



**BROKEN
CHALK**

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United
Nations Human Rights Council 4th Cycle – 46th Session

Right to Education

Country Review: Dominican Republic

Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK

October 2023

By Abigel Farkas

Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR

Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31687406567

upr@brokenchalk.org

www.brokenchalk.org

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council 4th Cycle – 46th Session

Right to Education

Country Review: Dominican Republic

Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK

October 2023

By Abigel Farkas

Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	3
II. Brief Overview of the Last UN-UPR Cycle	4
III. Lack of Quality Education	5
IV. Women’s Education At Risk	6
V. Statelessness as a Barrier to Education	8
VI. Recommendations	9
VII. References	10

I. Introduction

1. The Dominican Republic overcame many challenges over the last two decades to achieve its enhanced socioeconomic status. Vital reforms and policies allowed the country to prevail over the obstacles of the 2003-4 economic crisis, with an improvement that halved the number of people living in poverty today.ⁱ
2. As of 2023, among the approximately 11 million people inhabiting the Dominican Republic, 2.9 million students have enrolled in public or private schools. The development strategies that reinforced children's access to education result from a joint effort with the participation of the government, international organisations, and personal and academic sectors.ⁱⁱ
3. One of the most significant accomplishments of recent years is that compulsory education was extended to 13 years instead of the previously mandated eight years. Three levels of the educational structure in the Dominican Republic – pre-primary (3 years), primary (8 years), and secondary level (4 years) – are also being offered free of charge, except the 4th level, higher education.ⁱⁱⁱ
4. Under SDGs and the “National Development Strategy 2010-30”, authorities of the Dominican Republic pledged to ensure education for all regardless of gender, financial status, or territorial placement.^{iv} To boost literacy standards, multiple projects have focused on the foundational development of children. These frameworks somewhat weakened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, the Dominican Republic took severe account of the modernisation of digital learning and supplied necessary technological equipment for residents in due time.^v
5. While acknowledging all past efforts, Broken Chalk further aims to highlight educational injustices that continue negatively affecting many Dominican Republic communities.
6. Despite the promising enrolment rates, the number of drop-outs has been rising since 2009. In 2018, only 75% of children in primary education finished 4th, and 63% completed 6th grade. Insufficient secondary education attainment creates inequalities and reduces skilled human capital in the labour market.^{vi}

7. Girls' education is likewise at risk, as the lower secondary school completion rate of 74.5% for women was below the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) average of 83% in 2021.^{vii} Their studies usually end due to gender-based stereotypes, a high proportion of teenage pregnancies, and sexual harassment.^{viii}
8. Thousands of Dominican children of foreign descent – primarily Haitian – were rendered stateless in 2013, and despite the national regularisation plan 2018, many still face discriminatory treatment. Unable to reclaim their citizenship, these children are also being denied an education.^{ix}
9. Broken Chalk urges the Dominican Republic to uphold its domestic and international human rights obligations by considering the issues and their subsequent recommendations in the present report.

II. Brief Overview of the Last UN-UPR Cycle

10. About providing a follow-up to the recommendations received during the 2nd UPR Cycle, the Dominican Republic submitted its national report to the Human Rights Council on 7 November 2018. The report prepared for the 3rd Cycle reflected upon several achievements in the protection of human rights until the year 2018.^x
11. The Dominican Republic listed continuous and newly adopted strategic plans, awareness-raising activities, and development schemes focusing on improvement areas. Regarding the right to education, the Dominican Republic highlighted that access to State-sector educational institutions is guaranteed for all children and teenagers. To further strengthen the academic system, new schools and childcare centres were built, curricular structures were adjusted, extended school day and meal programs to help vulnerable families were initiated, guidelines for recognising diversity were adopted, and quality teacher training and digital literacy programs for older adults were introduced.^{xi}
12. Relevant stakeholders and interest groups guided the 3rd Cycle review. As for the general theme of the right to education, the Dominican Republic received 12 recommendations, among which 11 were supported and 1 noted. Support was given for matters such as the expansion of the National Literacy Plan to rural areas,

implementation of sexual education, reduction of unwanted pregnancies, empowerment of women's education, the inclusion of children with disabilities, promotion of access to education, and advancement of quality learning. The noted section concerns the elimination of child labour and the reintegration of exploited children into educational institutions.^{xii}

13. Additional recommendations (further 7) affecting education – proper health, adequate standard of living, reduced domestic violence against children, policies combatting gender violence – were all supported by the Dominican Republic; however, the prevention of statelessness and the restoration of nationality to Dominicans of Haitian descent received noted position.^{xiii}

III. Lack of Quality Education

14. Education of high quality is inevitable in society, as it accommodates students with more opportunities to excel in their future while reducing poverty indicators. Despite the significant progress in access to education in the Dominican Republic, the lack of improvements in quality deters children from becoming skilful adults and positively impacting their communities.
15. The results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 – the latest in which the Dominican Republic took part – indicate that students are less proficient in basic subjects than their peers from the other 70 participating countries on average.^{xiv}
16. Regarding reading skills, only 21% of students involved on behalf of the Dominican Republic gained a minimum level of proficiency as opposed to the 71% average result of students from OECD member states. When tested in mathematics, 9% of students reached the same minimum competence as the 76% OECD medium. These outcomes are parallel concerning the knowledge attained in the field of science, as the 15% of students having a low level of understanding is considerably beneath the 78% OECD standard performance.^{xv}
17. When measuring the gap between top and bottom-achieving students, further analysis establishes that children from higher-income households are more inclined to be affiliated with good grades and longer school attendance. While 88% of children raised

in upper-income families enrol in secondary school, 56% of students from the poorest and most vulnerable population group reach this level of the education system. The discrepancy among enrolment in urban and rural areas additionally demonstrates this tendency, as citizens from the San Domingo Capital District finish almost four more years of education than those living in the regions of Baoruco, Elias Pina, and Pedernales.^{xvi}

18. The discontinuance of studies at a secondary level indicates that the knowledge gained by students during their primary education is not secure enough and that education, in general, is not a priority for all families in the Dominican Republic.
19. The COVID-19 pandemic also negatively impacted the refinement of children's education. The Dominican Republic had a more extended school closure than the average 26 weeks in other Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) countries, with a total of 33 weeks. During these difficult times of the year 2020, not only drop-out rates increased, but class repetition also became more in demand. Regarding the former, data shows that while in 2019, 85.2% of students started their last year of primary education, this number decreased to 56.2% in 2020. As for the latter, the percentage of students recommencing their previous grade in secondary school has increased from 2.9% in 2019 to 9.4% in 2020.^{xvii}
20. The above findings suggest that much remains to be done in the Dominican Republic regarding quality education. There are still vulnerable groups that need to be better addressed, among them the children living in rural areas and lower-income households, as well as children affected by the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
21. By reinforcing school curriculums and preparing elevated evaluations on academically challenged students, all children could live up to their full potential. At the same time, human capital weaknesses in the Dominican Republic could be eliminated.^{xviii}

IV. Women's Education At Risk

22. In many instances, girls have no choice but to leave their educational institution early. Even though equality gaps have been reduced and access to learning opportunities are being made available for all, many girls still involuntarily give up their studies due to unfair domestic policies and different types of mistreatment.

23. The academic curriculum of the Dominican Republic provides sex education. Still, the depth and regularity of the subject are usually decided by educators, which creates a significant inconsistency among institutions around the country. The information taught to children about sexual and reproductive health is inappropriate and often behind time, as many young women declared that they knew almost nothing about the correct use of contraceptives in their teenage years. The lack of conversation makes the topic of sexual health a taboo, and as a result, many girls feel ashamed to ask for advice or look for support systems.^{xi}
24. The fear of judgment is equally prevalent in teenage pregnancies. As of 2019, around 20.5% of women between 15 and 19 became pregnant in the Dominican Republic. Many of these early pregnancies happen unintendedly, exposing young mothers and their infants to grave medical problems.^{xx}
25. Abortion is criminalised in all cases, despite 79% of the citizens agreeing that, at certain times, the practice should be made available for those in need. The regulation prohibits healthcare workers from carrying out an abortion, even for women whose life is in danger due to pregnancy or who became victims of rape or incest. Young women who face unwanted pregnancies often turn to clandestine, unsanitary abortions out of desperation, sometimes even resulting in death.^{xxi}
26. Adolescent girls who take on early childbearing are likely to drop out of school, as they worry about being condemned and shamed by both their peers and their instructors. Some educational facilities provide night-schooling options^{xxii}, yet early pregnancy lowers the chances of girls living in poorer or rural areas becoming reinstated. As domestic laws allow marriage under 18 with parental consent or judicial ruling, these girls will choose marriage over their studies due to community pressure.^{xxiii}
27. The academic years of many women in the Dominican Republic are also being disrupted by gender-based harassment, sometimes on the streets and other times in school environments. Above age 15, 84.3% of women claim they have experienced violent behaviour on the roads. Such events can trigger and make adolescent girls feel in danger on the way to school, especially during evening course attendance. Within educational institutions, 22% of women have been subjected to sexual misconduct, leaving them with many insecurities and doubts about school continuation.^{xxiv}

28. Educating young boys and girls using timely, age-appropriate, and comprehensive sex awareness lessons is necessary to prevent teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Similarly, ensuring the safety of all students with adequate response mechanisms must be prioritised at all educational institutions. Furthermore, no women should be discriminated against by being denied access to abortion and by letting them fight health risks and social stigma alone with limited consideration.

V. Statelessness as a Barrier to Education

29. Statelessness due to arbitrary deprivation of nationality affects the lives of many in the Dominican Republic up until today. The Constitutional Court decision 2013 called “La Sentencia” retroactively revoked the territorial and birth-right citizenship of more than 200 thousand citizens of foreign descent, ignoring their international human right to nationality.^{xxv}

30. Naturalization procedures until 2018 aimed to offer reparation by providing identification cards and birth certificates to people affected by the ruling. However, the authorities of the Dominican Republic have been communicating negligible statistical data on the actual number of people who successfully became remedied and reintegrated into society.^{xxvi}

31. A decade after the judgement was enacted, Dominicans of primarily Haitian descent continue to face discrimination against them by being denied the possibility to acquire nationality. Immigration raids have become more frequent recently, mainly targeting these marginalised communities without official documentation. Migration authorities are deporting and imprisoning people, sometimes solely based on skin colour and the assumption that they are Haitians. As a consequence of these practices of the government, racism and xenophobia have become deeply rooted problems within the country.^{xxvii}

32. The harmful policies do not guarantee equal treatment for all population segments. Apart from the challenges of persistent intolerance, individuals stripped of their nationality are experiencing hardships in all aspects of life, as they cannot marry, register their children, apply for social assistance, or access public services.^{xxviii}

33. The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the situation of stateless families. Safety measures slowed down the work of civil registries, making it extremely difficult to pull through the procedures of birth registrations. However, the government implemented a humanitarian aid programme to help impoverished households needing COVID-19 support. The state's rejection of social protection forced persons without citizenship to rely heavily on international aid to receive necessary vaccinations.^{xxix}
34. Alongside the complexity of obtaining medical treatment, education and employment access will likewise become restricted without an official record. Despite the Ministry of Education guaranteeing that children can attend primary and secondary schools while obtaining documentation, each institution's administration has a varying standpoint on handling students with no birth certificate. While some are fortunate enough to attend classes without complications, others are constantly afraid to be called to the principal's office for questioning to one day be dismissed.
35. All children struggling with being labelled stateless know that their studies will eventually end at high school. Unable to provide documentation, they cannot take the national exam required to graduate and receive proof of school completion. Attending university in the Dominican Republic is an unattainable dream of many. This thought demotivates children early in their lives and hinders their potential to pursue their aspirations' academic path and profession.^{xxx}
36. The denial of the right to education has life-long effects. All of those who experienced the negative implications of the 2013 ruling in the past ten years will bear the many consequences of not having an adequate educational background. Lack of qualification will make these victims more inclined to live in poverty, become unemployed, remain marginalised, and be exposed to illegal activities.
37. The Dominican Republic has a duty not to violate personal freedoms by granting all victims the necessary tools to enjoy a life where their fundamental human right to nationality is respected.

VI. Recommendations

38. Given the above considerations, Broken Chalk calls upon the Dominican Republic authorities to continue strengthening access to quality education, safeguarding

women's academic equality and protection and eliminating the biased treatment of citizens of foreign descent.

39. Regarding the challenges in educational standards, Broken Chalk recommends redefining and developing basic primary school curriculums to allow students to become better equipped with basic literacy skills during early childhood.
40. Broken Chalk further suggests filling in the gaps between education in rural and urban areas by increasing the available resources in less-developed regions so that all children can benefit from the same opportunities.
41. Broken Chalk advises conducting comprehensive research on the learning losses during the COVID-19 pandemic and offering supplementary classes for the most vulnerable groups of students to avoid high rates of class repetition and abundance of studies.
42. To improve women's education, Broken Chalk recommends advancing sexual and reproductive health information for young adolescents by raising awareness about available medical services and contraceptive options.
43. Broken Chalk advocates for decriminalising abortion to prevent women from turning to illegal and sometimes life-threatening solutions. In cases of teenage pregnancies, Broken Chalk likewise suggests fostering school continuation by offering alternative lesson attendance and psychological support for women in need.
44. To eliminate barriers of statelessness to education, Broken Chalk urges the Dominican Republic to recognise the fundamental human right to nationality.
45. Broken Chalk finally suggests speeding up civil registry mechanisms to equip students with the necessary documentation to excel throughout their academic years without being conditioned to discriminatory regimens.

VII. References

ⁱ IMF. "Dominican Republic: 2023 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Dominican Republic". *International Monetary Fund*, Country Report No. 2023/225, 22 June, (2023): p. 4. www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2023/06/22/Dominican-Republic-2023-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-Staff-Report-and-Statement-by-535083.

ⁱⁱ Dede, Chris. "Episode 150 | How the Dominican Republic Overcame Educational Challenges of the Pandemic." *Silver Lining for Learning*, May 7, (2023). <https://silverliningforlearning.org/episode-150-how-the-dominican-republic-overcame-educational-challenges-of-the-pandemic/>.

- ⁱⁱⁱ Diaz, Katia. “COVID-19 and Digital Learning in the Dominican Republic: Implications for Marginalized Communities.” *Current Issues in Comparative Education (CICE)*, Teachers College, Columbia University 23, no. 2 (2021): p. 144–45. <https://www.tc.columbia.edu/media/centers-amp-labs/cice/pdfs/special-issue-2022--vol-24-issue-2/859-233-PB.pdf>.
- ^{iv} OECD, ed. “Latin American Economic Outlook 2019: Development in Transition.” *OECD Publishing*, (2019): p. 210. <https://www.oecd.org/dev/americas/Dominican-Republic-Country-Note-Leo-2019.pdf>.
- ^v Diaz, Katia. “Uncovering Educational Inequalities: COVID-19 Digital Learning Strategies in the Dominican Republic.” *Current Issues in Comparative Education (CICE)*, Teachers College, Columbia University 24, no. 2 (2022): 151–62. <https://www.tc.columbia.edu/media/centers-amp-labs/cice/pdfs/special-issue-2022--vol-24-issue-2/859-233-PB.pdf>.
- ^{vi} OECD. Multi-Dimensional Review of the Dominican Republic: Towards Greater Well-Being for All. OECD ILibrary. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2022): p. 71-72. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/560c12bf-en.pdf?expires=1692701204&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=007DC625A9660F225058A2679011AFAA>.
- ^{vii} The World Bank. n.d. “Dominican Republic Gender Landscape.” World Bank Gender Data Portal. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099934406302284977/pdf/IDU03bd707a80b5e204a9b098e0096a5c56a8e2b.pdf>.
- ^{viii} Núñez, Isamar Marte. “Why Girls Aren’t Learning in the Dominican Republic?” www.unicef.org, April 18, (2022). <https://www.unicef.org/dominicanrepublic/en/node/2026>.
- ^{ix} Freedom House. “Dominican Republic: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report,” (2022). <https://freedomhouse.org/country/dominican-republic/freedom-world/2022>.
- ^x UN Human Rights Council. “National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 5 of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 16/21: Dominican Republic,” November 7, 2018, A/HRC/WG.6/32/DOM/1, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/333/83/PDF/G1833383.pdf?OpenElement>.
- ^{xi} Ibid
- ^{xii} UN Human Rights Council. “UPR of Dominican Republic (3rd Cycle – 32nd Session) Thematic List of Recommendations,” n.d. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/do-index#:~:text=Matrix%C2%A0of%20recommendations%3A-,English,-Infographic%3A>.
- ^{xiii} Ibid
- ^{xiv} OECD. “Country Note - Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Results from PISA 2018,” 2019. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_DOM.pdf.
- ^{xv} Ibid
- ^{xvi} OECD. Multi-Dimensional Review of the Dominican Republic: Towards Greater Well-Being for All. OECD ILibrary. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2022): p. 72-74. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/560c12bf-en.pdf?expires=1692701204&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=007DC625A9660F225058A2679011AFAA>.
- ^{xvii} Ibid, p. 69-71.
- ^{xviii} IMF, “Dominican Republic: 2023 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Dominican Republic”. *International Monetary Fund*, Country Report No. 2023/225, 22 June, (2023): p. 18-19. www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2023/06/22/Dominican-Republic-2023-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-Staff-Report-and-Statement-by-535083.

- ^{xix} Núñez, Isamar Marte. “Why Girls Aren’t Learning in the Dominican Republic?” [www.unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org/dominicanrepublic/en/node/2026), April 18, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/dominicanrepublic/en/node/2026>.
- ^{xx} Human Rights Watch. “Dominican Republic: Policies Fuel Teen Pregnancy.” Human Rights Watch, June 18, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/18/dominican-republic-policies-fuel-teen-pregnancy>.
- ^{xxi} Human Rights Watch. “Dominican Republic: End Total Abortion Ban.” Human Rights Watch, April 22, 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/22/dominican-republic-end-total-abortion-ban>.
- ^{xxii} Anonymous Interview Subject. 2023. “Broken Chalk Interview.” September 22, 2023.
- ^{xxiii} Human Rights Watch. “‘I Felt like the World Was Falling down on Me’: Adolescent Girls’ Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Dominican Republic.” Human Rights Watch, June 18, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/06/18/i-felt-world-was-falling-down-me/adolescent-girls-sexual-and-reproductive-health>.
- ^{xxiv} Núñez, Isamar Marte. “Why Girls Aren’t Learning in the Dominican Republic?” [www.unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org/dominicanrepublic/en/node/2026), April 18, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/dominicanrepublic/en/node/2026>.
- ^{xxv} ISI. 2020. “The World’s Stateless 2020: Deprivation of Nationality.” Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion. (2020): p. 65-66. https://files.institutesi.org/WORLD'S_STATELESS_2020.pdf.
- ^{xxvi} Ibid
- ^{xxvii} El Hosseiny, Salma. 2023. “HRC52: The Dominican Republic Must Recognise the Dominican Nationality of Haitian Descent People within the Country’s Territory.” ISHR. March 31, 2023. <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/hrc52-the-dominican-republic-must-recognise-the-dominican-nationality-of-haitian-descent-people-within-the-countrys-territory/>.
- ^{xxviii} Freedom House. 2022. “Dominican Republic: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report.” 2022. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/dominican-republic/freedom-world/2022>.
- ^{xxix} Wooding, Bridget. 2020. “Seizing New Opportunities to Address Statelessness in the Dominican Republic.” European Network on Statelessness. November 19, 2020. <https://www.statelessness.eu/updates/blog/seizing-new-opportunities-address-statelessness-dominican-republic>.
- ^{xxx} Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute. 2014. “Left Behind: How Statelessness in the Dominican Republic Limits Children’s Access to Education.” Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute Fact-Finding Project. p. 24-37. <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/human-rights-institute/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2018/03/left-behind.pdf>.



Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR
Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31685639758 | info@brokenchalk.org | www.brokenchalk.org

<https://twitter.com/brokenchalk>

<https://www.youtube.com/brokenchalk>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/brokenchalk>

<https://www.facebook.com/BrokenChalk/>

https://www.instagram.com/brokenchalk_/