



UPDATE ON SDG 4 IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



The Dominican Republic has made progress in reaching SDG 4 in the Dominican Republic. To reach this goal, the country aims to achieve inclusive and equal lifelong learning for all in Quisqueya, a nickname for the small Caribbean nation.

The Situation

The Sustainable Development Goals' site claims that the rate of net primary enrollment is going up with 92.7% of kids [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.NENR?locations=DO] attending primary school. However, that rate has been falling since 2015 when it was 93.5%. The country's education system includes three sections [https://www.justlanded.com/english/Dominican-Republic/Dominican-Republic-Guide/Education/Overview], much like the ones in the U.S.: Pre-school (Nivel inicial), Primary School (Nivel basico) and Secondary School (Nivel medio). For pre-school, only the final year is mandatory for children. Meanwhile, primary school is compulsory for all

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the kids. However, while the country legally mandates it, schools and authorities do not enforce attendance.

Baseball and Education in the Dominican Republic

In New York City, the Truancy division of the NYPD seeks kids who skip school. The Dominican Republic has no such system in place. Baseball is a big part of Dominican culture and many see it as the only way to get away from the island and onto a better life.

The MLB has a major recruitment presence in the country and many boys leave their schooling to train with MLB recruiters in hopes of reaching the major leagues. However, very few of those kids ever make it to the MLB and do not garner a proper education to carry them through life. Even those boys who are fortunate enough to make it to the MLB end up with limited education and have very little resources to establish a second career after retirement or injury.

In his paper “Children Left Behind: The Effect of Major League Baseball on Education in the Dominican Republic,” Adam Wasch proposes two solutions [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1571479] for this problem. The first is for the MLB to establish an international draft with the same education standard as the American draft so that the international recruits must have at least up to high school education. The other solution is for the MLB to create a Child Labor Corporate Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct would denounce the use of child labor and rearrange the recruitment and training program so that it would not interfere with the children’s education.

Improvements in School Attendance and Literacy

Fortunately, the country’s lower secondary completion rate has been steadily increasing

[[https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.CMPT.LO.ZS?](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.CMPT.LO.ZS?locations=DO)

[locations=DO](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.CMPT.LO.ZS?locations=DO)] for the better part of the last decade, which bodes well for SDG 4 in the Dominican Republic. Since 2013, when the rate sat at 77.92%, it increased to 89.34% in 2018. This means that more kids are completing at least a Primary School education than ever before.

Education has taken more of a focus in the Dominican Republic. In 2016, the literacy rate for youth (15-24 yrs old) was 98.8%, which is a 5.1% difference from the adult percentage where 93.7% of the adult population is literate. Both demographics have been steadily improving throughout

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the last decade, meaning that not only are kids receiving a better education, the adults are also seeking out improved education.

Poverty in the Dominican Republic

Poverty in the Dominican Republic is on a decline. In 2015, it was 21.70% [<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/DOM/dominican-republic/poverty-rate>] and decreased three years later to 13.80%. The undernourished population of the country has also reduced. In the one-year span of 2017-2018, the poverty rate decreased by 0.9% [<https://dominantoday.com/dr/poverty/2019/07/16/dr-reduces-hunger-in-last-two-years/>]. According to the Medina Administration, from 2012-2019, 1.5 million Dominicans [<https://dominantoday.com/dr/poverty/2020/02/06/govt-1-5m-dominicans-leave-poverty-from-2012-to-2019/>] left poverty and 650,000 Dominicans left extreme poverty. The middle class jumped from 22.6% to 30% in the same time span. The Administration also claimed that it created 823,389 jobs in those seven years.

The Dominican Ministry of Education receives up to 22.6% of the Dominican Republic's budget spending, making it a priority of the Dominican Republic's government in the last few years. In the budget that received approval for the year 2020, the government assigned the Education Ministry more than RD\$194,523 million [<https://dominantoday.com/dr/economy/2020/09/12/which-dominican-republic-ministries-have-largest-budgets/>]. The state must spend 4% of the GDP on pre-university education.

As the new ruling political party, the Modern Revolutionary Party, settles in, the international stage is looking to the new party to see how it will continue the upward trend of education in a country that has historically struggled with providing proper education to all its citizens. Hopefully, it will continue to help the country on its path to reaching SDG 4 in the Dominican Republic.

– *Pedro Vega*

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