

# Reducing violence against young children: lessons from comprehensive community-based interventions in the Dominican Republic

## BACKGROUND

The Caribbean Region has high rates of reported violence against children, and physical punishment is often considered an acceptable form of discipline. **Estimates of children in the Dominican Republic that are exposed to abuse in the home range from 50-80%.** The Dominican Republic, which is the second largest Caribbean nation, is a middle-income country with the largest economy in Central America and the Caribbean. Despite the country's economic progress, however, problems such as corruption, inequality, and poor access to social services, healthcare and education continue to exacerbate the high rates of violence.

## RESULTS AND IMPACT

An evaluation of two comprehensive community-based interventions, which provides a variety of services to caregivers and community members, reported several positive outcomes for children and their caregivers:



### VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Caregivers were less likely to threaten, yell, or use physical punishment to discipline their children. **Parents who received the intervention were 2-3 times less likely to respond "yes" to using physical discipline than those who received no intervention.**



### OVERALL CHILD WELLBEING

As a result of this intervention, children gained multiple benefits in terms of school readiness and performance, **gaining prosocial and behavioral skills, and improving overall well-being.**



### CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH

The intervention was able to reduce levels of stress among caregivers as well as increase nurturing behaviors towards children, which helped develop better child-parent relationships.

## INSPIRE STRATEGIES

Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children ([read more](#))



Norms and values



Safe environments



Parent and caregiver support



Response and support services

## ISSUES ADDRESSED

Violence Against Children  
Corporal Punishment  
Community Engagement

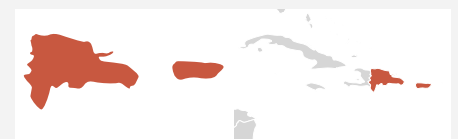
## TIMEFRAME

June 2012 – June 2015



## LOCATION

9 municipalities in the Dominican Republic: Santo Domingo, Santiago, Boca Chica, La Romana, Jimani, Puerto Plata, Herrera, Monte Plata, and Villa Altagracia.



## LEARN MORE

Read more about this project and its findings at [theevaluationfund.org](http://theevaluationfund.org)

## KEY LESSONS



Caregivers who reported **high stress** were more likely to support and use physical punishment to discipline their children.



Community-based interventions should include **age-appropriate and child-friendly training curricula** that build on positive and culturally relevant child-rearing practices.



Successful strategies for engaging families that were highlighted in this evaluation included a **welcoming and caring environment, accessible and reliable staff, relevant and informative activities, and effective communications**.



When conducting an evaluation of this type, it is important to establish a **baseline assessment** prior to the implementation of the program in order to be able to draw causal inferences from the results.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

The two interventions were implemented by the **Centers for the Integral Attention of Children (CIANIs) and the Local Community Organizations of Child Protection (LCOCPs)**. Both organizations are under the auspices of the National Council for the Children's Protection (CONANI), which develops policies to protect children in the Dominican Republic.

**CIANIs** provide high quality, comprehensive early childcare and development services to low-income families with children between 45 days and 6 years. The multidisciplinary services, which include educational, health, nutritional, psychological, and social services, are designed to enhance parental capacity, improve parent-child relationships and family functioning, and strengthen community support to families. Although the management and staff of CIANIs were transferred from CONANI to the National Institute for Integral Attention to Early Child Intervention (INAIPI) and the name of the service was changed, the centers continued to provide comprehensive early child care and development services for children aged 45 days old to 5 years.

**LCOCPs** are local entities responsible for maintaining, enforcing, and ensuring Child Rights. LCOCPs complement and extend CIANIs services: monitoring and reporting, providing peer support and surveillance, and conducting public education and community outreach.

## PARTNERS

Role	Organization
Researchers	School of Social Work, Ryerson University
Researchers	Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD)
Implementing partners	Consejo Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia (CONANI)
Implementing partners	Centers for the Integral Attention of Children in Dominican Republic (CIANIs)
Implementing partners	Local Community Organizations for Child Protection (LCOCPs)

## PUBLICATIONS

Parada, H., Silver, S., & Burke, M. (2016). **Evaluation of Centres for the Integral Attention of Children in Dominican Republic (CIANIs) and Local Community Organizations for Child Protection (LCOCP)**. Toronto, Ontario: Ryerson University. School of Social Work. Faculty of Community Services. <https://digital.library.ryerson.ca/islandora/object/RULA%3A5896>

## STUDY DETAILS

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the process review, qualitative techniques were used to conduct semi-structured interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders. The outcome evaluation was based on a quasi-experimental design and included surveys of respondents living in municipalities with (a) CIANIs only, (b) CIANIs and LCOCPs, and (c) a control group with no services.

## TARGET POPULATION

Over 9,000 young children in the Dominican Republic, between 45 days and 6 years, and their families.

## CONTACT

### Henry Parada

PhD, School of Social Work,  
Ryerson University

[hparada@ryerson.ca](mailto:hparada@ryerson.ca)

[www.ryerson.ca/socialwork/programs/bsw/](http://www.ryerson.ca/socialwork/programs/bsw/)

## LEARN MORE

Read more about this project and its findings at [theevaluationfund.org](http://theevaluationfund.org)

## STRENGTHEN THE FIELD

Visit this project on our website where you can easily share it with your networks and partners.



**The Evaluation Fund**  
Reducing Violence Against Children