship and policies so as to stimulate a democratic culture. Presently, UNICEF is modifying the work strategy for this program, seeking to improve the form of government in the City Youth Councils.

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[119] Unicef webpage: http://www.unicef.org/republicadominicana/politics_3773.htm

National Youth Network

With support from the *Instituto Dermatológico de Cirugía y Piel* (IDCP) and the Global Fund, the National Youth Network fosters citizen oversight of the use of municipal funds to deliver health services. The Network implements programs with its members to encourage youth participation in the provincial development councils and the development of municipal plans in the municipalities where they are represented. An important accomplishment of this network is that five of its members are the representatives of the youth departments in their municipalities.

Coordinator of Socio-Cultural Animation *(CASCO), Training and Support to Community-based Youth Organizations in San Cristobal Province*

In the province of San Cristobal, and with support from the Global Fund, this program seeks to integrate young people in the Municipalities of Palenque and Cambita into a training process on STIs and HIV/AIDS, linked to the creation of a local advocacy agenda. This program has brought about the establishment of two youth organizations that have demonstrated influence with municipal authorities and successfully solicited financing from the city councils to fund the community actions that they implement. To date, two inter-institutional agreements have been reached between youth organizations and the city councils. Their aim is to create a local health promotion plan where youth play a leading role in execution, direction and surveillance while the city council assumes the financing.

Alianza ONG

The *Sirve Quisqueya* initiative creates a space for youth ages 14-25 who participate in volunteer groups, networks and youth associations whose work seeks to support the achievement of the millennium development goals. Presently, this network works in 7 municipalities (Bonao, Fantino, Herrera, Guerra, Dajabón, Santiago and Azua). *Alianza* NGO also promotes the Green Brigade initiative that uses a Service Learning approach, in which the young adults undergo a learning process and then participate in community service projects to apply their knowledge.

Social Rehabilitation Programs for At-Risk Youth

Youth Network of Guachupita

The Guachupita United Youth Network is an effort that seeks to incorporate young adults belonging to gangs into a process of social participation that motivates them to join youth development programs and makes them less vulnerable. This program started with funds from the Guachupita community and later obtained funding from the Presidential AIDS Council, COPRESIDA, for actions linked to STI/HIV/AIDS prevention, as described above under Health. Young adults, ages 13-35, with high vulnerability rates and social risk as members of juvenile gangs in Guachupita and Los Guandules joined this network. The program has successfully graduated 40 young gang members as health promoters for HIV prevention and also integrated these youth in participation mechanisms in their communities such as neighborhood councils.

National Office for Integrated Attention for Young People in Conflict with the Law

This government program works through seven detainment centers (prisons), which incorporate adolescents in a learning process aimed at their rehabilitation and social reintegration. Presently, there are two in San Cristobal, two in Santo Domingo, and one each in La Vega, Santiago, and San Francisco de Macorís. The adolescents in these centers create a personal life plan which guides their participation in technical courses, literacy classes, and sports and recreational activities. These centers have Basic Education programs for adults and part-time secondary education, sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

Hogares Crea Dominicano

While not focused exclusively on youth, this organization recruits people with drug dependence and incorporates them in a rehabilitation process to reintegrate them into society free of drug addiction. Presently, *Hogar Crea* has 43 homes throughout the Dominican Republic serving people from age eight. Since 1975, it has reintegrated 20,000 men and women into society as productive human beings. Their approach is based on group and psychological therapy, which incorporates teamwork in tasks such as cleaning and economic subsistence as a tool that allows them to be humble and recognize the importance of work.

Gaps between Supply and Demand in Civic Participation

While programs exist in response to the need for better involvement and integration of youth in society, gaps still remain, especially in the following areas:

1. Distrust of authority and the need for a voice
2. Impediments to civic participation
3. Passive conceptualization of participation
4. Limited programming for younger youth
5. Lack of funding to support justice and rehabilitation

Distrust of Authority and the Need for a Voice

Youth tend to distrust government authorities and institutions. They feel exploited when authorities tell them they are the future but act in ways that contradict such statements. Youth perceive that government offerings for youth are poor-quality, and there is no motivation to initiate the youth participation mechanisms considered in the General Youth Law 49-00. They also tend to fear the judicial process, or to be apathetic about participating. Designing programs directed towards strengthening youth groups in political action could improve youths' perception of judicial processes and help them understand that justice is a matter of rights.

Furthermore, young adults perceive that they have a negative image in society, and consequently that youth initiatives are not recognized. According to interviewees, communication and the ability to reach mutual understanding between adults and young

people is complicated by the fact that adults do not understand the codes used by young people. That being said, young people emphasize the need for freedom of speech and to be able to say things in such a way that their voice can be heard. Focus groups identified using media such as the radio as an important means to express their opinions and be heard.

Impediments to Civic Participation

Young people are not enthusiastic about participating or initiating participatory actions, partly because they feel closed out of many opportunities. Focus group participants mentioned organizations in the community are not open to youth participation, which causes youth to feel frustrated and disillusioned. They note that existing traditions discriminate against youth and inhibit their share of power within the social environment. Furthermore, a centralized or "closed" adult system implies that political processes are for "adults." Youth participation is more accessible through church activities and sports, in which they play assigned roles.

"In this country there are very few opportunities (to participate) ... for everything you have to be a listener ... the voice of youth is usually not heard because normally... when young people want to express themselves they are afraid or repressed. No one listens."

Certain youth segments face particular impediments to participation. Interviewees perceive that one of the main problems for youths' civic participation is poverty. Correlated with poverty is the likelihood of not having an identity card, which comprises an important tool in enabling youth to access services and exercise their rights. In addition, it is almost impossible for adolescents and young adults with a criminal record to obtain formal employment, thereby limiting their prospects for earning income. Young adults who have been gang members are restricted from participating in many church and sports activities, making it harder for them to reach higher levels of participation in their communities and in organizations other than gangs.

Passive Conceptualization of Participation. Youths' ability to participate actively and positively in society is determined by their level of commitment to and knowledge of the importance of participation, and their awareness of different ways to participate. Youth ages 10-13 and 14-17 who participated in focus groups do not recognize the importance of their social and political participation, unless related to a specific program. It is evident from focus groups that youth in programs with a political action component see their social and political participation as more relevant, while for those in programs that do not include political action, their participation holds less importance.

The focus groups showed that the participants generally do not identify active forms of involvement, considering civic participation equivalent to joining organizations. This indicates that youth consider their involvement to be a passive process, such as though membership or nomination to an organization. Learning processes equipping youth with political action tools could engender their ability to advocate for public policies and play a

more active role in shaping society. While the many existing youth networks could play this role, they are dispersed and no mechanism exists to integrate them as a social and political force.

Limited Programming for Younger Youth. While a number of institutions have contributed to the development of democracy, citizenship and political participation, interviewees perceive the coverage of these programs to be limited given the educational gap among youth in these areas. Existing political and leadership training programs tend to target ages 18-30 and in some cases, up to age 45. There is a need to promote knowledge and awareness of democracy and citizenship at the basic and secondary education levels, especially involving practical components such as citizenship exercises and community service.

Lack of Funding to Support Justice and Rehabilitation. The high cost of judicial services, associated with the large number of poorly qualified professionals, makes it more difficult for young adults to access justice. One interviewee highlighted the need to connect youth with high rates of violence in peri-urban areas with organizations focused on justice. While raising awareness about the law and legal processes could facilitate access to justice, it is perceived that insufficient funds are allocated to training and information dissemination. In addition, investment in social rehabilitation programs for adolescents in conflict with the law is perceived to be limited by financial considerations. For example, interviewees noted limited resources for the design and supervision of educational activities included in the personal development plans for adolescents involved with the National Office for Integrated Attention for Young People in Conflict with the Law. They perceive that social rehabilitation programs cannot be considered in the short-term, but rather that medium and long-term involvement is necessary. Due to the high cost of longer-term interventions, the lack of funds to address the scope of the problem is significant.

VIII. HAITIAN YOUTH DISPLACED AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

According to interviewees,[120] it is difficult to estimate the number of Haitians, including youth, who migrated to the DR as a result of the earthquake.[121] The Jesuit Service for Refugees and Immigrants of the *Centro Bonó* is currently finalizing a report estimating these numbers, but the results were not available to be included in this assessment.

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[120] Organizations that monitor or serve Haitian youth in the DR that were interviewed for this assessment include Aquelarre Support Center (CEAPA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), *Colectiva Mujer y Salud*, CONANI, and the International Office on Migration (IOM), Jesuit Service for Refugees and Immigrants of the *Centro Bonó*. CRS reported to be monitoring the situation closely through three of its partner organizations, *Acción Callejera, Caminante*, and *Niños del Camino*.
[121] It is important to note that this assessment did not look separately at Haitian youth who were living in the Dominican Republic prior to the earthquake. However, some of these youth may be served by the programs described in previous sections.

"We [Haitian youth] are migrants. We came from a very poor country and even poorer after the earthquake. The majority of us, we are here against our will, because we don't have another alternative. We lost our parents in the earthquake, we lost hope. ... We have a need to go to school. In my particular case, I finished my studies in Haiti. I am wondering how I can continue my studies."

That being said, interviewees perceived a significant influx of Haitians into the DR since the earthquake. While many initially moved to the border and are still living in border towns such as Pedernales and Jimaní,[122] more recently Haitian migrants have moved to big cities and provinces such as Santo Domingo and Puerto Plata, including in bateys. Citing studies indicating that urban Haitians tend to move to urban areas in the DR and rural Haitians to rural areas, one interviewee suggested in this case that most of the migration has likely occurred between Port of Prince and Santo Domingo. The five focus groups conducted for this assessment took place in two different locations within the Santo Domingo metropolitan area, including four in one batey.

While more research is needed to understand the situation of youth living in the DR as a result of the earthquake, the assessment identified two segments of youth, with overlap between the two. The first group, described principally by interviewees, appears to exhibit the greatest vulnerability. These youth may be living and working in the street and/or be vulnerable to commercial, including sexual, exploitation. They have immediate needs for safe shelter and food. The second group, including many of the focus group participants, may exhibit greater agency, e.g., they may have come to the DR seeking opportunities after having lost family members or livelihoods. However, they find themselves in limbo as a result of not having legal documents, with few opportunities to study, work or engage in recreational activities.

Policies Directed at Haitian Youth in the DR as a Result of the Earthquake

In order to ensure an effective and coordinated response to Haitian children and youth in the DR as a result of the earthquake, CONANI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), together with numerous public and non-governmental institutions, established the "Protocol for the Protection for Vulnerable Haitian Children and Adolescents who are in the Dominican Republic as a Consequence of the Earthquake." The Protocol addresses the treatment of unaccompanied minors, those

"We need to have document[s], to eat every day, to find a place to sleep. Beyond that, many youth here, we need some type of psychological assistance to overcome the tragedy that we have just lived through."

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[122] UNICEF website: http://www.unicef.org/republicadominicana/emergencies_18258.htm

separated from their families, and those in other situations of vulnerability. It establishes a critical path for identifying and contacting family members. Training has been carried out to support implementation of the Protocol, and one interviewee noted the Protocol has had some effect. However, interviewees report a lack of resources to respond adequately to the needs presented.

Characteristics of Haitian Youth in the DR as a Result of the Earthquake

Interviewees indicated that trafficking in persons and labor exploitation have been observed and appear to be organized (e.g., street kids begging in Santo Domingo). One interviewee reported that women and girls believed they had to work against their will, had little ability to negotiate their work conditions, and received almost no remuneration. Another interviewee noted that street youth ages 13 or older who steal for food may be arrested (while those under 13 may not), but processing time is long, and cases may slip through the cracks. In the meantime, these youth lack a safe place to stay.

Youth in focus groups reported coming to the DR in search of better opportunities in the face of few alternatives. In many cases, one or both of the youths' parents had died in the earthquake or lost their jobs. Youth aspiring to earn income sought not only to support themselves but also to contribute to their families' well-being.

Focus group participants perceived barriers to meeting their needs and fulfilling their aspirations, as well as a lack of support to overcome such barriers. Needs articulated ranged from access to food, potable water, housing and good health, to education, employment, and recreation. Lack of legal documents, ability to speak Spanish and access to transportation were widely cited as barriers to education and employment. When asked about sources of support to realize their aspirations, youth generally replied that they had none, even less so after having lost family members in the earthquake. They noted that in the absence of positive alternatives, some turn to drugs and crime.

Education

Youth in focus groups placed strong value on education, though many of them and those they know faced barriers to furthering their education. In discussing their aspirations, many cited enrolling in school or finishing their studies, including university. Among the primary obstacles they faced in fulfilling these aspirations were a lack of money and access to transportation, as well as necessary legal documentation. Youth also view school drop-out as mainly an economic issue, though they cited pregnancy as a major factor, and drug abuse as an additional reason.

Youth varied in how they perceived the quality of schooling in the DR. Youth ages 10-17 perceived low quality and a lack of discipline in Dominican schools. They noted that students do not respect or obey teachers, and that teachers do not respond to behavioral issues, including violence. Youth ages 18-24 consider education opportunities in the DR

better than in Haiti, though it is not clear whether these youth are referring to secondary, tertiary or vocational education.

Employment

Focus group participants perceived a dearth of employment opportunities, owing in part to the significant barriers they face. As with education, two of the main barriers included a lack of legal documentation and transportation to and from areas offering employment. In addition, some perceived prejudice by Dominicans against Haitians as a barrier. These factors combined to limit opportunities for Haitian youth to particular segments, such as construction (for male youth), domestic work (for female youth), and handicrafts. This contrasts sharply with youths' stated aspirations to be doctors, nurses, lawyers, or artists. Youth believed that having a trade provided opportunities, and those ages 14-17 viewed vocational training as an important alternative to formal education when the latter was unavailable. Youth across age groups said that they were not aware of youth employment programs or did not believe that any existed.

Health

In focus groups, youth reported a broad range of health concerns that affected them and their communities. These included lack of food; malaria and HIV/AIDS; environmental concerns such as contaminated water, trash, air pollution, and lead; respiratory problems, asthma, colds and fever; alcohol and associated violence, and psychological issues such as depression and anxiety. Youth perceived the need for psychological assistance, a view shared by interviewees who noted that these youth have experienced trauma and gender-based violence. Youth also saw the need to promote awareness about sex and drugs. They perceived that many youth have early sexual relations, and as noted above, that teen pregnancy is a major reason for dropping out of school. Young adolescents (10-13) did not know anything about existing health programs, while older youth simply said health services did not exist in their communities. Some did note that the church works to promote health, peace and non-violence. Asked what they would do if they could design health programs, youth responded that they would provide medicine and food to those who need it, establish medical centers, and address environmental pollution.

Civic Participation

In focus groups, youth exhibited a strong orientation toward helping others, but they often perceived that youth in general don't feel responsibility toward their communities. Some saw the need to raise awareness in order to foment a greater sense of responsibility. However, others saw responsibility between youth and the community as mutual. Those ages 10-17 saw few or no opportunities for youth to participate and have a voice.

Programs Serving Haitian Youth

In general, youth in focus groups did not know of programs or services to serve them, or believed they did not exist. As one young person put it, Haitian youth came to the DR with the expectation of encountering an organization that would help them to enroll in university, to legalize their documents, or to learn Spanish, but these services did not materialize. However, churches and religious organizations were mentioned as sources of support.

While interviewees identified a few organizations serving Haitians in the DR, they reported that the supply was inadequate to meet the demand and that Haitians are reluctant to access formal services for fear of deportation. Interviewees note that despite the Protocol to serve these children and youth, little funding is available to implement it and provide support services. CONANI has observed an increase in the Haitian youth served in its foster care homes ("*hogares de paso*"), though another interviewee indicated that these are now full and more youth still need safe shelter. Comprehensive education centers such as *Acción Callejera* offer alternative means of addressing needs for those who cannot or are afraid to access formally provided services. One interviewee from a youth-serving organization stated the need to establish a program to provide documentation to Haitian migrants. Speaking specifically of the needs of Haitian women and girls who are subject to abuse, an interviewee indicated that they should be recognized as disaster victims and afforded free medical and psychological care, and safe shelter.

Gaps between Supply and Demand among Haitian Youth

Lack of Safe Spaces

The assessment indicated that many Haitian youth in the DR as a result of the earthquake are highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, but they lack access to safe spaces and may be hesitant to seek help. There appears to be an immediate need for shelter for children, youth and women, as well as for psychological support to address the depression and anxiety they face. In addition, youth would benefit from safe places to go, such as alternative education centers or other youth-serving programs, where they can engage in positive and constructive activities while working with staff to develop longer-term plans.

"We are in a foreign land. You can't live without papers ... you can't study, work, do anything. This need is very important, not only for me personally but for the whole group in general."

Legal Issues

Haitian youth in the DR as a result of the earthquake may not be residing in the country legally or have their documents to prove their identity, nationality or immigration status. As a result, they face challenges in accessing formal education and/or employment.

Limited Resources

Interviewees indicated that despite the pressing need among this population, there is little funding to provide them with services in the Dominican Republic. Institutions tasked with implementing the Protocol for the Protection of Children and Adolescents lack the resources to act. In addition, organizations serving street youth and female youth who have been abused perceive insufficient funds to meet demand.

IX. GAPS AND KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

While this assessment indicated many areas of gaps between the needs of different youth segments and the programs and services that exist to serve them, it also tapped the expertise of interviewees and focus group participants to identify a number of key success factors for program design, based on what has worked well and what can be improved. Accordingly, this section: 1) synthesizes the specific youth segments not sufficiently attended and the services they need most; and 2) describes key success factors for programming articulated by key stakeholders, including youth themselves.

Gaps between Supply and Demand

Before spotlighting a particular youth segment, it bears mentioning that the research for this assessment indicates a strong rationale for USAID/DR's focus on youth in general. Youth feel that they lack a voice and distrust the government. They have particular health needs, but services are often not delivered in ways that speak to those needs. Many interviewees mentioned that they did not have a "youth focus" per se, but rather they offered services that happened to be available to youth. What emerged from focus groups is that youth have aspirations and show a sense of caring and responsibility toward others, but they often lack the opportunities or are thwarted in realizing their aspirations or engaging with society in a positive way.

Chief among underserved youth segments, poor youth face a number of barriers to accessing services and opportunities that renders them vulnerable. The quality of education available to them is often very low, and large class sizes mean less individualized attention, thereby making them more likely to slip through the cracks. Low-quality education translates into low skill levels, putting them at a strong competitive disadvantage in the job market and impeding them from enrolling in training courses. Poor youth are more likely to lack identity cards, which serves as a further impediment to accessing a

range of services, including training. For a variety of factors, poor youth are also more likely to become involved in crime. In turn, a criminal record impedes youth from participating in programs or obtaining employment.

The Haitian youth displaced by the earthquake who participated in focus groups also comprise a particularly vulnerable group. Some Haitian youth appear to be trafficking victims, involved in commercial and sexual exploitation. Some youth left Haiti because they felt they had few alternatives, often after their parents died or lost their jobs. While youth in focus groups place significant value on education, many are unable to study in the Dominican Republic for lack of legal documentation. This lack of documents also severely constrains their job opportunities, which they said were limited to construction and domestic work. They reported having no health care facilities in their communities.

The gap between needs and supply for youth in general appears to be greater for those in the 10-13 and 14-17 age groups than for either the younger or the older age segments. While children younger than 10 may clearly be vulnerable and many interviewees emphasized the importance of serving youth as early as possible, younger children may also receive more attention through the school and health care system and NGOs. At the other end of the spectrum, young adults 18-24 are legally independent, have better job prospects as employers see them as more mature, and those who are citizens have the potential to participate in the electoral process, even when they don't choose to exercise that right.

Falling between the age of compulsory basic education and the age of adulthood, vulnerable youth ages 14-17 face a particular dearth of options. The scarcity and low quality of education supply at the secondary level means that many youth who have completed 8th grade are unable to continue with their studies.   Those who have not completed 8th grade face even fewer options as they cannot participate in many job training programs.   The adolescent pregnancy rate is very high, which focus groups and interviewees cite as a common reason for drop-out among girls. Pregnant youth and young mothers who leave school prematurely have diminished prospects for advancement or income generation.   Female youth show higher unemployment rates, which one interviewee noted was a function not only of pregnancy and motherhood, but also of discrimination.

While youth ages 10-13 are often considered a "captive audience" because they are generally still in school, there remain significant gaps in serving this segment. Despite high basic education enrollment, a substantial number of these youth are out of school (22,000 for ages 10-14 in 2008), greatly exceeding the capacity of education programs aimed at their reentry. Male youth at this age are much more likely to be illiterate and out of school than female youth, and interviewees indicate that it can be more difficult to involve them in programs. In addition, because youth at this age are considered too young to be sexually inactive despite the early sexual debut of many, there is a relative lack of adequate reproductive and sexual health programs directed toward them. Such programs could lay a critical foundation for adolescent pregnancy prevention.

In light of the gaps described above, the research for this assessment indicates that the following areas would benefit from greater investment and attention:

Education

Education was seen as a critical need among interviewees and youth alike. The education system itself must improve to serve youth more effectively, and USAID/DR and other donors are collaborating with the Ministry of Education toward that goal. However, for youth currently attending low-quality schools or for those out of school, programs that provide the attention, support, and advocacy to help youth to reenter and succeed in school fill a critical gap. While a number of reputable programs exist to meet this need, including some operating at fairly large scale, they pale in comparison to the number of youth who would benefit from these services.

Employment

Given the high unemployment and skills gap among youth, employment programs can play a crucial role in facilitating youth in obtaining their first job or becoming self-employed. The research encountered a few large-scale programs of this type as well as many smaller programs. In both cases, INFOTEP offered training courses with varying degrees of accommodation for more vulnerable populations (e.g., delivering courses for those with only basic skills). While INFOTEP is strongly interested in serving this segment, interviewees suggest the need to further adapt its courses to the segment's needs. In addition, this process may be simplified by direct collaboration and negotiation between USAID/DR and INFOTEP. Given that a large-scale program aimed specifically at employment for vulnerable youth (the Ministry of Labor's Youth and Employment Program) already exists, and that self-employment presents a promising option in the face of few formal employment opportunities, there may be a greater need for programs that provide entrepreneurship specifically to vulnerable youth. Programming offered by Junior Achievement could be adapted and expanded. Regardless of whether programs promote formal, informal or self-employment, they should provide the support and follow-through to connect youth with their first job.

Health

While youth noted the presence of a host of health problems in their communities, interviewees perceived a lack of health programming directed specifically toward youth and suggested that existing services should be adapted. Given that life skills programs may be delivered to younger youth in schools, those who are out of school and arguably more vulnerable to health risks are less likely to receive them. Youth may not attend "youth-friendly" services that do exist for fear of stigma. As noted above, reproductive and sexual health services are less commonly or effectively directed toward young adolescents (ages 10-13). In addition, youth noted environmental concerns ranging from a lack of safe spaces for engaging in physical activity and playing sports, to pollution and trash. While some programs exist to address these needs, the demand appears to exceed the supply.

Two themes strongly emerged from the research on the supply of programs related to civic participation. First, legal documents present a critical issue and a real need among many youth. Additional investigation should be done on the programs that exist to aid youth and their families in obtaining documents to determine how future programming can link with or expand these services. Second, civic participation programs are generally not directed toward the most at-risk youth, though there are exceptions. Youth in gangs or with criminal records in particular are often excluded from the very programming from which they would benefit. Providing meaningful opportunities for vulnerable youth to engage in civic participation would serve both to increase the voice they strongly feel they lack and enable them to contribute positively to their communities.

Key Success Factors for Future Programming

This assessment sought to identify key success factors for youth programming in two ways. One, interviewees were asked how they would improve existing programs or design new ones. Two, youth themselves were asked what types of programs were most needed and which elements they should include. Together they suggested the following program design elements, both from a cross-sectoral standpoint and for each sector.

"I would create (a program) so that young people that have problems, or vices, could participate dynamically ("jevi"), cool, you know, with enthusiasm so they leave those other things behind."

Interviewees recommended engaging youth actively in program design and accounting for differences in the needs and interests of different individuals and groups. They suggested enlisting youth in designing their own initiatives. They further recommended asking them about the types of programs in which they would most like to participate and schedules that work well given their other commitments. They recommended tailoring programming to each individual youth's needs, for example through the development of individual life plans. They also noted the importance of differentiating programming for different age groups, for instance, providing more flexibility to older youth to accommodate work and other responsibilities and interests.

Both interviewees and focus group participants stressed the necessity that activities be engaging to youth. Sports were the most frequently mentioned attraction or "hook" for youth, though cultural activities and computers also were cited. Older youth (ages 18-24) in particular noted a lack of artistic, literary and cultural activities, which they saw as strengthening character and broadening perspective. Youth expressed a strong need to create safe recreational spaces for sports and other activities, including learning and training. Both youth and interviewees viewed programs leading to income generation and employment as appealing. Interviewees noted that activities are more engaging when

youth have opportunities to practice what they learn and take action, such as internships, peer-to-peer health promotion, and civic participation.

Interviewees noted the importance of providing integrated programming that attends to youths' varied needs: education, socio-emotional, employment, health, civic participation, and recreational. Implicitly, youth also recommended a holistic approach, by stating the need for supports and opportunities in each of these areas. In particular, they expressed this need with regard to youth living and working in the street, and orphans.

Education

In their recommendations with regard to education, interviewees focused on needed skills and effective strategies, while youth identified the knowledge and skills they most wanted to acquire. Interviewees saw a critical need for youth to improve their academic skills, particularly reading and writing. They cited the importance of providing individualized support (e.g., through homework rooms), thereby enabling staff to identify and address deficits and helping to offset lack of personal attention in crowded schools. They also stressed the importance of accelerating learning for overage youth. Youth in urban areas placed strong emphasis on the need for technical training, while youth in the tourist areas of Puerto Plata and Boca Chica cited the need for language classes, particularly English. In addition, youth expressed interest in spaces in which they could access the internet, both for learning and to occupy their time, and noted that such spaces do not exist in many communities. They also articulated the need to develop educational programs in audiovisual communications, such as film, music, and presentations, and the arts.

Employment

Interviewees and youth shared many of the same recommendations with regard to employment, focusing on skills development, connection with first employment, and entrepreneurship and access to credit. Both groups saw increasing youths' skills as indispensable. In addition to academic and technical skills, interviewees noted the importance of teaching "soft skills" – ranging from attitudes and behaviors to CV-writing and interviewing techniques – which employers view as highly important. Youth tended to focus more on acquiring technical skills. Interviewees and youth both noted the difficulty of youth in obtaining their first job. Interviewees cited the importance of actively making this connection, while youth viewed training courses such as those provided by INFOTEP as a means of acquiring initial employment. While interviewees saw internships as a way to motivate youth and provide real work experience, some noted the importance of designing internship programs carefully and in strong partnership with employers so as not to give false hope to youth of being hired. Both interviewees and youth emphasized the importance of entrepreneurship training and access to credit, especially in areas that lack employment opportunities, enabling youth to put their ideas into practice and generate income.

Health

Interviewees and youth saw a strong need to invest in health programming tailored specifically to the youth population and the issues they face. Interviewees noted the lack of health programming directed toward youth, despite the importance of adapting programs and services to youths' needs to increase usage and efficacy. Youth consistently articulated the need for reproductive and sexual education and related health care, and the prevention and treatment of substance use. Youth ages 10-13 and 14-17 indicate that female youth need health services such as gynecological and prenatal care because many engage in commercial sex work or become pregnant. In addition, they emphasized the need for treatment for addiction, including alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Interviewees saw the need to train staff to identify and appropriately deal with issues arising from physical and sexual abuse and drug use. Youth also asserted the need to develop educational programs on how to protect the environment, which in turn would have a positive effect on health.

Civic Participation

Interviewees and focus group participants noted that youth truly do want to have their voices heard, but they need to be engaged through the right mechanisms and on issues of importance to them. Opportunities for youths' civic participation should be active and meaningful, enabling them to affect real change. While youth tend to perceive the government negatively, they have demonstrated their capacity to affect public policy in working with NGOs and youth networks. Youth note that certain themes, such as environmental protection and fighting corruption, motivate youth to participate more. Opportunities for civic engagement tend to involve, and in some cases be better suited to, older youth. However, interviewees stressed that younger youth should also receive civic education and have opportunities to take action.

In addition to describing key success factors for program content, interviewees noted key organizational or structural elements. They recommended that USAID/DR take a long-term view in order to maximize the likelihood of impact and sustainability, by considering a time horizon of at least 5 years. As one interviewee representing a donor organization noted, programs that seem to have the most impact are those in which the staff have deep, longstanding ties to the community and intend to be there for the long-term. Two years was seen as insufficient to achieve impact. In addition, it was recommended that USAID/DR scale up its programming gradually to maintain quality.

Interviewees also noted the importance of having adequate staffing and incorporating individual and institutional support and capacity-building into a new program. With regard to implementation staff, interviewees suggested maintaining sufficiently low child-staff ratios that staff can know youth well on an individual basis and to foster program quality. In addition, hiring personnel that really cared about youth and could work effectively with adolescents was seen as important. Youth participants and implementation staff should be provided with continuous support and follow-up both during and after programming. In addition, interviewees saw the need to provide training and invest sufficiently in administrative personnel, especially with regard to USAID

regulations and the management of funds, to enable organizations that are strong programmatically to increase their management capacity. This is especially relevant in cases when organizations are expected to operate at increasing levels of scale.

Finally, interviewees noted that to serve at-risk youth effectively involves coordination among a multitude of stakeholders, who should be engaged at the outset and regularly during program implementation. Stakeholders include youth themselves, their families, teachers and school directors, neighborhood associations, municipal governments, ministries, churches, and the private sector. Many interviewees stressed the need to raise awareness of youths' rights among all stakeholders, including families and schools. Further, they noted the importance of working with government, NGOs and the private sector to lift barriers to youth participation in opportunities. However, they also regarded stakeholders as key allies. Interviewees recommended working closely with schools and earning trust of teachers in order to enlist them as partners in identifying, serving and monitoring students. Programming should reinforce and coordinate with government efforts to implement existing policies. In addition, it should tap all existing resources, both public and private, in the community, through formal linkages with government- and privately provided services.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

The team proposes that USAID/DR establish a single youth program with the following objective:

> To establish a social safety net for vulnerable out-of-school and at-risk youth within targeted geographic areas by financing core services and coordinating and leveraging additional resources to support youths' successful reentry into school, connection with economic opportunities, health and well-being, and participation in their communities.

USAID/DR requested that the team propose program options under three funding scenarios:

1. US$1 million per year for a core program;
2. US$3 million per year for the core program, plus funding from the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI);
3. US$4-5 million per year for the core program, CBSI and other sector involvement.

Rather than differentiate programming by funding level, the team proposes that increased funding be used to implement programming toward the above objective at greater levels of scale. The goal at each funding level would be to achieve sufficient scale in a given locality or set of localities to establish therein an effective social safety net for vulnerable youth. The approach of scaling up a single program would facilitate implementation, maximize resources through economies of scale, and have the greatest potential for impact.

Target Population and Localities

The core target population for the program would be youth ages 10-13 who are out of school and youth 14-17 who are out of school and unemployed. Nationally, these youth number approximately 22,000 (ages 10-14) and 55,000 (ages 15-19) respectively. Given that 60 percent of these youth live in the Santo Domingo and North/Cibao regions (roughly 7,000 ages 10-14 and 18,000 ages 15-19 respectively in the former and 6,000 and 15,000 respectively in the latter), the program would focus on serving selected communities in those provincial areas.

The team proposes that special attention also be paid to one or more of the following highly vulnerable groups:

- Youth 10-13 who are in school and overage
- Poor youth exhibiting additional risk factors (e.g., physical or sexual abuse, living or working in street; worst forms of child labor; drug abuse)
- Pregnant youth and young mothers
- Gang or criminally involved youth
- Vulnerable Haitian youth in the Dominican Republic as a result of the earthquake

Highly vulnerable, out-of-school youth were chosen as the target population for four reasons, relating to the country context and USAID/DR specifically.

1. While many programs exist to serve at-risk youth, fewer programs are available to address the multiple, complex needs of highly vulnerable youth, particularly in the holistic way that is needed.

2. The government has established the policy framework to serve highly vulnerable youth through its Code for the System of Protection and Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents (Law 136-03) and Policy Guidelines on the Holistic Protection of Street Children and Adolescents 2007-2012, among other policy instruments. The government, chiefly CONANI, is now tasked with translating these policies into practice in a coordinated, effective manner, which presents an opportunity for donor organizations to play a supporting role.

3. USAID/DR has gained important experience and contributed significantly to this work through its Out-of-School and At-Risk Youth Program. The new program would seek to build upon the experience base of USAID/DR and its implementing organizations and leverage existing programs and capacity.

4. Among the aims of the program would be to address the root causes of crime and gang activity and provide positive opportunities for youth already criminally involved, thus fulfilling a core purpose of the USAID Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, a potential funding stream for the program.

Youth ages 10-13 who are overage were selected as an additional target segment for several reasons. Overage youth are strongly at risk for dropping out of school. Formal programs aimed at bringing overage students up to grade level or helping them to progress through the school system more quickly appear to be concentrated at the secondary level. In addition to drop-out, overage in-school youth face many of the same risks as those out of school, namely unemployment, teen pregnancy, drug use, and criminal activity. Focusing on overage youth at the basic education, rather than secondary, level comprises a more preventive approach to addressing these risks. Finally, solely incorporating more out-of-school youth into the school system without helping those in school to succeed and progress has the potential to increase the burden on already crowded schools and further diminish student learning within those schools.

The overall proposed age range was chosen based on the relatively greater opportunities available and investment benefiting both younger children and older youth. Although youth ages 18-24 were also included in the scope of this assessment, our findings indicate that they have more opportunities than younger youth, in terms of both programming and employment, as noted above. At the other end of the age spectrum, children ages 5-9 benefit from significant investment, for example through the World Bank's Early Childhood Development project (aimed largely at preprimary education for 5-year-olds) and USAID/DR's and the Inter-American Development Bank's projects targeting 1st-4th grade. Therefore, the greatest gap exists for youth ages 10-17.

Under each funding scenario, it is proposed that the program select a set of localities based on: 1) the degree of need; and 2) the capacity of youth-serving organizations and other stakeholders to address that need. While need refers mainly to the number of youth fitting the profiles described above, it could also encompass school characteristics (such as drop-out or low achievement) and community characteristics (such as poverty, crime and violence). Capacity of grant recipient organizations encompasses: program design including evidence of effectiveness; implementation capacity, including staffing, coordination with other stakeholders, and monitoring; and finance and administration. While the assessment did not examine these three areas in depth, it did identify organizations that appear to exhibit strengths across these areas, with the capacity to serve substantial numbers of highly vulnerable youth (e.g., at least 500-1,000 per year), particularly in the Santo Domingo and Santiago metropolitan areas (as discussed further below). These organizations are the most likely to be able to "hit the ground running" with a new injection of resources. It is recommended that the base funding level prioritize resources to high-need communities that these high-capacity organizations can reach. Other organizations with strong or promising programming and implementation capacity should also be considered for funding, potentially with capacity-building support.

USAID/DR Program Strategies

Our recommendation is for USAID/DR to have a prime contractor or grantee that provides overall management, supervision and technical guidance to the project. The prime contractor would have the responsibility of ensuring that the program as a whole reaches

its targeted goals. Reaching these targeted goals would be assessed through outcome measures such as numbers of youth served; changes in the developmental status of at-risk youth; and changes in the capacity of participating youth-serving organizations.

As proposed in the out-briefing presentation, the program would finance four strategies:

1. Grant funding for youth-serving organizations and youth-directed projects
2. Youth design and monitoring framework
3. Networking
4. Capacity-building

Grant Funding

The prime contractor should be asked to administer a program of sub-grants to local and international youth-serving organizations and youth groups. These sub-grants would be the principle strategy for implementing the project and reaching its goals. Each sub-grant recipient organization would be responsible for the implementation of a specific program of sector-specific and/or multi-sector services aimed at the target population.

Sub-grants could comprise two types: 1) grants to youth-serving organizations; and 2) small grants to individual youth or youth groups.

1. *Youth-serving organizations.* Such organizations would receive funds to implement services, similar to past programming in this area.

2. *Youth and youth groups.* Under a small grant program, youth could design and implement entrepreneurship and community leadership activities.

For the small grant program for youth-led initiatives, USAID/DR can consider models such as the World Bank's 2010 Latin America and Caribbean Development Marketplace, entitled "Youth Developing Opportunity: Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Sustainability."

Youth Design and Monitoring Framework

The assessment team recommends that the prime contractor also have responsibility for the development and implementation of a design and monitoring framework against which the ability of the project to reach its goals can be measured. This framework would include various categories of outcome measures including programmatic outcomes associated with the objectives of the activities carried out by sub-grant organizations, and youth development outcomes associated with changes in the developmental status of youth who participate in the program[123]. It is recommended that the design and monitoring framework be developed by the prime contractor in collaboration with sub-grantee organizations once these organizations and their programs have been identified.

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[123] For examples of developmental assets for different age groups, please see the Search Institute's 40 Development Assets: http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets/lists

Such a framework would achieve a number of goals. First, it would require the prime contractor and sub-grant recipients to think through and articulate the logic model for their work, i.e., the ultimate impact they hope to achieve, the outcomes that contribute to that impact that can be measured in the intermediate term, and the direct outputs of their work that contribute to those outcomes. This thought process should result in better designed programming. Second, it could facilitate monitoring the program at different points in its cycle, providing important opportunities to assess outcomes and determine if strategies are working. Third, it could facilitate program evaluation, which is lacking in this area, particularly beyond the level of outputs. In order to assess the effectiveness of the program, USAID/DR could use the framework to conduct a quasi-experimental evaluation, by selecting similar communities not participating in the program as a control group. Finally, using a uniform framework across recipients could permit comparisons among them, though some caution is warranted given that recipients may target different segments.

Networking

The prime contractor would also be responsible for organizing and ensuring the organization of activities to help recipient organizations network, and ensure that recipients and other stakeholders work together to coordinate the delivery of services across the targeted urban locations where the project will take place. Networking could occur at different levels and among different stakeholder types. These include:

1. *Recipient organizations and other stakeholders within a locality:* to share knowledge of available services, strengthen inter-institutional linkages, and dedicate additional resources (financial and non-financial), including through the development of formal agreements.

2. *Stakeholders at the national level:* to strengthen coordination in the implementation of policy and facilitate linkages at the local level.

3. *Recipient organizations:* to share experiences and best practices in programming, management, and external relations.

4. *Youth grantees:* to share experiences on key themes (e.g., entrepreneurship, community leadership), establish connections, and provide mutual support.

The first form of networking seeks to address the lack of coordination among stakeholders that was cited by numerous interviewees in this assessment. The assessment proposes that USAID/DR follow a model similar to its Batey Community Development Project, which provides a powerful example of both concentrating and coordinating a holistic set of services within a given community. Under the project, each community benefits from a Local Coordinator, who coordinates and monitors the provision of services and supports the program staff in ensuring that community members avail themselves of those services. It is recommended that the program take a similar approach by assigning responsibility

within grant recipient organizations to personnel dedicated to this coordination role. Such personnel will focus on linking and leveraging all available resources – public and private, technical and financial – within the community. It is important to note that such a role will be more complicated in targeted communities, which likely have many uncoordinated services and stakeholders, compared to bateys with relatively few services.

Capacity-Building

The program could provide capacity-building support to three primary groups: 1) youth-serving organizations; 2) youth grantees; and 3) government agencies.

1. *Youth-serving organizations:* Support to youth-serving organizations could focus on both technical and managerial aspects of providing services to highly vulnerable youth at increasing levels of scale. On the technical side, examples include general topics like project design and monitoring, as well as more specific topics such as implementing the systematized intervention process. On the managerial side, support could be provided for helping organizations to plan for scale-up, as well as to manage project finance and administration in accordance with USAID requirements.

2. *Youth grantees:* Capacity building support for youth could focus on two youth cohorts who receive small grants through the above-mentioned youth fund. Through mentoring and linkages with the private sector, youth entrepreneurs could receive training on project management, business planning, budgeting, market analysis and value chain analysis, among other hard and soft skills to increase their likelihood of success. Support of youth who receive grants for community leadership activities could include project management, community asset mapping, needs assessment, communication, budgeting, teamwork and civic engagement. These youth could also be linked to community-based organizations or government departments in order to implement their ideas within an existing system and to have mentors along with community buy-in.

3. *Government agencies:* USAID/DR could collaborate with government agencies and other donors to determine areas in which the government would benefit from technical support. For example, CONANI noted that key elements of its National Network of Protection included a monitoring system to track youth as they move among organizations or communities, and a national drug treatment center, both of which could potentially benefit from external support.

Program Design

The team proposes that sub-grantee grantees focus on establishing a social safety net that consists of (a) the sector-specific   areas of education, employment, health, civic

participation, and (b) a cross-sectoral area that includes values and life skills, recreation, legal assistance, and advocacy.

These services would be provided by the network of sub-grantee organizations described above. It is envisioned that selected sub-grantees would have the capacity to provide services in one or more of the targeted sector-specific or corssCROSS-sectoral substantive areas. The prime contractor would facilitate the establishment of a referral network among sub-grantees that would enable youth who are participating in a service program provided by a particular sub-grantee institution to have access to a complete holistic range of services provided by other organizations in the network...

Here is a description of the types of activities that should be provided in each of the targeted areas of service delivery.

- **Education:** School reentry and completion
- **Employment:** Entrepreneurship and vocational skills, and first work experience
- **Health:** General reproductive and sexual, and psychological health promotion
- **Civic participation:** Civic education, ID and voter registration, and leadership development
- **Cross-sectoral:** Values and life skills, recreation, legal assistance, and advocacy

School Reentry and Completion

The team's findings indicate that a large number of youth are out of school and that education represents a significant deficiency among at-risk youth. Accordingly, we propose that the program focus on: 1) school reentry; and 2) progression and completion. The program should help youth to identify and enroll in the most appropriate educational setting, especially for older youth who may enroll in formal or non-formal programs. In order to support their progression, the program should build basic literacy and numeracy skills, reinforce classroom learning, and foster thinking skills for both formerly out-of-school youth and overage youth at risk of dropping out. Particular attention should be paid to critical transition points, such as the end and beginning of each education cycle and from school to work. Strategies should take into account the disproportionately high number of male youth who are out of school and illiterate.

Vocational Skills, Entrepreneurship, and First Work Experience

Vulnerable youth face a significant knowledge and skills gap in obtaining or generating employment, particularly their first work experience. Such youth often are unaware of the jobs that exist, may not know how to conduct a job search or present themselves effectively, and lack the academic qualifications and vocational skills required for many formal jobs. This gap puts them at a competitive disadvantage, particularly in the face of high youth unemployment, as employers tend to select more qualified candidates. While the informal economy may offer promising opportunities, and youth may be creative and enterprising, they often lack the know-how to launch and run their own businesses.

For these reasons, the program should enable youth to access vocational and entrepreneurship training to help to level the playing field for vulnerable youth in seeking and succeeding in jobs. Such programming could include opportunities to gain real-life business experience, e.g., through internships and access to financial credit. The program should support youth in taking the next steps of obtaining a job or starting a business. Programming should take into account the disproportionately high level of unemployment among female youth and address the needs of young mothers, who need specific services to balance studies/work and family responsibilities. The program should consider incorporating a child care component into programming that is directed at teenage mothers.

General, Sexual, and Psychological Health Promotion

The assessment indicated that vulnerable youth were concerned about and suffered from health problems to a greater extent than their better-off peers, and that youth in general engage in a high rate of risky behaviors. In focus groups, youth noted a broad range of health issues, chief among which were early sexual activity, pregnancy and HIV/AIDS; drug abuse; infectious and environmental illnesses such as dengue and those arising from pollution and trash; and socio-emotional or psychological issues. At the national level, the majority of youth engage in sexual activity before the age of 18, and rates of teenage pregnancy and motherhood are high (e.g., nearly a third of 18-year-old girls). Interviewees and youth asserted that there was insufficient health programming directed specifically toward youth, that youth did not necessarily make use of existing services for fear of stigma, and that youth perceived available health services to be low-quality. In addition, youth saw a strong need for social and emotional support. Youth who have experienced domestic or other violence, Haitian youth in the DR as a result of the earthquake, and youth who are addicted to drugs present a particularly strong need for psychological services or treatment.

For these reasons, the program should link with and potentially expand health promotion activities for youth. Programming should address how youth may care for themselves and their families effectively, involve youth in health promotion activities in their communities, and help youth to access health services when needed, including quality pre-natal care for pregnant adolescents. Reproductive and sexual health education shouldfocus strongly on pregnancy prevention, not simply the prevention of STIs and HIV/AIDS. It should target youth from age 10 to account for early sexual debut and provide older adolescents with information on condoms in addition to other risk-reduction strategies. Such programming should be provided in settings in which it is most likely to reach the most vulnerable youth, e.g., youth-friendly locations such as alternative education centers or community centers where youth feel more comfortable accessing services, not simply in schools or clinics. Finally, the program should provide socio-emotional support to all youth and should facilitate the provision of psychological and drug treatment services for those who need them.

Civic Participation

Youth generally perceived that they had little voice in society and few opportunities for meaningful participation. Unless they participated in civic participation programs, they had a limited or more passive view of how to participate. In order to support youth in advocating for themselves, their peers and their communities, the team proposes that youth receive training in civic participation, with a focus on democracy, rights and responsibilities of citizens, leadership, advocacy, justice and non-violent conflict resolution. As a means of bringing this training to life, youth could be provided with opportunities to gain first-hand experience, including by developing innovative and appealing activities to integrate other young people in their community and bring about positive change. This may be particularly important for youth at risk for gang involvement, who often join gangs as a means of having a voice and participating in a collective activity.

Another initiative worth including in the area of civics is supporting the efforts of youth to gain ID cards and become registered voters. This effort could be implemented through small grants and capacity-building assistance to enable youth-led organizations to implement youth ID and voter registration campaigns. A further elaboration of work in this area would support the efforts of youth to play more positive roles in the election process, e.g., by sponsoring candidate forums on youth issues or serving as journalists and reporters.

Values and Life Skills

Interviewees cited the need to develop values and life skills across sectors. Values and life skills form the foundation for self-efficacy and positive interpersonal relations in a variety of settings. Vulnerable youth often suffer from a range of attitudinal and behavioral issues, from low self-esteem to violence. Employers place particular value on the possession of life skills, such as self-discipline and teamwork. For these reasons, values development and life skills training should be incorporated as a component of a holistic approach to addressing youths' needs. In addition, the program could consider implementing parenting classes for pregnant teens, their partners, and young parents to help them care for and respond to the needs of their young children.

Recreation

Across ages, locations, and nationalities, youth in focus groups expressed a strong need for recreational opportunities and for positive, engaging things to do. As noted under Key Success Factors, activities such as sports, computers, or cultural activities can serve as a lure for at-risk youth to join and continue with a program. In addition, such activities can build character and develop values such as leadership, teamwork, and self-discipline. Furthermore, they can fill the vacuum in which youth are exposed to illicit activities, thereby contributing to the prevention of risky behavior, crime and gang involvement.

Vulnerable youth can be affected by a range of legal issues. Chief among these is the lack of identity documents, which presents an obstacle to enrollment in secondary education, as well as training and formal employment. In addition, youth may face legal issues relating to their family, especially those who are living in foster care or have experienced physical or sexual abuse. Furthermore, youth may become involved with the criminal justice system and require legal counsel and advocacy. The program should therefore include referrals to government agencies and other institutions that provide legal expertise in these areas. Haitian youth who are in the Dominican Republic as a result of the earthquake can benefit from legal assistance across these areas.

Advocacy

In addition to becoming empowered themselves to address the problems they face, youth can benefit from advocates who speak on their behalf. Interviewees spoke of the need to raise awareness among the key actors in youths' lives. On a personal level, the principal actors include parents and teachers, who may not be aware of youths' rights and the importance of supporting them, and in the worst cases, abuse or neglect youth. On a political level, programs can amplify youths' voices by demanding that they receive the attention and resources that ought to be directed to them according to government policy.

Institutional Models and Capacity

Education and Employment

USAID/DR has a track record of supporting programs that serve out-of-school youth successfully, and the team recommends that the new program leverage that experience. The Catholic Relief Services projects, *Consorcio* NINA and its successor, *Aprendiendo Juntos*, and the local implementing organizations that the team visited, *Acción Callejera* and *Caminante*, presented compelling models of holistic, individualized support to highly vulnerable youth, including formal linkages with the legal authorities to manage cases of street youth in a constructive manner. The IDDI Youth Employment model also comprises an important example, particularly given their presence and experience not only in Cotui but also in Santo Domingo North. In addition, other organizations not funded by USAID/DR in the prior out-of-school youth program, such as the network of centers, *Muchachos y Muchachas con Don Bosco*, should be evaluated for inclusion as a means of achieving greater scale.

If USAID/DR seeks to extend a model of core, holistic services, it may be important to consider standardizing elements of the approach of implementing organizations as a means of ensuring quality. A compelling example is the systematized intervention model developed under the *Consorcio* NINA project. The stages are characterized as: 1) First contact; 2) Diagnostic and support; 3) Individual evaluation by technical team; 4) Plan for integrated attention; and 5) Construction of sustainability through follow-up. In the team's interview with CONANI, it was suggested that this model be utilized by all institutions

serving highly vulnerable youth. However, as a general principle, developing and applying a standardized approach must be balanced by the need for local ownership and a diversity of strategies.

In addition, the model can be augmented to more effectively meet specific needs or serve particular youth populations. Educational approaches such as the PUCMM-developed educational software recently instituted in CRS' programs should be evaluated to determine their efficacy in addressing academic deficiencies. The *Espacios para Crecer* program could also be further replicated within the context of a holistic approach (e.g., including socio-emotional support) and potentially a greater emphasis on the development of basic skills.

With regard to employment, the research for this assessment revealed that several large-scale programs exist to develop youths' job readiness, vocational skills, and entrepreneurship. Chief among these are: INFOTEP and its programming directed toward vulnerable populations; the Ministry of Labor's Youth and Employment Program, and Junior Achievement. It may therefore be more efficient for organizations to tap into existing programs, rather than to develop small youth employment programs themselves. However, USAID/DR should facilitate partnerships with these large-scale programs and/or finance them directly, thereby increasing the "negotiating power" of its grantees. Finally, core service providers would continue to need to play a role in monitoring and supporting youths' success in obtaining a first work experience.

Health

Although several education and employment programs address health as part of their life skills curricula, USAID/DR should link its new youth program with other programs that address adolescent reproductive and sexual health more directly. These include the program newly financed by USAID/DR to be implemented by PSI and its local partners; AED's life skills program; and *Profamilia's* sexual and reproductive health program for youth. The PSI and *Profamilia* programs could be particularly relevant given that they target some of the geographic areas proposed by this assessment and include a focus on out-of-school youth. In the event that AED's life skills program is expanded to the Santo Domingo and North/Cibao regions, linkages should be established with that program as well, to provide complementary programming to youth in school. In addition, organizations targeting vulnerable populations, such as COIN or the Guachupita Youth Network, bear consideration.

The assessment did not identify many institutions specifically focused on psychological services, either for the general population or youth in particular. In the interview with CONANI, it was suggested that programs make greater use of services provided by SESPAS. However, the assessment team did not explore the effectiveness of such services. In addition, it is unclear the extent to which Haitian youth would feel comfortable accessing these services or be able to avail themselves of them, given their legal status. The Ministry of Women, *Colectiva Mujer y Salud* and the *Aquelarre* Support Center are potential

resources specifically for female youth, including Haitians, who have been victims of domestic or other violence or have experienced trauma.

The assessment also identified few resources for youth contending with drug addiction. *Hogar Crea* was the largest organization focused on drug treatment and rehabilitation. Given that it serves youth as young as 8 years old, it should be considered a resource to which drug-involved youth served by the new program can be referred. In addition, if CONANI establishes a national drug treatment center for children and youth, it too will be an important resource.

Civic Participation

An opportunity exists for USAID/DR to expand its support for civic participation programming toward at-risk youth beyond the critically important area of children's rights to broader concepts of democracy, citizenship and advocacy and more active forms of youth participation fostered by other programs encountered in this research. However, unlike in other sectors, few examples exist of widely implemented programs, and evaluation data are limited.

Programs that appear to hold particular promise are those that provide youth with real-life opportunities to enhance local policy and make a difference in their communities. Models to be examined further and considered for replication or expansion include: the Guachupita Youth Network; CASCO's youth program in San Cristobal; *Alianza* ONG's *Sirve Quisqueya* Program; and *Civitas*. The Guachupita Youth Network was the only program encountered by this assessment that sought to rehabilitate gang youth and appears to have had some success. In addition to fostering civic participation, the Guachupita program and CASCO's also address pressing health issues for youth. *Alianza* ONG's *Sirve Quisqueya* leverages youths' strong interest in the environment. *Civitas* was one of the few programs targeting younger youth (in 4-7th grade).

Civic participation, more than other sectors, may be a particularly promising area for youth-led initiatives. [124] Accordingly, the program could support such initiatives through a small grant program.

Institutional Linkages

As has been noted explicitly and implicitly above, the work of serving vulnerable youth is and must be done by a range of individuals and institutions. Under this program, USAID/DR will fund a set of organizations to provide a core set of services, but other institutions have the power to greatly amplify (or detract from) their work. Accordingly, specific institutional linkages to be considered are described below.

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[124] The UNICEF Caribbean X-Change Movement could serve as a potential model for promoting youth participation in the DR. More information can be found at http://www.xchangecaribbean.org/Default.asp

At the national level, USAID/DR should consider establishing memoranda of understanding or similar agreements with CONANI and INFOTEP. CONANI is the agency responsible for coordinating and overseeing the care and protection of youth, in particular those who are most vulnerable. CONANI is currently working to establish the National Network of Protection as a means of translating policy into practice. USAID/DR could coordinate with and actively support CONANI in this work. INFOTEP is the largest provider of training in the country and has in recent years begun to focus more on vulnerable populations. However, individual implementing organizations may lack the clout to negotiate effectively with INFOTEP to adapt its training courses to the needs of vulnerable youth. The assessment recommends that USAID/DR adopt the approach used under the *Aprendiendo Juntos* Project, Batey Community Development Project, and Youth and Employment Program as its standard approach for the new Youth Program, to enable sub-grant recipient organizations to serve youth who have not completed 8th grade.

Additional linkages at the national level should also be considered. For example, coordination with the Ministry of Education and SESPAS at the national level would greatly facilitate coordination at the local level. The National Office for Integrated Attention to Youth in Conflict with the Law may be a particularly important partner in establishing and facilitating programs that work with gang and criminally involved youth.

Establishing a social safety net in a given geography will require coordination among a host of actors at the local level. These include families; schools; district attorneys and police; municipal governments; public health facilities and practitioners; local offices of social assistance programs such as *Solidaridad;* and local providers of other key services. Such linkages would pertain to: outreach and referrals to core and specialized services; coordination and monitoring of service provision; and awareness-raising about youths' rights, among other areas. Grantees could thereby extend the scope of their services, e.g., through co-location or referrals, to better meet youths' needs.

Private Sector Engagement Strategy

A private sector engagement strategy should be developed by USAID/DR and the Prime Contractor to leverage the expertise of and forge linkages with the private sector. The strategy should take a two pronged approach to involving the private sector, one approach to create general private sector support for the project and the second approach to build local private sector support in target communities. First, USAID/DR should consider expanding its partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce of the DR (AMCHAMDR) to direct resources toward this project. USAID/DR might also develop new alliances with other private sector representative organizations such as the Dominican National Business Council *(Consejo Nacional de la Empresa Privada, CONEP)* and the local chambers of commerce. These organizations often already have corporate social responsibility, education, and/or workforce development committees that promote private sector support for community development activities. When possible, USAID/DR and the Prime Contractor should build upon the committees already in existence. If no such committees exist, the Prime could consider forming a project-wide Business Advisory

Council composed of private sector leaders in order to leverage additional business support for the project.

Secondly, once the geographic locations of the project are selected, the prime contractor should collaborate with sub-grant recipients to conduct a rapid assessment of the private sector in the selected areas to determine the primary businesses, industries, and employers. The prime contractor should then create a strategy for involving the local businesses and relevant industry organizations (for example the Manufacturers Association) in order to leverage local private sector support for the project.

The private sector engagement strategy should also include a variety of options for involving the private sector, such as providing internships, employee mentoring/volunteering opportunities, funding opportunities, etc. and the business case for these actions (which will vary according to industry). This allows smaller businesses, which may not be able to provide funding, to be involved in other ways, for instance by providing internships to program participants. Furthermore, USAID/DR and the Prime Contractor should strive to include organizations in the project that already have strong private sector alliances, such as Junior Achievement DR.

ANNEXES

1. Methodology
    1.1   Work Plan
    1.2   Research Questions
    1.3   Interview Organization List
    1.4   Key Informant Interview Protocols
        1.4.1   Youth-Serving Organizations
        1.4.2   Donor Organizations
        1.4.3   Other Stakeholders
    1.5   Youth Focus Group Distribution Table
    1.6   Focus Group Protocol
    1.7   Focus Group Demographic Survey
2. Youth Policy Framework
3. Education Programs
4. Youth Employment Programs
5. Youth Employment by Activity, Age, Geography, and Gender
6. Youth and Employment Program
7. Youth Health Programs
8. Youth Civic Participation Programs
9. Bibliography