

Plan Dominican Republic

Country strategic plan summary 2008-2012

This document outlines how Plan DR and its partners will mobilise resources to improve the welfare and prospects of vulnerable children. It provides the strategic framework for consistent and continuous work from July 2008 to July 2012.

About the Dominican Republic

Covering an area slightly larger than Holland, the Dominican Republic is situated in the Caribbean, on the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the sister Republic of Haiti. The Dominican population numbers about 9.2 million, 45% of whom are under the age of 18.

Plan in the DR

Plan has been working in the DR since 1987 and currently works directly with about 300 communities, reaching out more than 200,000 people across five provinces and 26 municipalities.



An alternative space to learn, share and have fun

Current issues affecting children

Children, their families and communities face extreme poverty and social exclusion, with alarming effects such as:

- ✓ **Violence and protection:** Children's lives are permeated by violence and abuse both at home and at school.
- ✓ **Discrimination:** A high percentage of children of Dominican and Haitian descent do not have access to birth registration; exclusion of pregnant teenagers from classroom; lack of children's participation in subjects that matter to them.
- ✓ **Child labour and sexual exploitation:** Almost half a million boys and girls work in dangerous conditions.
- ✓ **Low quality education:** Very limited access for children under five; a high level of desertion or illiteracy among older children.
- ✓ **Poor social health services:** Children under five are exposed to unhealthy environments, water-borne diseases, malnutrition, high rates of child mortality with low quality pre and post-natal care, underage pregnancies and limited knowledge of sexual and reproductive rights.
- ✓ **Gender discrimination:** Women have limited involvement in the development process of their communities and organisations.
- ✓ **Weak institutional structure in grassroots organisations and government:** Local and national governments often lack the mechanisms, organisation, or political will to put children's rights at the top of their agenda.

How Plan addresses these issues

Plan DR is implementing four programs designed to address the issues affecting the rights of children, their families and communities:

- ✓ Community Solidarity
- ✓ Institutions that Guarantee Human & Children's Rights
- ✓ Cross-Border/Multi-Cultural Program with Plan Haiti
- ✓ A Society with Justice

Programs are implemented through a variety of interested parties, starting with the children themselves, their families and communities, community-based organisations, public institutions, private sector organisations, the civil society, the corporate sector and NGOs.



Children gather in backyards to learn about child's participation.

These programs will result in the achievement of country objectives related to:

- Strengthening the capacities and skills of children and young people so that they may recognise, exercise and enjoy their rights.
- Increasing responsiveness and effectiveness of public institutions as duty bearers of the rights of children and their families.
- Engage elites and government institutions at the national level in the processes for the promotion, defence and fulfilment of children's rights.
- Increasing positive changes at bi-national level by promoting community development with the participation of boys, girls, and young people from both countries (Haiti and Dominican Republic) so that immigrants and their children may enjoy and exercise their rights with inclusion, equality, and non-discrimination.



A young girl explains to her classmates about children's rights.

Program approach

The program strategy in the Dominican Republic also supports the promotion of individual and social transformation through the interaction between Plan, the population (the family, civil society and private sector), and the State at the local and national level. The goal is to have a positive impact towards the promotion, respect, protection, and realisation of children and adolescents' rights.



Early Childhood Care and Development program strengthens abilities before formal education

This simply means that Plan Dominican Republic will reinforce communities to tackle their own problems, using Government, and other organisations as partners. It means that we see the communities' problems through the eyes of a child and see where their rights are not being achieved. For example, in the program called **Community Solidarity**, there are many subsidiary programs in Community Education, Community Health, Child Media, or Community Childhood Development where interested groups in the community go through a process which asks them to reflect on the problems and to take concrete actions to find solutions. For example, "Community Education" might now involve building a school, but working with teachers to see how they can be better supported or how a "child-friendly school" might be attained.

"This day-care centre has been an opportunity to learn how to take care and love our children". Ana, 23 years old.

This approach will contribute to develop and strengthen the capacities and skills of families, communities, local government and grassroots organisations, to reflect about their rights, duties and needs, defining their own priorities through action plans and agendas. Those will involve the community and children in all stages of program cycle in order for them to lead their own development in an equitable and sustainable way. It will allow boys, girls, young people and their families to become stronger, to enjoy a **life with dignity** and **develop their full potential** through enjoyment of their rights.