



International
Labour
Organization

► Systematization

PROJECT

Strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Labour
to improve working conditions in agriculture
in the Dominican Republic (FORMITRA)



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First edition 2023

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ISBN: 9789220399439 (web PDF)

Also published in English: Systematization: "Strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Labour to improve working conditions in agriculture in the Dominican Republic"- FORMITRA Project, 9789220399446 (pdf web), San José: International Labour Office, 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document had the support of Luisa Rosario and Francisco Delgado for the preparation of the information. The technical review was carried out by María Luisa Rodríguez and Brenda Lora from the FORMITRA Project with the support of Ramona Castillo. Likewise, to the officials and authorities of the Ministry of Labor for their commitment to the implementation of the project.

Design and layout: Pía Menicucci & Asoc., SRL

This publication has been made possible thanks to the support of the United States Department of Labor:

"The United States Department of Labor provides funding under cooperative agreement number IL-31479-17-75-K-11. 100 percent of the total project or program expenses are financed from United States government funds, for a total amount of US\$5,000,000. This publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, and mention of any trademark, commercial product, or organization does not imply endorsement by the United States Government."

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A farmer working in a peaceful autumn field generated by artificial intelligence / www.freepik.com

Executive summary

The Project “Strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Labour to improve working conditions in agriculture in the Dominican Republic” (FORMITRA) is a technical cooperation project executed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) between 2019 and 2023 in the Dominican Republic, which was funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). Its objective was to strengthen the capabilities of the Ministry of Labour to promote compliance with labour regulations and the improvement of working conditions in agriculture in the Dominican Republic. To achieve this objective, more than 50 strategic activities grouped programmatically into four results were executed:

- ▶ **Result 1:** Improved systems, tools and instruments adopted by the Ministry of Labour.
- ▶ **Result 2:** Better knowledge for the application of labour regulations in the agricultural sector demonstrated by the Ministry of Labour.
- ▶ **Result 3:** Improved implementation of institutional initiatives related to decent work and child labour by relevant actors.
- ▶ **Result 4:** Piloted initiatives to improve employment promotion, job placement and productivity.

The project had elements conducive to its good implementation, such as the active participation of the Ministry of Labour in the design of the project and the use of learning from previous technical assistance processes. However, situations were also experienced that interfered with the execution of the project, such as the provision of social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic and the delays caused by the electoral campaign period and change of government in 2020.

The actions carried out (training, provision of technological, procedural and legal tools, consolidation of articulation and social dialogue platforms, among others), supported by a broad set of strategies, contributed to the structural consolidation of the Ministry of Labour, the generation of greater public value, improving organizational culture and strengthening its institutional capacities.

The project provided a modern and updated vision of the fundamental role of the Ministry of Labour in promoting decent work, preventing and eradicating child labour and its worst forms, and creating favourable conditions to improve the quality of life of working people.

Introduction

This document presents the systematization of the project “Strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Labour to improve working conditions in agriculture in the Dominican Republic” (FORMITRA), approved in 2017, executed between 2019 and 2023 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and financed by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL).

The Dominican Republic has been a member of the ILO since 1924 and has ratified 39 conventions of this international organization to date. The results of the FORMITRA project are directly linked to Convention No. 150 on Labour Administration; Convention No. 81 on Labour Inspection; Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment; Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour; Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework for Safety and Health at Work, among others.

ILO technical assistance has been present in the country for decades through numerous initiatives, such as the International Program for the Eradication of Child Labour (IPEC), the BRIDGE Global Project, among others. In recent years, the FORMITRA project stands out, as it has been aimed at increasing the capabilities of the Ministry of Labour for better performance of its functions, especially the protection and application of laws and the regulation of relations between labour entities in favour of compliance with their rights and duties.

Institutional strengthening refers to processes through which an entity (company, State, institution) develops skills to perform functions, solve problems and establish and achieve its objectives. From the point of view of the State and public administration, including labour administration, institutional strengthening focuses on improving governance and generating greater public value

from the services offered. The ILO has highlighted that strengthening the institutions of labour ministries and modernizing their services, especially those related to labour inspection, are key processes in promoting decent work.

In the case of the Dominican Republic, institutional strengthening contributes to the adaptation of the response of the Ministry of Labour to the transformations and challenges of the current context related to social, economic and demographic changes, as well as changes in the labour market generated by technology and automation. Furthermore, it is an urgency and mandate in the face of the need to recover from the various crises and consequences left by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected that this will translate into an increase in the quality of the services delivered to citizens, which will contribute to the good governance of the State, which is responsible for guaranteeing labour peace and regulatory compliance. Likewise, it has contributed to the sustainable and inclusive development of the country in the terms included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and in the National Development Strategy 2030 (END 2030). To achieve the SDGs and fulfil the commitment to “leave no one behind”, it is key to have consolidated public institutions.

Specifically, this institutional strengthening process supported by the FORMITRA project has contributed in some way to **SDG 8** Decent Work and

Economic Growth (and its targets 8.5 to achieve full and productive employment and decent work, 8.7 to eradicate forced labour and all forms of child labour and 8.8 to protect labour rights and promote a safe and secure work environment) and **SDG 16** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (and its targets 16.5 to reduce corruption and 16.6 to build effective and transparent institutions), among others.

Regarding the National Development Strategy (END-its acronym in Spanish) 2030, goals are established to achieve decent, sufficient and risk-free work in its third axis Sustainable, Integrative and Competitive Economy. Likewise, among others, the following lines of action coincide with the results of the project:

- ▶ 2.3.4.4 Eradicate child labour and its worst forms.
- ▶ 2.3.2.3 Training and labour insertion.
- ▶ 3.3.2.1 Dialogue between the public and private sector on work standards.
- ▶ 3.3.2.2 Social dialogue on the pillars of decent work.

In addition, the FORMITRA Project responds to the National Multiannual Plan for the Public Sector (2021-2024), the Institutional Strategic Plan 2021-2024 of the Ministry of Labour and the General Plan for the Reform and Modernization of Public Administration, which also support and order institutional strengthening.

This project has had the involvement of officials from each of the impacted areas in the entire technical implementation process and, in turn, has generated the appropriation of the achievements achieved, as well as the support of the authorities to the highest level.

This systematization collects the most representative actions and experiences of the FORMITRA project (hereinafter, the project) and highlights the institutional strengthening processes developed within the Ministry of Labour and related institutions, in order to make visible the real and potential impact on increasing their capacities to promote greater compliance with labour regulations and the protection of fundamental labour rights.

The document is structured in 4 sections that address 1) the systematization approach used; 2) the results of the project; 3) the impacts, lessons and good practices, and 4) recommendations for the sustainability of said results.

1. Systematization approaches

Systematization is understood as a process of documentation and analysis of a particular experience, event or process that seeks to identify lessons learned, knowledge and tools generated and good practices that help strengthen learning at the individual, group and institutional level.

This systematization was based on the project's theory of change, so the initial context or situation is collected and contrasted with the final situation described by the sources consulted.

1.1. Systematization Objectives

- Prepare project reports by documenting its main actions and results.
- Reflect on the experiences lived during the execution of the project through the analysis of successes, failures and strengths, as well as the abilities to resolve conflicts and overcome difficulties.
- Socialize the lessons learned and good practices of the project in terms of institutional strengthening that constitute contributions to the development of other relevant processes.

1.2. Systematization Methodology

The systematization has focused on the four results with their respective actions and the achievements achieved by the project. Added to this is the documentation of the lessons learned and the good practices identified in terms of institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Labour to increase its efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its function of applying and complying with labour regulations.

The project experiences were collected through a three-step methodology:

- I. Results: The starting point is the intermediate results from a logic of change and a general vision.
- II. Actions and achievements: The systematization is organized into products and activities that respond to its results, just as the activities were structured during the execution of the project.
- III. Experiences: The experiences of the actors involved in each of the processes are collected.

In relation to the people **participating** in the systematization process, there were officials from the Ministry of Labour and other government entities; members of business and union organizations, networks or platforms for action and coordination led by the Ministry of Labour, and representatives of civil society and the community. Participation was representative of the provinces prioritized in the project at the central and local levels.



Vegetable plantation / @wirestock / www.freepik.com

Regarding the territorial **delimitation**, this systematization was concentrated in 11 provinces prioritized within the framework of the project both in its link with the Ministry of Labour and in inter-institutional and multisector spheres where public institutions, civil society and those related to the working world.

The **collection of relevant information** to document the results of the project began in July 2023, and interviews and consultations were conducted virtually.

2. Fundamental aspects of the FORMITRA project

El proyecto de cooperación técnica FORMITRA fue The FORMITRA technical cooperation project was executed by the ILO and was funded by the USDOL. Its general objective is to strengthen the capabilities of the Ministry of Labour in compliance with labour regulations to contribute to the improvement of working conditions in agriculture in the Dominican Republic.

2.1. Data Sheet

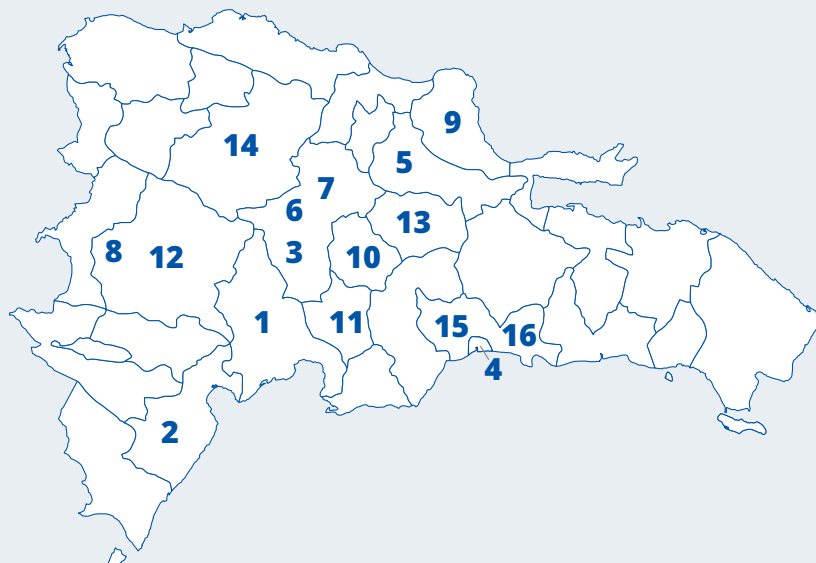
- **Expected final result:** The Ministry of Labour improves the strategic application of labour laws and working conditions in agriculture.
- **Implementation period of the activities:** 2019-2023
- **Geographic coverage:** 11 provinces of the country that have agricultural activities and 16 local labour representations (RLT-their acronym in Spanish).

2.2. Initial situation or context

The Ministry of Labour is the highest national administrative authority in matters of labour relations. To fulfil satisfactorily its mandate, it requires strengthening institutional capacities in its substantive areas and increasing quality indices in the execution of its functions in order to provide optimal service to citizens.

Specifically, needs were identified in aspects such as updating and disseminating labour regulations documents and protocols, increasing capacities for regulatory compliance and monitoring, training and promotion of decent work, improving skills for prevention and management of occupational risks, the adaptation of institutional technological systems and the increase in knowledge for the generation of quality data and statistics.

1. Azua
2. Barahona
3. Constanza
4. Distrito Nacional
5. Duarte
6. Jarabacoa
7. La Vega
8. Las Matas de Farfán
9. María Trinidad Sánchez
10. Monseñor Nouel
11. San José de Ocoa
12. San Juan de la Managua
13. Sánchez Ramírez (Coutí)
14. Santiago
15. Santo Domingo Este
16. Santo Domingo Oeste



2.3. Implementation Strategy

For the execution of the project, two main strategies were established: one aimed at comprehensively strengthening the Ministry of Labour, especially those areas related to the application of labour regulations, and another that aims to promote intra- and inter-institutional coordination to address the prevention and eradication of child labour.

These strategies were carried out with the involvement and participation of other public institutions and relevant socio-labour actors, among which stand out:

INTERESTED PARTIES AND OTHER KEY ACTORS

- ▶ Ministry of Labour (MT)
- ▶ Program “Supérate”
- ▶ National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI)
- ▶ National Institute of Technical-Professional Training (INFOTEP)
- ▶ Autonomous Trade Union Confederation (CASC)
- ▶ National Confederation of Dominican Workers (CNTD)
- ▶ National Confederation of Trade Union Unity (CNUS)

ALLIANCES WITH OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- ▶ Local governments and mayorships
- ▶ Ministry of Youth
- ▶ Ministry of Education
- ▶ Attorney General’s Office

3. Results, actions and experiences

This section provides an account of the activities implemented with the purpose of achieving each of the intermediate results of the FORMITRA project. These sought to contribute to strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Labour to promote compliance with labour regulations and improve working conditions in agriculture in the Dominican Republic.

Result 1

Improved systems, tools and instruments adopted by the Ministry of Labour

Result 2

Demonstrated better knowledge of the Ministry of Labour for the application of labour regulations in the agricultural sector

Result 3

Improved implementation of institutional initiatives related to decent work and child labour

Result 4

Piloted initiatives to improve employment promotion, job placement and productivity

Result 1. Improved systems, tools and instruments

The project proposed five key actions for institutional strengthening through the generation, adaptation and improvement of systems, tools and instruments for the various processes carried out in the Ministry of Labour. In order to achieve this result, actions were carried out to improve the use of technological systems and the training and qualification of civil servants who provide services and directly assist workers and employers in judicial processes.

Actions and achievements

1. Preparation of the *Labour Inspection Manual*

This manual, presented in February 2022, was the result of a recommendation from the labour inspection needs assessment (2018), since there was a dismantling of management instruments. The manual includes the following action protocols: 1) Protocol of Good Labour Inspection Practices, 2) Protocol for Investigation and Verification of Labour Rights and 3) Protocol for Safety and Health at Work.

The main achievement was to collect, under the same structure and harmonized language, the inspection protocols and instruments that the Ministry of Labour has.



The preparation of this document included the participation of all the officials of the General Directorate of Labour and the Inspection Directorate linked to labour administration, for its review and final approval. In this way, a quality, practical and reference document was obtained for their daily work.

2. Creation of the Integrated System of Labour Inspection Cases (SICIT-its acronym in Spanish)

This crucial tool arises in response to a demand to replace the previous Electronic Inspection Case Management System (SEMC-its acronym in Spanish) identified in the technical evaluation of the SEMC carried out in 2018. The project contributed to the creation of the Integrated Inspection Case System of Labour (SICIT-its acronym in Spanish), which allows the Ministry of Labour, through its Inspection Directorate, to plan, register and manage inspection services. Its implementation has strengthened the management and operationalization of the labour inspection in the Dominican Republic by automating the reception, response, monitoring and resolution of cases.

The SICIT has improved the collection and availability of data, the execution of the monitoring function of compliance with labor regulations attributed to the Ministry of Labour and the management of inspection personnel.

SICIT coverage at national level

+175 trained staff with 126 inspectors and 36 local representatives/supervisors and IT staff

Equipment of 16 RLT in 11 provinces

It provides the possibility of interoperating with other information systems of the Ministry of Labour itself and is adapted for the use of inspection area personnel with visual disabilities.

SICIT: *In the previous system, the inspector arrived at the company blindly, without information about what was happening there. Now with SICIT we can access all the company's information to have a prior diagnosis of the situation [...]. Greater statistics can also be collected, thanks to specifications that did not exist in the previous system. For example, the different nationalities of people and more detailed options of business types (Aracelis Guerrero, Labour Inspector of the LM).*

SICIT: *After the training we could see how useful the system is. For example, it allows us to upload documents in PDF, scan or photograph versions to the system, which is very practical. [...] it also allows us to enter the warnings with more details (Genny Anbiory García, Labour Inspector).*

3. Strengthening of the Institutional System of Administrative Records

The project contributed to carrying out a diagnosis of the Administrative Records of the Ministry of Labour and the design of an integrated information and management system based on the administrative records of the different functional areas, which will serve as an instrument for quality improvement and the harmonization of the information generated by the Ministry of Labour in the fulfilment of its missionary functions, as well as management areas.

4. Design of a communication strategy on minimum wages and advertising campaign on minimum wage in agriculture

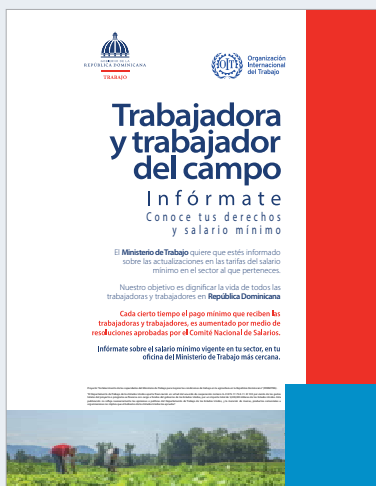
The purpose of the campaign design is for the Communication Department and the Salaries Directorate to strengthen the chain of dissemination of information about changes or resolution adjustments related to minimum wages.

A strategy has been designed to improve communication to the public about the minimum wage resolutions issued. Likewise, materials have been delivered to the Ministry of Labour, such as posters and brochures, to execute said strategy, which has specific information sections on minimum wages in the agricultural sector.

5. Platform for managing judicial assistance cases

After an evaluation carried out in 2020 on the existing platform for judicial assistance services, a new system called the **Integrated System for Control of Work Files (SICET) for Judicial Assistance** was developed. The SICET is the result of the process of investigation, evaluation and technical analysis of the system used by the Department of Legal Assistance of the Ministry of Labour for the management and control of the cases of said Department, which offers free legal assistance to workers and employers of low economic resources to exercise their rights in labour courts.

In addition, in 2023 the **Diploma in Labour Procedural Law** was developed, in order to improve the capabilities of the staff of the Judicial Assistance Department of the Ministry of Labour. The Luis Heredia Bonetti Higher Institute of Specialized Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities (LHB) provided this training. Seventy-seven (77) lawyers and paralegals from the Department of Judicial Assistance (representing 85% of the professionals in that Department) were trained in order to streamline the assistance provided to employers and workers in cases that reach the courts of work to exercise their rights.



Diploma in Labour Procedural Law: *Finally, this Diploma in Labour Procedural Law has been a path of learning, growth and enrichment. I thank the Ministry of Labour, the ILO and the Luis Heredia Bonetti Higher Institute of Specialized Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities for their invaluable contribution to this educational experience. I am sure that, like me, each of my colleagues will take with them the knowledge acquired to make a positive difference in their professional practice. Let us move forward with the commitment to continue promoting labour justice and respect for the rights of those most*

Result 2. Improved knowledge to apply the labour standards in the agricultural sector

This result includes key actions that achieved an increase in the technical, operational and legal capabilities of personnel, in order to raise their level of performance. Furthermore, efforts were made to ensure that the training and training actions gave evidence of the results of the learning process, which is why the majority concluded with specific products, such as the unification of technical criteria, common lines of action or ideation processes for other products (list of dangerous jobs and preparation of a national policy proposal on safety and health at work, among others).

Actions and achievements

1. Program to strengthen the capacities of labour inspectors

One hundred percent of the technical and managerial staff of the Labour Inspection Directorate, at the central and local level, saw their capacities strengthened in topics such as occupational health and safety inspection techniques, strategic planning for inspection, investigation techniques and soft skills, fundamental rights and report writing for inspectors. Local labour representatives and officials from the General Directorate of Labour joined in these trainings.

2. Specialized training for staff of the Mediation and Arbitration Directorate and other officials of the Ministry of Labour

The project facilitated the design and implementation of a set of training activities aimed at 17 mediators (9 men and 8 women), local representatives and other officials of the Ministry of Labour. It included national and foreign facilitators who were experts in labour legislation, social dialogue, workplace cooperation, mediation and arbitration. Among the activities, the following stand out:

- ▶ Seminar-workshop “Strengthening skills in social dialogue, collective bargaining and conflict resolution.”
- ▶ Course “Strengthening skills in conciliation, mediation and resolution of labour conflicts in the Dominican Republic.
- ▶ Training course for trainers “Competences for conciliation/mediation processes”.

The training of Ministry of Labour officials in social dialogue, freedom of association, collective bargaining and access to labour justice, prevention and resolution of conflicts is essential for the strengthening and development of the mediation service provided by the Ministry to workers and employers (participant).

3. Development of the Program to Strengthen the Directorate of Industrial Hygiene and Safety (DGHSI) of the Ministry of Labour

The project allowed the implementation of a set of technical tools to expand the knowledge of people involved in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), including productive activities in the agricultural sector.

In 2021, the document, ***Pesticides, Friendly guide for use and application***, was prepared, which contains standards, instructions and technical information linked to the responsibilities of workplaces regarding pests and pesticides, safety equipment, storage, labelling and measures in case of poisoning and spills.

With the purpose of installing technical capabilities for the management of tools that promote comprehensive health and the prevention of occupational risks, the guide was complemented with training processes for facilitators in their use to promote health and safety in workplaces linked to the agricultural sector.



The guide was presented through **training workshops** in 15 provinces of the country, in which 373 people (238 men and 135 women) were trained, including the technical staff of the Ministry of Labour at the central and local level and representatives of Joint Committees of Health and Safety of companies in each province.

Likewise, specialized training was offered on **“Research methodologies related to poisoning due to the use of agrochemical products”**, in which 26 officials (12 men and 14 women) from the DGHSI participated, who increased their technical capabilities to carry out investigations of labour accidents, with emphasis on the agricultural sector.

In the line of making the substantive processes of the Ministry of Labour more technical, a process was carried out **to formulate the strategic vision of the DGHSI (vision setting)**, given its centrality in the protection of the life and working conditions of workers and employers. This is a proposal prepared in a participative manner in 2023, which includes the roadmap for its implementation. Also, the project facilitated consultations with representatives of government institutions, business and union organizations, academia, scientific and specialized societies for the **preparation of a proposal for a National Occupational Health and Safety Policy**.

4. Specialized program to strengthen the Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour (DPPETI) of the Ministry of Labour

The project contributed with a diagnosis of the strengths and needs of the DPPETI, whose findings were incorporated into the training processes, updating of processes and procedures, inter-institutional coordination and implementation of actions at the national and local scale.

The following section describes the substantive transformation that the FORMITRA project generated in this Directorate of the Ministry of Labour, its area of influence and the renewed profile of actions that it has managed to implement. Proof of this was the use of an exchange of experiences with the Office for the Attention and Eradication of Child Labour and Protection of Adolescent Workers (OATIA) of Costa Rica, held in 2023, in which more ambitious lines of action were drawn for the DPPETI, among which stand out: 1) the establishment of a program to declare municipalities free of child labour, 2) the identification and attention of problematic supply chains, 3) the creation of a conditional monetary transfer program, 4) the establishment of child care centres for daughters and sons of workers in the agricultural sector and 5) specific approaches to prevent child labour in the migrant population.

Result 3. Improved implementation of the institutional initiatives related with decent work and child labour

The Project has been key to strengthening the Directorate of Policies for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour (DPPETI) and its leadership in supporting the National System for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour (SNPETI). Based on a diagnosis of DPPETI's needs and strengths, carried out within the framework of the FORMITRA project in 2019, the actions and achievements have had an expansive and empowering effect that has facilitated the multiplication of efforts at

all levels and sectors of influence of the project and others outside of it.

Since 2021, the internal coordination of substantive processes of the Ministry of Labour between the DPPETI and the Directorate of Labour Inspection has improved significantly. These points to a comprehensive public policy approach that addresses child labour from its multiple causes and impact factors. In addition, the DPPETI and the SNPETI were strengthened thanks to processes of creating and updating their respective protocols.

Actions and achievements

1. Creation of the DAR-CE training method to prevent and eradicate child labour and its worst forms

DAR-CE responds to the initials of the verbs that indicate the five steps or stages of training: describe, analyse, reflect, commit and evaluate. It is the result of inter-institutional work led by the Ministry of Labour, through the DPPETI, which also integrated the specialized technical staff of the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) and the “Supérate” Program.

It is a novel proposal made up of 6 booklets. It incorporates the good practices that are found in the process, which represent a change in the traditional way of conducting training by using the popular education methodology. Through this approach, the teaching-learning process is participatory, is based on the experience and context of the participating people and groups, and uses oral resources, such as reflection, dialogue and role-plays.



BOOKLETS FROM THE PEDAGOGICAL PACKAGE

- ▶ General presentation
- ▶ Facilitation guide
- ▶ Understanding the issue of child labour
- ▶ Recognizing the worst forms of child labour to eradicate them
- ▶ Child labour in agriculture
- ▶ Child labour in industry and services



There are more than 900 people trained as facilitators at the national level within the framework of the project, distributed in 10 provinces. The cascade training allowed 50 national representatives of the institutions involved to be trained, who replicated the training to 250 local representatives and they multiplied it in the community leaders. Participant profiles include public and private officials, community leaders and families.

In my time that was not bad, they sent you from dawn to dusk to the countryside, there were no schools. The Ministry already explained to us and now I have learned that it is better to wait for them to be older before sending them to work, it is better for them to study, who knows if they become agronomists or teachers, and they are not as mistreated as much as one was (producer made aware during an operation).

2. Multiplier training workshop on child labour for officials of the Ministry of Youth

The project supported the unprecedented coordination between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Youth with the implementation of a training workshop aimed at 32 provincial representatives and other officials of said Ministry.

As from this workshop, others were launched at the local level with young people, volunteer leaders from the Ministry of Youth, who joined local efforts against child labour.

3. Multiplier manual for the prevention and eradication of child labour

This is a tool so that young people can contribute to the prevention of child labor through the dissemination of information and awareness within their communities and other spaces of socialization.

The *Multiplier Manual for the prevention and eradication of child labour* is the result of workshops held with provincial representations of the Ministry of Youth and the DPPETI team of the Ministry of Labour.

4. Campaign “Lanza tu dardo contra el trabajo infantil” (Throw your dart against child labour)

The objective of this campaign, developed from August 2020 to May 2022, was to raise national awareness about child labour. For this, brochures, posters and audio-visuals were prepared and disseminated. In addition, two compilations were published for the understanding of national and international regulations on child labour and promotional material, such as pens, folders and notebooks.





5. Campaign “Cambiando patrones contra el trabajo infantil” (Changing patterns against child labour)

This second campaign began on June 12, 2022, in commemoration of the International Day against Child Labour. It was aimed at employers, workers and families linked to the productive sectors in which there is a higher incidence of child labour, such as agriculture. Its launch activity served as a platform for the signing of the **Public Manifesto to Fight Child Labour**, which reinforces the commitment assumed by the institutions that make up the National Steering Committee to Fight Child Labour (CDN) and allied institutions.

6. National workshop for local governments on child labour

One hundred fifty (150) mayors were trained on the topic of child labour and its worst forms in a cycle of 4 regional workshops, which served to renew the commitment to preventing and fighting against child labour. This led to the publication of the document *Local governments against child labour. The role of local governments in the prevention and eradication of child labour and its worst forms*, in which their responsibilities in the eradication of child labour are established based on the regulations and the relevance they have for being the institutions closest to the population. Through the project, the articulation process for carrying out these actions between the Ministry of Labour, CONANI, the Dominican Municipal League (LMD) and the Dominican Federation of Municipalities (FEDOMU) was supported.



THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE PREVENTION AND ERADICATION OF CHILD LABOUR AND ITS WORST FORMS

- 1 **The eradication of child labour and all types of abuse or violence against minors is declared to be of the highest national interest.** Children and adolescents will be protected by the State against all forms of abandonment, kidnapping, state of vulnerability, physical, psychological, moral or sexual abuse or violence, commercial, labour, economic exploitation and risky work.
- 2 **The active and progressive participation of children and adolescents in family, community and social life will be promoted;**
- 3 Adolescents will be active subjects of the development process. The State, with the solidary participation of families and society, **will create opportunities for stimulating their productive transit towards adult life** (Page 19).

This was not a coincidence, we went regional by regional, meeting in every corner of the country with all the mayors and we saw what the needs were regarding Child labour [...]. Today we have mayors aware that child labour does more harm than good (Mayrenis Corniel, Vice Minister of Labour for Vulnerable Sectors and Child Labour).

7. Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Labour for the inter-institutional coordination in the prevention and eradication of child labour

The project contributed to making more efficient the coordination of actions to prevent and eradicate situations of child labour within the framework of the National System for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour (SNPETI).

The training actions, strategic planning, updating of protocols and technical support generated better detection and care of cases at the local level, the placement of the problem on the national agenda and the integration of public policies, which favours greater compliance with the functions, regulations and objectives related to the prevention and eradication of child labour.

The **Internal Coordination Protocol** was prepared for the reception and attention of complaints of child labour by the DPPETI and the **Inter-institutional Protocol** for the coordination of the SNPETI was updated, which includes the National Steering Committee (CDN), the Local Steering Committees (CDL) and other instances. Both instruments were formulated in participatory review sessions. Its functions are to standardize responses to cases of child labour and expand capabilities for the prevention and eradication of said problem.

With the support of the project, the **Annual Operational Plan (POA)** of the National Steering Committee (CDN) to Fight Child Labour for the years 2022 and 2023 was developed and four strategic priorities were identified: coordination and awareness, statistical information, monitoring and empowerment. In addition, all local representatives

of the Ministry of Labour were trained to guide the preparation of the POA at the provincial level annually.

8. Update of Resolution no. 52/2004 on hazardous and unhealthy Jobs for persons under 18 years-old

Through a consultative process led by the DPPETI, with the support of the project, it was possible to update the list of dangerous and unhealthy jobs for people under 18 years of age. Adolescents, above the minimum age for admission to employment, are authorized to work in activities that do not put their physical and mental health and comprehensive development at risk.

Government entities, business and union organizations, non-profit organizations, international organizations, among others, participated through consultations at the national and local level, specifically in the provinces of Santiago, Santo Domingo, San Juan, La Vega, Salcedo, Duarte, Azua and Barahona.

9. Strategic alliances with government institutions and other key actors

Within the framework of the project, the agreement was signed between the Ministry of Labour, the Dominican Municipal League, the Dominican Federation of Municipalities and the National Council for Children and Adolescents, with the objective of aligning concrete awareness-raising, training and other interventions in the territories for the eradication of child labour.

10. Guide for the declaration of municipalities free of child labour

With the support of the project, a technical proposal was made to guide the Ministry of Labour in the assessment and declaration of municipalities free of child labour through the generation of participation incentives for local governments to promote territories free of child labour and its worst forms.

The guide allows one to evaluate the existing social conditions in each locality and the capacities of local governments to prevent and eradicate

child labour through comprehensive, articulated, relevant and high-impact interventions. The Ministry of Labour intends to implement a program to declare municipalities free of child labour within the framework of the agreements signed with CONANI, FEDOMU and LMD.

11. Study on the perceptions and raising awareness for the trade union sector

The study of perceptions of union groups regarding child labour was carried out in 2022 and included the participation of 268 representatives of different union organizations from the provinces of Duarte, Santiago, Azua, San Juan and the National District. The study shows concepts and positions on child labour present in the imagination of union leaders. Its results led to the creation of strategies and plans so that this sector can expand its capabilities to contribute to the prevention and eradication of this problem. An immediate action was the creation of an awareness guide “*Cambiamos nuestra visión sobre el trabajo infantil: Guía de sensibilización para la prevención*” (*Let's change our vision of child labour: Awareness guide for prevention*), designed as an instrument for work, discussion and reflection by union organizations for the working population in general, which seeks to change the perception of child labour and how to contribute to its prevention.



12. Publication of children stories and the performance of theatre and muppets plays for children

This action constitutes a novelty in terms of training, since it includes people directly affected by child labour. The stories and activities aimed at girls and boys offer self-protection skills and strengthen the prevention work carried out with families and communities. Puppet plays were performed for students from 7 to 13 years old in 13 provinces/municipalities, in coordination with the schools of the Ministry of Education in those places, which were attended by more than 1,600 boys and girls.



Result 4. Piloted initiatives to improve the promotion of employment, labour insertion and productivity

This section addresses two key actions linked to the pilot programs on employment promotion and labour insertion aimed at vulnerable families in the agricultural sector and another that uses the ILO SCORE methodology for the development of capacities of local personnel and the strengthening of small and medium-sized businesses.

Actions and achievements

1. Implementation of the SCORE Methodology

The SCORE (Sustainable, Competitive and Responsible Enterprises) methodology is a global ILO program for improving productivity and working conditions in small and medium-sized enterprises through the implementation of efficient business management systems, sustainable and based on cooperation in the workplace.

With the technical assistance of the ILO, the National Institute of Vocational Technical Training (INFOTEP) began the implementation of the SCORE program in 2016 with a pilot application in the banana sector in the northern region. In 2019, the transfer of the methodology was completed through the FORMITRA project with the participation of 25 small and medium-sized companies.

In addition, 15 INFOTEP business advisors were trained, 10 in specialized training and 5 with SCORE certification, who, in turn, trained officials from the General Directorate of Employment of the Ministry of Labour.

INFOTEP is the only technical-vocational training institute in the world that has become an implementing agent of SCORE and is the second Center of Excellence in this methodology in Latin America and the Caribbean.



SCORE: *The greatest benefit we have had with the methodology is that we have gained a lot of time in organizing the documents, since before it took us 15 to 20 days and now we can have them in less than 30 seconds.* (Massiel Gómez, Asociación de Pequeños Productores La Santa Cruz (Small Producers Association La Santa Cruz).

2. Labour Insertion Pilot Program

It was an initiative to promote decent work, aimed at vulnerable families to improve their employability. The Program trained 462 people in the provinces of San Juan, Santiago and Duarte, in collaboration with the General Directorate of Employment and the Directorate of Child Labour of the Ministry of Labour and the ISA University (Higher Institute of Agriculture).

It was made up of four training programs:

- ▶ Sales Assistant,
- ▶ Operation of Production Processes,

- ▶ Food Handling and

- ▶ Basic Electricity, with transversal topics, such as safety and health at work, child labour and job orientation.

In the last stage of the program, the participants were accompanied in their job placement and were offered personalized attention to create their professional profile and participate in fairs, company conferences and mini-work internships.

Claves de éxito



- ▶ Realización de estudios sobre el mercado laboral.



- ▶ Identificación de brechas entre demanda laboral y oferta formativa.



- ▶ Mecanismos para promover la inserción laboral de la población vulnerable.



- ▶ Rediseño de ofertas formativas de la zona al perfil de participante del piloto.



- ▶ Coordinación interinstitucional y con el sector privado.

Un paso más allá



- ▶ Se espera que las instituciones involucradas repliquen la experiencia en otras provincias del país.



- ▶ Se sumen otras instituciones.



- ▶ Crear alianzas entre el sector público y privado que promuevan la inserción laboral.

4. Impacts, lessons learned and good practices

The FORMITRA project allowed the successful implementation of more than 50 strategic activities to strengthen the management of the Ministry of Labour of the Dominican Republic, grouped into 4 intermediate results. This section sets out the good practices that deserve to be replicated, the lessons learned for new cooperation projects and the impacts generated at an aggregate level.

4.1. Good practices and lessons learned

The implementation of an ambitious project with diverse work aspects offers important learning that serves to improve other processes of institutional strengthening in increasing regulatory compliance and good practices to replicate them in other labour sectors or geographic areas.

Regarding the project components, the most important lessons learned and good practices are the following:

- The use of **social change methodologies for community training** allows the expected impacts to be multiplied. The popular education methodology implemented through the DAR-CE method and the campaign approaches that use the language and codes that the population understands and uses have made it possible to enhance the scope of the training and awareness processes about the negative consequences of child labour and the mechanisms for its prevention and eradication.
- The strategic activities of the project had open **participation processes for the consultation and contribution of the various actors**, such as interdisciplinary worktables, joint planning and evaluation processes, and spaces to find consensus on the tools developed with the support of the project.
- For the first time, the underage population was incorporated into raising awareness about child labour, through the development of **specific materials for boys and girls** in the form of children's stories that, in addition to promoting reading, inform about their rights, tools of self-care and protection against child labour and its worst forms.
- The **training processes** were a transversal axis and brought together different sectors. The project managed to transcend the installation of capacities in the Ministry of Labour and allowed the development of training activities, such as seminars, workshops and courses, which included other government entities, union organizations, local governments and communities. Likewise, the project facilitated systematic mass communication campaigns, which aimed to disseminate information to change sociocultural patterns.
- The project opted for the **use of information systems** as an essential mechanism to maintain productivity and efficiency and simplify the institutional processes of the Ministry of Labour. Digital government is a transversal agenda that represents a modern vision to improve the results linked to labour administration and inspection. Likewise, the interconnection and interoperability of the institution's computer systems strengthens the credibility, transparency, effectiveness

and public value of the services offered to citizens. They also offer the possibility of collecting data and transforming it into formal and useful knowledge and allows decision-making and the choice between different public policy options, that is, it is highly relevant to inform public action in all its stages (planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation).

On the other hand, the project also generated learnings regarding the implementation processes:

- ▶ Carrying out participatory **diagnoses and evaluations** for the definition of baselines guaranteed that the actions and products responded to the real needs of the institution and were instruments that promote institutional change by facilitating the empowerment and appropriation of the processes by the officials of the Ministry of Labour and contribute with the recognition of strengths and achievements.
- ▶ **The dissemination of information in several languages** on services available to workers guarantees greater inclusion and reach of the messages, as is the case of the service offered by the Ministry of Labour regarding legal assistance disseminated in the Spanish, English, Creole and Mandarin Chinese languages.

Child labour is a multidimensional and multi-causal problem, which transcends the possibilities of the Ministry of Labour, and requires permanent articulations with various institutional sectors and actors in the territories. The holding of inter-institutional consultations that included the business sector, the union sector and entities linked to children's rights (CONANI, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth, "Supérate" and others) were important to plan comprehensive care that affects the structural causes that cause child labour.



4.2. Internal and external factors that influenced the project execution

During the period from project approval in 2017 to completion in 2023, implementation and results were influenced by internal and external factors, described below.

On the one hand, the project had elements conducive to its good implementation, which offer the possibility of enhancing the impacts. For example, the **active participation of the Ministry of Labour in the design of the project** stands out, built from the prior identification of needs.

Likewise, the project had a **history of technical assistance** initiated within the framework of other ILO actions, especially those related to strengthening labour inspection, the SCORE methodology and addressing child labour. In this way, it was possible to implement strategies and activities based on the learning from other technical assistance processes, such as the BRIDGE Global Project and the project "Improvement of working conditions in the banana sector", as well as the coordination with other platforms, such as the Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour.

However, restrictive situations were also experienced. The development of the project occurred in the midst of the crisis caused by the **COVID-19 pandemic** and the social distancing measures that were established. The pandemic meant greater responsibilities for the Ministry of Labour, which played a central role in policies to mitigate socioeconomic effects and protect employment. The inter-institutional team linked to the FORMITRA project, including the donor, had to adapt the implementation schemes to comply with the provisions and have flexibility in the face of unpredictable circumstances.

In July 2020, presidential elections were held in the Dominican Republic, where an opposition party was elected in the first round. The change of government generated long waits for the transfer of command and the consequent change of authorities in the cabinet and the Ministry of Labour,

which was added to the electoral campaign period, and which also involved significant delays.

4.3. Final situation or changes in the context

The results evidenced in this systematization show that the project processes were aimed at addressing two major strategic axes: the needs to strengthen the Ministry of Labour in relation to the application of labour regulations and the installation of capacities for the promotion of decent work and the prevention and eradication of child labour in the Dominican Republic. Although the project has just concluded, elements are already evident that guarantee deep and long-term impacts on both axes.

By reviewing the project comprehensively, it is possible to conclude that the **actions carried out have structurally consolidated the Ministry of Labour and have allowed it to generate greater public value**, which is explained by the fact that the implementation used a broad set of strategies, means and approaches for strengthening institutional capacities, which included specialized training, the provision of technological, procedural and legal tools, the consolidation of platforms for articulation and social dialogue, and others.

The **installation of capabilities and knowledge** in the staff of the Ministry of Labour and other government agencies is a mechanism that promotes lasting and sustainable changes. Furthermore, the training processes resulted in tangible commitments and concrete actions that continue to be implemented without direct support from the project. For example, a Local Steering Committee (CDL) took advantage of the knowledge acquired in a workshop to develop its plan against child labour through the use of its own resources, and the training for local governments motivated the signing of inter-institutional agreements.

Regarding child labour, the lack of knowledge that exists in many contexts of its risks and negative impacts in the short and long term restricts the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. For this reason, the need to correct the existing biases in the officials in charge of inspection, identification,

care and restitution of rights of minors in child labour in companies, local governments, communities and families was identified. Along these lines, training, awareness and dissemination of information on the subject are highly relevant actions and the project placed emphasis on the **training of broad sectors of society**, thereby supporting sociocultural transformations in this area.

On this point, it is also relevant to highlight that methodological approaches for training contribute to the sustainability and expansion of results and potential impacts. For example, the cascade training offered by the DAR-CE method has led to it being reproduced in other localities and is being assumed by state entities, local coordination tables and other sectors of interest.

The project generated **better tools for the substantive management** of the Ministry of Labour in relation to its leading role in guaranteeing labour rights, promoting decent work and eradicating child labour and its worst forms. Three elements stand out in this area: 1) the operation and internal organization is now more orderly and agile based on the creation of protocols and manuals in its different processes, 2) the interconnection and interoperability between different internal information and management systems allows com-

prehensive and more expeditious approaches and 3) strategic planning improves the internal and external articulation processes of the Ministry.

The project modified the **organizational culture** and provided a modern and updated vision of the fundamental role of the Ministry of Labour in improving the quality of life of working people. The personnel of the different directorates of the Ministry of Labour that were part of the project activities express high satisfaction and indicate that the results of the project have allowed them to have greater performance and work dynamism. Specifically, they express that training and the delivery of technical resources renew their professional commitment and strengthen their skills.

During the years of execution of project actions, **platforms for articulation and social dialogue** were consolidated, linked to the empowerment that was generated at an inter-sectoral level. The work carried out by the National Steering Committee to Fight Child Labour stands out, with a tripartite structure, in which national and local actors have committed actions within the framework of their respective powers to join those of the Ministry of Labour and enhance the results in terms of prevention and eradication.



Portrait of a greenhouse grower holding a box with biolettuce grown without pesticides/ @DCStudio / www.freepik.com

5. Recommendations for the sustainability and extension of the achievements

It is important that the political and technical levels of the Ministry of Labour establish lines of monitoring the actions and achievements of the project to guarantee its continuity, expansion and capacity to impact compliance with labour regulations and the protection of fundamental labour rights, as established in the sustainability plan developed in a participative manner with the Ministry's areas in April 2023.

To this end, the participation and empowerment of the different actors involved in the project, with links to the Ministry of Labour or belonging to other sectors, generate a favourable environment so that the strengthening of the Ministry of Labour becomes a permanent task. With this objective, the following recommendations are noted:

► Institutionalize processes of **professional development, training and exchange of experiences** for technical level officials of the Directorates of the Ministry of Labour and Local Labour Representations. A higher level of professionalization of technical staff is a fundamental step to consolidate the strategies and activities developed within the framework of the FORMITRA project. There would also be equipment and installed capacities to make the natural transition that occurs, when there are changes in government, more efficient and orderly. It is suggested that the training programs developed be installed as permanent training on some virtual platform.

► Permanently update the **information and management systems** of the Ministry of Labour, accompanied by training on their use and processes to minimize rejection of change or resistance to the use of technology.

► Ensure the provision of **technological resources to Local Labour Representations**. It is urged to take advantage of the modernization process promoted by the central government through digital government strategies and to budget financial resources to meet these needs. In addition to this, inspection in agricultural areas through the SICIT can become more efficient if inspectors are provided with mobile equipment, such as tablets for fieldwork and inspection visits, as well as enabling the information system to receive data even without an internet connection.

► At the national and regional level, **disseminate the publications** made within the framework of FORMITRA in the dimension of knowledge creation. This includes studies, guides, manuals and any public document. This measure expands the results and supports the expected impact on increasing knowledge and compliance with labour regulations and the protection of rights.

In relation to the promotion of decent work and the prevention and eradication of child labour, long-lasting actions are required, even more so when trying to resolve its structural causes, such

as low productivity, poverty and informality. In this sense, the Ministry of Labour must seek such sustainability through lines of work such as those recommended below:

- ▶ Approve the update of the list of hazardous jobs and proceed to its dissemination. This is a key element for the protection of adolescents of working age, separating them from productive activities that expose them to risks and limit their integral development (physical and psychological).
- ▶ Currently, the annual operational plans are functioning as instruments to organize short-term actions for the prevention and eradication of child labour. Taking advantage of this experience, it is recommended to advance results-oriented medium-term strategic planning both in the Child Labour Directorate and in the National Steering Committee and the Local Steering Committees, using a roadmap, national policy or multi-year plan.
- ▶ Establish a socio-labour support program to promote the connection to decent jobs of families in vulnerable situations. Based on the learnings from the labour intermediation pilot, financed and executed through the FORMITRA project, it is recommended to scale it to other provinces in the country, in association with other public entities and with the participation of the private sector.

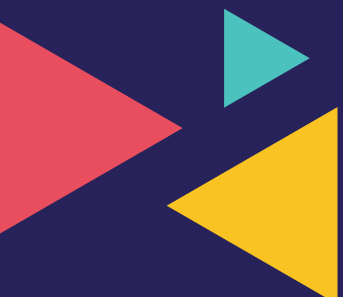


6. Conclusions

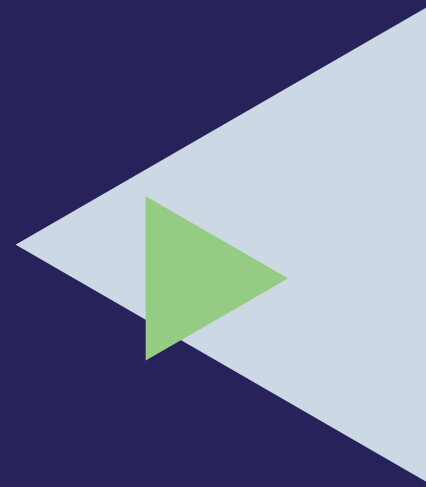
The process of strengthening the Ministry of Labour of the Dominican Republic shows concrete, solid and sustainable advances, which have materialized in the installation of capacities to generate greater public value and contribute to the social development of working people in the country. However, it is an ongoing action and an ongoing responsibility. The construction of social agreements, the promotion of decent work, the protection of workers' rights, the promotion of human talent and the consolidation of social protection are continuous tasks that require a robust, efficient and proactive Ministry of Labour.

The great challenges in labour matters are expressed in informality, lack of social protection, child labour and its worst forms, unhealthy and hazardous conditions in the workplace, among others. These can only be resolved through a permanent exercise of strengthening and a renewed vision of the Ministry of Labour, which places work as the axis of human development, through a solid system of inspection, surveillance and control to protect the fundamental rights of workers, efficient labour intermediation mechanisms, technical training programs, and well-consolidated social, business and union organizations.

Improvements in the coordination within the Ministry of Labour, the modernization of its processes through new computer platforms, inter-institutional coordination and social dialogue to address multi-causal situations, the updating of labour legislation and the transformation of team attitudes and technical capabilities are part of the tasks that should not stop. It will be up to the national authorities and the staff of the Ministry itself to take advantage of what has been achieved and mobilize public, private and international cooperation resources to enhance the achievements, with the firm purpose of ensuring that the dynamics of the labour world do not leave any Dominican woman and Dominican behind.



ilo.org/sanjose
International Labour Organization (ILO)
Phone: +506 2207 8700
sanjose@ilo.org
San José, Costa Rica



ISBN 978-92-2-039943-9



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