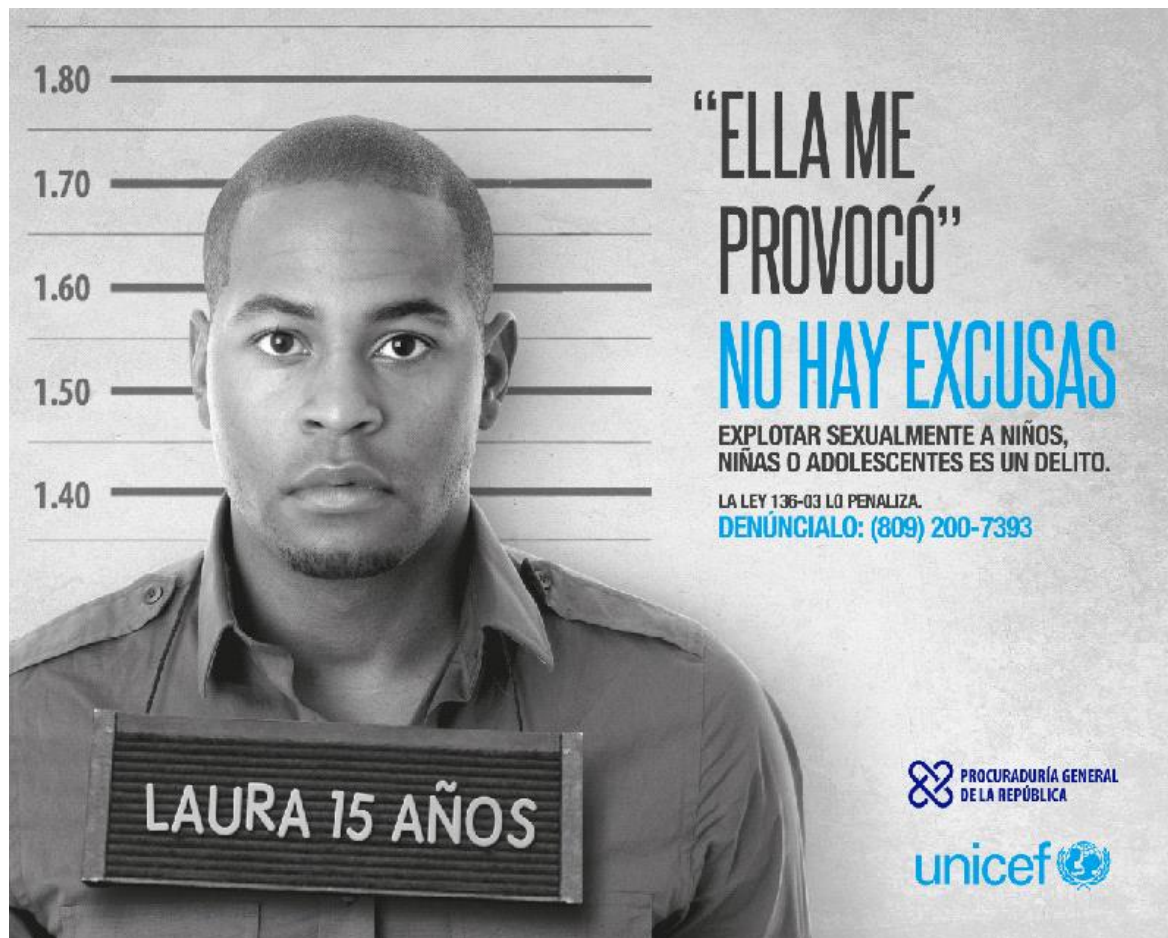


DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Thematic Fund Report: SC 149906 Child Protection

January – December 2016



UNICEF Dominican Republic

March 2017

ACRONYMS

ASONAHORES	National Association of Hotels and Restaurants (Asociación Nacional de Hoteles y Restaurantes)
CESFRONT	Specialized Land Border Security Corps (Cuerpo Especializado en Seguridad Fronteriza Terrestre)
CESTUR	Specialized Tourist Security Corps (Cuerpo Especializado de Seguridad Turística)
CONANI	National Council for Children and Adolescents (Consejo Nacional para la Niñez y Adolescencia)
CSE	Commercial Sexual Exploitation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MITUR	Ministry of Tourism (Ministerio de Turismo)
MOE	Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación)
MOH	Ministry of Public Health (Ministerio de Salud Pública)
NGO	Non-Governmental organization
PEDATEC	Specialized Unit for Crimes of High Technology

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report corresponds to the implementation of Grant SC149906 for UNICEF Dominican Republic's Child Protection Programme from January to December, 2016. The financial implementation of the contribution to date is US \$ 246,670.38.

The protection of children and adolescents is one of the key priorities of the UNICEF Dominican Republic Country Programme 2012-2016 with the Dominican Government, which was extended until the end of 2017. The Child Protection programme consists of the following components: prevention of violence against children, birth registration, prevention of child trafficking, and juvenile justice, and it contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16.1, the Dominican Republic National Development Strategy 2030, the priorities established in UNICEF's medium-term strategic plan, and the United Nations Development Framework 2018-2022 in the country.

During the reporting period, UNICEF achieved the following key results, in coordination with counterparts:

- **UNICEF worked with the Government to prevent the deportation of children.** During 2016, the deportation of foreigners without legal residence continued. UNICEF installed observers in three official border crossing points who interviewed all the people in the process of deportation who claim to be under 18 years old, a parent with children in the country, or a pregnant woman. To date, UNICEF identified 94 children in the process of being deported, and facilitated their family reunification in the Dominican Republic, thanks to the coordination with the migration authorities. In addition, four children erroneously deported to Haiti have been repatriated and reunited with their families, in coordination with UNHCR.
- **Commercial sexual exploitation is now in public debate.** Together with the Attorney General's Office, UNICEF launched a successful communication campaign "*No Hay Excusas*" ("No Excuses" in Spanish). More than 60% of the country's population was reached, visualizing the commercial sexual exploitation in the national public debate.
- **The Government started to tackle the crime of online child pornography.** UNICEF supported the Government with the implementation of the *National Roadmap for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children*, which was approved and launched in 2015. Within this framework, UNICEF provided pivotal support for the creation of a Specialized Unit for Crimes of High Technology (PEDATEC) within the General Prosecutor's Office to focus on online child pornography, and essential technical support was provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States and the United Kingdom National Crime Agency. The unit has already demonstrated a significant impact: during the second half of 2016, 342 investigations were initiated and 32 search warrants were executed. Child pornography downloads via internet in the Dominican Republic were reduced by 70% during the last quarter of 2016.
- **More children were registered timely at birth.** UNICEF continued to support the Central Electoral Board and MOH to ensure the timely birth registration of children born in prioritized public hospitals. In 2016, 67% of children obtained the birth registration before leaving those hospitals, compared to 37% in 2012. This means 15,600 more children have been registered compared to 2012.

COUNTRY SITUATION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Violence against children

Violence against children and adolescents, in its various manifestations, is a common and socially accepted behavior in the Dominican Republic, ranging from insults, corporal punishment, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, to sexual exploitation. Per the 2014 ENHOGAR/MICS survey, 62.9% of parents reported that their children between 1 and 14 years old received psychological threats or physical punishment in their homes in the month prior to the survey. The data demonstrates that physical or psychological violence against children is generalized throughout the country, with no significant differences by geographical area (62.7% in urban areas and 63.5% in rural areas), by families' income quintiles (61.3% in the richest quintile and 62.2% in the poorest quintile), by gender (64.4% in boys and 61.3% in girls), nor by the education level or religion of the head of household.

Sexual violence against children

Committee on the Rights of the Child to the Dominican State in its 2015 report expressed concerns about sexual violence against children and adolescents in the Dominican Republic. Limited quantitative information is available to estimate the scope of the sexual violence against children in the country, and it can only be partially estimated from the reports of the Attorney General's Office, which is incomplete and not disaggregated by age. During 2015, the Office of the Attorney General received 6,741 reports of sexual crimes. While many cases of sexual crimes go unreported, 236 (3.5%) of reports were related to incest and 1,767 (26%) were "seduction of minors". Of this type of crime, in the first five months of 2016, 896 complaints had been received, 20% more than those received in the same period of the previous year.

Having sexual relations with minors is socially accepted. According to a UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF joint study on knowledge, attitudes, and practices with regard to gender-based violence in schools, 36.4% of female adolescents and 32.5% of male adolescents participating reported to have received sexual proposals from adults.

The tourism, the country's major source of foreign income, can make children in the Dominican Republic vulnerable to child sexual exploitation (CSE), as the number of foreign tourists increased from 2.3 million per year to 5.4 million per year, and is expected to reach 10 million by 2022. Although UNICEF has been working with the tourism industry to prevent CSE, the country needs to improve its protective measures, and integrate them as a part of tourism development policy. In 2015, the Office of the Attorney General identified 66 cases of children and adolescent victims of CSE, and opened 13 criminal proceedings. While this number is considered to be very low compared to the estimated prevalence of crime, it demonstrates a progress against a crime that has been rarely prosecuted in the country before.

UNICEF also started to tackle the issue of online child pornography in the country in 2016. According to the child pornography trafficking monitoring system, implemented by the Office of the Attorney General with the support of UNICEF, more than 21,000 online exchanges of pornographic images of children were identified during the second half of 2015, from or to the Dominican Republic.

Birth registration

Universal birth registration remains an unfulfilled right. Birth registration has improved steadily since 2000, however, 12% of children under 5 years are not yet registered. More children living in rural areas lack birth registration (17.1%) compared to urban areas (10%), although the concentration of population in urban areas makes the number of non-registered children greater (75,478 children) than those in rural areas (37,312 children). Children from poorer families are more affected: 27.5% of children under 5 years old from the poorest quintile are not registered, which is double of the national average and is fifteen times more compared to children from the richest quintile (1.7%). The majority of unregistered children from the poorest quintile are descendants of Haitian immigrants who have settled in the country, but have never regularized their migratory status, thus transmitting it to succeeding generations.

Since 2013, UNICEF has worked together with the Central Electoral Board and MOH on an initiative to ensure the timely birth registration of children born in 12 prioritized public hospitals. As a result, the number of children registered before leaving these hospitals has increased by 50%.

Deportation of children

As a measure to protect children and adolescents from being deported, UNICEF, with the migration authorities' approval, installed observers at three official border crossing points in 2016. Ruling 168-13 of the Dominican Constitutional Court denied nationality to children born in the Dominican Republic of foreign parents, the majority being of Haitian origin. Thanks to the advocacy led by the United Nations system and other key donors, the Dominican government enacted Law 169-14, which limits the effects of the above-mentioned ruling, establishing two procedures: a) to ratify the nationality of people registered in the Civil Registry born to foreign parents; and b) for those not registered in the Civil Registry, access to a permanent residence. At the same time, the Government established a National Regularization Plan by which all foreigners with irregular migration status can have access to temporary or definitive residence. For those who did not apply to this Plan, a formal deportation process was established and implemented since August 2015. The Government is committed to avoiding deportation of children under 18 or pregnant women, and to respect the principle of family unity.

UNICEF worked in close collaboration with the Ministry of Defense, the General Directorate of Migration, other UN agencies and international actors, to protect children and adolescents from being deported. The government implemented UNICEF's suggested measures to provide protection to children, and relies on UNICEF to coordinate actions with National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI), NGOs, and Local Protection Boards.

PLANNING AND RESULTS BY OUTPUT

This results report is organized according to the four outputs of the Child Protection Programme of the CPD 2012-2017.

- **By 2016 the Dominican Republic has an established national policy for the prevention of violence against children in accordance with international human rights treaties and the recommendations of the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children.**

Roadmap for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children

Eight sectoral plans for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children were developed. As an education response, UNICEF strengthened the capacity of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to implement the Standards on Harmonious Coexistence in Public and Private Schools. The Action Protocol

and the School Mediation Programme for Peers was published, and 50 MOE technical staff from different parts of the country were trained. They then multiplied their learning with 5,000 public school counsellors and psychologists during the summer training session. Its pilot implementation was launched in 30 public schools in Santo Domingo East.

With the support of UNICEF, the MOH finalized and launched a protocol making it obligatory for medical staff in hospitals to report suspected cases of child abuse.

CONANI established a monitoring and follow up mechanism on the Roadmap's achievements, activities, and indicators, with UNICEF's support. Also, three technical commissions were established to propose a draft bill to prohibit corporal punishment for children, which will be presented to the National Congress in 2017, and to develop a communications strategy which promotes the Roadmap and sensitizes families about violence against children.

Strengthening of the local Child Protection System

The local child protection system was strengthened in 2016. To date, 87 local protection boards and 97 local Directories for child protection function in prioritized territories. Progress in 2016 includes the establishment of, and support for, local protection boards in provinces of Samana, La Romana, San Pedro de Macoris, and Higüey. The local protection boards safeguard and promote the well-being of children in at the municipalities level, and take actions to restore threatened or violated rights of children. UNICEF worked with its NGO partner Caminante to train 126 members of 7 Local Protection boards in 21 workshops on prevention of CSE and protection of victims.

In addition, 275 government officials from CESTUR, MOH staff, and psychologists of the MOE were trained. This training provided the authorities with information on their responsibilities to protect children from CSE, and with tools to take preventive actions.

Prevention of sexual exploitation

Prevention

UNICEF continued to promote the prevention of CSE through supporting local efforts in the most vulnerable touristic communities, through promoting the ECPAT's Code of Conduct among tour operators, and through carrying out a communications campaign to raise public awareness against CSE.

With the technical and financial support of UNICEF, training was provided the local public institutions to protect children against CSE, with an emphasis on their duties and responsibilities, and on providing care for children victims of CSE. UNICEF worked with local communities, NGO partners, ASONAHORES, and the tourism industry in 13 provinces. Six hotels and one tourism television network signed ECPAT's Code of Conduct against the CSE. A total of 3,229 employees from tour operators and institutions, as well as 1,848 adolescent leaders were trained on how to identify CSE and refer cases to the corresponding authorities. In addition, 2,944 families, 12,550 children and 1,859 community leaders were sensitized to prevent the CSE.

Social mobilization against CSE

A communication campaign "No Excuses" against the sexual exploitation of children was developed together with the Attorney General's Office, the Vice-Presidency of the Republic, and UNICEF, and was

launched in September 2016. The concept of the campaign was donated by UNICEF Uruguay in 2013, which was adapted to the context of the Dominican Republic. The campaign aims to demystify more or less uniform arguments of the perpetrators: "I did not know that she was a minor", "She provoked me", and "I helped her", among others. These excuses are widely believed to be justifiable and accepted in many communities and families, which make them blind from recognizing it as a crime and to report such cases. The campaign challenged such social acceptance and norms, and aimed to clarify that CSE is a crime, and to encourage the public to act against and report. To respond, the Attorney General's Office installed a special telephone line to receive reports from the public. The telephone number was widely disseminated as part of the campaign's message.

The Vice President of the Republic, who coordinates the Social Policy Cabinet, has been personally involved in the campaign. Her office promoted the campaign by disseminating it to the beneficiary families of the Social Protection Program *Progresando con Solidaridad* (PROSOLI). Thanks to this alliance, more than 1,200 owners of small grocery stores throughout the country were sensitized against CSE and placed campaign materials in their businesses. They were joined by additional 856 small grocery stores owners and small hotels in touristic communities in the north and east of the country, in which the NGO partner MAIS facilitated. The involvement of small grocery store owners was critical to prevent CSE in the country, since they are habitual points of contact between clients or intermediaries and the children or CSE child victims.

Given the success of the campaign, the Vice President requested UNICEF to extend the period of the campaign until April 2017, and plans to organize public events by mobilizing 1,000 young people in 30 different locations in Santo Domingo.

Seven media groups and private sector companies contributed to the campaign by donating advertising space of various types. TV, radio and printed advertisements, and billboards and street signs, were placed in Santo Domingo and the main touristic destinations in the country. The value of these contributions is calculated to be \$1.7 million.

The "No Excuses" campaign is estimated to have reached 60% of the country's population (6 million people), visualizing the issue of CSE in the national public debate. The success of this campaign was reflected in a dramatic increase in reported cases of sexual exploitation. During the first five months of the campaign, the Attorney General's Office received 354 reports, of which 53 were allegations of sexual exploitation; 71 were allegations of sexual abuse and other forms of violence against children; and 35 were telephone calls to follow up on previous reports.

Online child pornography prosecution

The Specialized Unit for Crimes of High Technology (PEDATEC) within the General Prosecutor's Office has installed a monitoring system of online child pornography with UNICEF's assistance in 2016. The unit demonstrated a significant impact: during the second half of 2016, 342 investigations were initiated and 32 search warrants were executed. Also, child pornography downloads via the internet in the Dominican Republic were reduced by 70% during the last quarter of the year.

Further, 123 judges, prosecutors, members of the National Institute of Forensic Sciences, the National Police, CESTUR, CONANI, and the Dominican Institute of Telecommunications (Indotel) participated in the First International Congress to combat child pornography "Protecting the Cyberspace of Children," organized by UNICEF in partnership with the Attorney General's Office. The event was attended by experts from 4 countries in the region.

Thanks to the financial support by the British Embassy in Santo Domingo, UNICEF supported the government to organize the first regional coordination meeting and workshop on child pornography prosecution, which was attended by 51 representatives from child protection authorities, national police, and prosecutors from 5 Latin-American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic.

- **By 2016 in 6 prioritized territories the Registrar's Office delivers birth certificates to non-documented children and pregnant adolescents.**

UNICEF facilitated the coordination between Central Electoral Board and MOH for timely birth registration in selected public hospitals. Despite the delay caused by the Presidential and general elections in May, 67%, or 34,685 out of 51,535, newborns were registered in 2016, compared to 37% in 2012.

The initiative started in 2014, and aims to improve the coordination between MOH and the Central Electoral Board to: 1) provide monthly monitoring of newborn babies registered before leaving the hospital; 2) to sensitize pregnant women about the importance and requirements for the birth registration; and 3) to inform health personnel about their supporting role and responsibilities.

Bottlenecks for the timely birth registration had been identified. The majority of the unregistered newborns are of adolescent or foreign mothers: the data from UNICEF-supported monitoring suggests that among 13,681 babies who left target hospitals without being registered, 60% (8,213) were babies of adolescent mothers and 27% (3,684) were of foreign mothers.

An evaluation of the timely birth registration initiative was undertaken. It identified successful evidence as well as challenges, for which the actions are already being taken. It is expected that in 2017 the initiative will be extended to more hospitals, a technical unit will be created in the Central Electoral Board that assumes its functions, and incorporates the government institutions in charge of social protection programmes, and the government's Extreme Poverty Eradication Plan. An inter-institutional agreement will be signed among the Central Electoral Board, MOH, the National Health System, the Ministry of the Presidency, and UNICEF, to make the universal birth registration the government's priority.

UNICEF also supported the late birth registration of 56 children and adolescents, and the registration of children of 16 Haitian mothers by obtaining their passports, which is a requirement for the registration. This pilot initiative was developed in coordination with World Vision at the border of the province of Dajabón.

- **By 2016 mechanisms exist for the prevention, control and care of children who are victims of trafficking and smuggling in border regions and prioritized territories.**

Preventing the deportation of children

To protect children and adolescents from deportation to Haiti, UNICEF worked in close collaboration with national authorities, local child protection representatives, local NGOs, and UN agencies. UNICEF is now regarded by Dominican migration authorities as a key actor in preventing deportation of minors, and in coordinating the family reunification.

In 2016, UNICEF installed observers at three official border crossing points to strengthen its monitoring. To date, UNICEF supported the identification of 94 cases of children during the deportation process, and facilitated their family reunification in the Dominican Republic. In addition, 4 children who were

erroneously deported to Haiti have been repatriated and reunited with their families, as a result of coordinated work with UNHCR. UNICEF coordinated closely with the country's UN interagency group on Statelessness.

With UNICEF's support, 149 members of Specialized Land Border Security Corps and Specialized Tourist Security Corps were trained in the investigation and prosecution protocol for cases of child trafficking, facilitated by the country's Special Prosecutor Against Trafficking. It is expected that this inter-institutional training among authorities improves the coordination between Special Forces, prosecutors and child protection authorities.

Protection of children on the move in the border of Haiti and Dominican Republic

Binational coordination between Dominican and Haitian child protection institutions has been improved. Working in coordination with UNICEF Haiti, a total of 181 people, including representatives of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Institute of Social Welfare and Research of Haiti (IBESR), IOM and CONANI, participated in two binational coordination meetings held in the Dajabon/Ouanaminthe and Pedernales/Anse-a-Pitres regions, organized by UNICEF Dominican Republic and the NGO partners Plan International and World Vision. At these meetings, information was exchanged (including contacts among officials), risks were identified, and practical solutions to improve the protection of children on the move and in the migratory flow were agreed to prevent the trafficking of children.

Also, in the border areas with Haiti, with UNICEF's support, World Vision trained 95 leaders of child protection networks and Local Protection Board members on the protection of children, and on strengthening the community-based protection mechanisms. In addition, 25 community-based child protection networks against trafficking were created and strengthened, 14 different local networks developed work plans, and 1,123 children were trained on their rights and the prevention of violence and trafficking. Adults in these communities (624 parents and 144 members of the child protection networks and the Local Protection Board) were sensitized, and 371 community leaders and local government officials were trained in child rights and protection.

- **By 2016, the juvenile justice system implements rehabilitation programs for criminal sanction enforcement**

Implementing alternative measures to the deprivation of liberty for adolescents

UNICEF provided support for the Attorney General's Office through the development of a Procedures Manual to implement alternative measures to the deprivation of liberty for adolescents in conflict with law. It aims to harmonize the information to the court that ordered the measures, the follow-up procedures of the alternative measures, and the support provided to the families of affected adolescents. A total of 128 judges, prosecutors, public defenders, CONANI technical team, and civil society participated in three coordination meetings to promote its implementation.

Protection of children in legal proceedings

The Supreme Court of Justice, with UNICEF's support, installed three new interview centers in Puerto Plata, La Altagracia, and Samaná, to ensure the protection of children in legal proceedings. These centers are now equipped with staff and specialized psychologists with technical knowledge and skills to conduct interviews with children and adolescent victims or witnesses of crimes without re-victimizing them.

RESOURCES

Table I: Planned Budget for Child Protection Outcome

Output / Funding Source	Planned Budget	Funded
PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN	312,260.00	504,368.00
Other Resources – Regular		374,494.00
Regular Resources		129,874.00
UNIVERSAL BIRTH REGISTRATION	154,719.00	90,749.00
Other Resources – Regular		90,749.00
Regular Resources		0
PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING	90,000.00	75,957.00
Other Resources – Regular		47,757.00
Regular Resources		28,200.00
JUVENILE JUSTICE	105,906.00	192,135.00
Other Resources – Regular		192,135.00
Regular Resources		0
Grand Total	752,885.00.00	863,208.00

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Table II: Expenditure by Programme Area

Output / Funding Source	Total Budget	Total Utilised	Percentage Utilised
PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN	504,368.00	504,356.00	100%
Other Resources – Regular	374,494.00	374,494.00	100%
Regular Resources	129,874.00	129,862.00	100%
UNIVERSAL BIRTH REGISTRATION	90,749.00	90,749.00	100%
Other Resources – Regular	90,749.00	90,749.00	100%
Regular Resources	0	0	
PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING	75,957.00	75,957.00	100%
Other Resources – Regular	47,757.00	47,757.00	100%
Regular Resources	28,200.00	28,200.00	100%
JUVENILE JUSTICE	192,135.00	192,135.00	100%
Other Resources – Regular	192,135.00	192,135.00	100%
Regular Resources	0	0	100%
Grand Total	863,208.00	863,196.00	100%

WORKPLAN 2017

Activities	Implementing Partners
Support to CONANI for the implementation of the <i>National Roadmap for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children and Adolescents 2015-2018</i> .	CONANI MOH Ministry of Education
Strengthening national capacities to protect children against sexual exploitation.	Office of Attorney General
Promotion of the signing of the Code of Conduct, sensitization to community leaders, parents, teachers and students, and reinforcement of local protection systems in tourist areas (east and north).	Mais Caminante Plan International ASONAHORES
Implementation of the initiative for timely birth registration in prioritized public hospitals and support the creation of a Monitoring Unit in the Electoral Board.	Electoral Board MOH Ministry of Presidency
Observation of the deportation processes to eliminate the deportation of children to Haiti.	National Migration Directorate UN agencies
Establishing, training and sustainable operation of community based child protection networks in border areas with Haiti.	Plan International World Vision
Implementation of the alternative measures to deprivation of liberty for adolescents in conflict with the law.	Office of Attorney General

Planned Budget and available resources for 2017

Output	Funding Type	<u>Planned Budget[1]</u>	<u>Funded Budget¹</u>	<u>Shortfall[2]</u>
Prevention of violence against children	RR	105,232.00	105,232.00	0.00
	ORR	134,768.00	44,768.00	90,000.00
Universal birth registration	RR	0.00		0.00
	ORR	90,000.00	65,000.00	25,000.00
Prevention of child trafficking and smuggling	RR	0.00		0.00
	ORR	83,144.00	43,144.00	40,000.00
Juvenile Justice	RR	0.00		0.00
	ORR	320,500.00	315,500.00	5,000.00
Sub-total Regular Resources		105,232.00	105,232.00	0.00
Sub-total Other Resources Regular		628,412.00	468,412.00	160,000.00
Total for 2017		733,644.00	573,644.00	160,000.00