

# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

## THE PROBLEM SEX TRAFFICKING

The Dominican Republic is a global tropical tourist destination known for its sandy beaches and natural beauty—but it is also a hotspot for traffickers and sex tourists. Sex trafficking in the Dominican Republic is predominantly street-based. Customers can easily purchase girls and teens by working through *buscones*—young men who work as pimps and often drive taxis or motorbikes. The Dominican Republic passed its first anti-trafficking law in 2003, and three years later the government enacted a nationwide plan to combat child sex trafficking. In the decade since this law was enacted, there have only been six sex trafficking convictions. Authorities are willing to act, but need more resources to implement the laws that will free children and restrain traffickers.

## IJM DOMINICAN REPUBLIC PROGRESS SINCE 2013



18

children  
rescued from  
sex trafficking



19

survivors currently  
receiving aftercare  
services from IJM



9

criminals  
restrained for sex  
trafficking



### THE FACTS



Worldwide, there are nearly **two million children** in the commercial sex trade.<sup>1</sup>

Human trafficking is a massive global enterprise, generating about **\$150 billion a year**—two-thirds from commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

About **80% of human trafficking victims are women and girls**, and up to 50% are minors.<sup>3</sup>



“Dominicans know that trafficking is a huge problem...Our work will bring real change, and I believe we can help end this horrible crime.”

—Jessica Ortiz, Director of Casework

## How IJM Dominican Republic Combats Sex Trafficking

**We rescue victims** by uncovering sex trafficking cases and reporting the crimes to the Public Ministry *fiscales* (public prosecutors) and Dominican police. We help these authorities carry out the rescue operations, providing support to the survivors and ensuring each one is brought to a place of safety.

**We bring criminals to justice.** IJM helps the Public Ministry find and arrest suspects, and our lawyers help collect evidence to build a strong case. We also help survivors who choose to share the truth in court prepare for their testimony.

**We restore survivors** by equipping government agencies and local NGOs with training and skills to provide quality aftercare to sex trafficking survivors. IJM develops treatment plans for each survivor focusing on physical health, trauma-focused counseling, personal security, economic self-sufficiency and, ultimately, reintegration back into a community where they can thrive.

**We strengthen justice systems** by developing strategies to improve the overall justice system—the police, courts and social service providers—so that it protects all child victims of trafficking, not just those IJM can help through individual cases.

### IJM DOMINICAN REPUBLIC MILESTONES

2013

#### COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

A team of IJM staff conducts an initial assessment to determine prevalence of crime.

2013

#### IJM DOMINICAN REPUBLIC OPENS

This is our first office to fight sex trafficking in Latin America.

2014

#### FIRST LEGAL CASE BEGINS

7 suspects are charged with trafficking, thanks to evidence prepared by IJM.



#### FIELD OFFICE DIRECTOR FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ

Fernando is leading IJM's first team in Latin America to combat sex trafficking in partnership with local authorities. Fernando joined IJM in 2010 as Field Office Director for Bolivia, where he led a team defending children who had suffered sexual violence. Before moving overseas, Fernando was a trial attorney in Texas. He and his family moved to the Dominican Republic in 2013.



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**INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION** is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors, and strengthen justice systems.

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