

## Assessment and recommendations

### Overview

In line with the four strategic objectives, each with multiple objectives, of the National Development Strategy for 2010-2030 to: 1) foster a society where equality of opportunity and access to essential services fosters inclusive growth; and 2) create an efficient, transparent, and results oriented public administration that delivers for its citizens, this OECD Review focuses on improving access to quality and timely services for citizens as a means to facilitating inclusive growth in the Dominican Republic.

In particular, the review undertakes an assessment of, and provides recommendations on: 1) the governance framework that guides the provision of services, from planning to co-ordination and results assessment; and 2) a number of key policy levers for better service delivery, including digital government, public innovation and administrative simplification policies, with attention to their interactions and potential for co-ordination.

### **A decade of sustained macroeconomic growth, but challenges to inequalities remain**

In the past two decades, the Dominican Republic has experienced strong macroeconomic growth, outperforming most countries in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Between 1992 and 2014, the country's growth rate averaged 5.5%, while the average regional growth rate was 3.1%.

Despite this good performance, the Dominican Republic still faces a number of policy challenges to help more people across society benefit from improved macroeconomic conditions. The sustained period of growth has not led to a proportional decline in poverty levels: it is estimated that over three million people live in poverty, and that poverty has a strong rural dimension, with poor people constituting about half of the population in rural areas. Furthermore, income share held by the lowest 10% of the population remains relatively low (1.9 %), and has remained stable at this level for more than a decade. Between 2000 and 2011, just under 2% of the population moved up in the income ranks, in contrast with an average of 41% in the Latin American region (World Bank Group, 2014a).

In this context, facilitating access to efficient, quality public services, as a way of connecting people with opportunity, emerges as a key priority for the Dominican Republic. Successive governments have focused efforts on protecting the most vulnerable populations through special programmes and increased social protection. The coverage of social safety nets has been expanded, and fiscal transfers for education and health have become better targeted. These efforts, however, have had mixed results.

Despite an increase in health sector coverage, there remain issues related to the quality of the service and overall poor service outcomes. Life expectancy is below the regional average, while the maternal mortality rate, at 40%, is above the regional average (MEPYD, 2014). Satisfaction with public health services remains generally low.

According to the *Latinobarómetro* (2015), 47.9% of Dominicans declare not being satisfied with public hospitals, whereas in OECD countries, 71% of citizens declare satisfaction with their healthcare system (OECD, 2015).

Coverage has also increased in the education sector. Since 2015, the sector has benefited from a significant increase in funding, as a result of a social movement that demanded the allocation of 4% of GDP towards education. However, challenges remain. For example, according to the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ORELAC/UNESCO 2008), 48% of third-grade students from the Dominican Republic have a reading ability below third-grade level, a percentage significantly higher than the regional average of 33%.

### **Improving access and quality of public services are key for inclusive growth in the Dominican Republic**

Inclusive growth cannot be achieved without a well-functioning service delivery system. While income is important, employment, health, and education outcomes are also factors driving inequalities, and are crucially dependent upon the delivery of accessible and responsive public services. Access to services is, therefore, essential for achieving higher-paid jobs, better living standards and longer, more fulfilling, lives (OECD, 2016a).

Evidence from the literature and work carried out by the OECD suggest that improving service delivery can not only improve satisfaction with public services, but may also lead to higher citizen trust in government. At the same time, trust in government as the provider of essential services plays an important role in achieving key policy outcomes that matter for the well-being of citizens and inclusive growth. Distrust in government services, for instance in the health sector, can steer citizens' existing health information, policies and services, which can negatively affect their health outcomes.

Several context-specific factors affect the delivery of public services in the Dominican Republic. First, citizens repeatedly report limited satisfaction with the quality and access to services in the country, often reflected in less than optimal outcomes. Second, current population and demographic dynamics, such as high growth of population, a rapid urbanisation pace and a large share of minorities living in poverty, increase the demand for services. Third, relatively low government revenues, combined with limited tax morale, constrain the available resources for the government to improve public services. Finally, despite a strong drive for government reform, the lack of enacting regulation, and the difficulties for sectorial institutions to adapt to the new institutional framework, undermine the efficiency of service delivery.

### **The policy drivers that influence access to public services (such as digital governance, innovation or administrative simplification) remains to be fully developed**

A number of policy levers can assist the Dominican Republic in its efforts to enhance service delivery to promote inclusive growth. This review explores the role that improved digital governance, administrative simplification and public sector innovation, together with an enabling governance framework, can play in further deepening ongoing efforts.

Chapter 3 looks at how administrative simplification and better regulation can significantly improve public service delivery in the Dominican Republic, while helping achieve the national objective to “reduce cost, administrative procedures and transaction

time and authorisations, eliminating duplicity of functions and powers”. Chapter 4 addresses how digital governance can improve service delivery and support inclusive growth. This is a critical objective of the National Development Strategy 2030, which recognises the “development of electronic government” as a strategic line of action supporting the creation of a more efficient, transparent and performance-based public sector. Chapter 5 discusses the potential that public service innovation has to improve outcomes for Dominican citizens, and assesses the strategic agility of the government to adapt to existing and upcoming challenges, and to create the capacity to transform risks into opportunities for new and improved methods, tools and delivery channels. The findings of the review suggest that while there are many initiatives in place to enable these policy drivers, more can be done to leverage their potential for improving service delivery.

For these policies to be successful, a solid governance framework must underpin the institutional arrangements and shape the planning, implementation, assessment and continuous improvement of public services, as discussed in Chapter 2. This is true particularly when considering the non-income areas associated with improvements in multidimensional inequalities, such as health or education.

Public governance, or “the system of strategic processes and tools, as well as institutions, rules and interactions for effective policy making” (OECD, 2016a), is the essential base for improving the delivery of public services, and ultimately achieving inclusive growth. Failures in the governance system can undermine the capacity of the government to achieve inclusive growth, and can exacerbate multidimensional inequalities, while rendering government efforts ineffective.

### **The institutional framework for planning, delivering and monitoring service delivery is in place, but implementation and co-ordination failures undermine its capacity**

The Dominican Republic has undergone several reforms in the past 50 years that have transformed its institutional structure as it has tried to improve co-ordination, strengthen the centre of government and build capacities for planning and delivering better services, particularly in the social sector.

Laws on Public Administration, Planning, Budget and Financial Management have been enacted. In addition, particular focus has been given to the introduction of tools to guide the planning process, including: 1) setting up the vision, through the National Development Strategy (NDS); and 2) translating the vision into medium-term plans that link priorities and resources, through the Multiyear National Plan for the Public Sector (PNPSP). Supporting institutional structures have been launched, including the National Development Council, the Technical Secretariat, the Presidency, the Institutional Planning and Development Units, and the Provincial Development Councils. Information management systems, including for poverty monitoring, have also been developed. The Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) has become the governing body of the Public Administration, and the co-ordinator of the institutional strengthening system.

These successive reforms have left a strong network of institutions and instruments at the central and sub-national level, enabling, in principle, whole-of-government planning and co-ordination. Nevertheless, the impact of these reforms is far from reaching its full potential. First, although the institutional architecture is in place, the lack of enacting regulation, and the difficulties for sectorial institutions to adapt to the new institutional

framework, have undermined these new arrangements. Second, the institutions and bodies responsible for policy co-ordination are not operating as such, either for political economy considerations or because of a priority focus on implementation. Third, monitoring and evaluation initiatives are relatively new and not fully integrated with the decision-making process. Underlying information systems operate independently from each other and are not fully integrated into policy making across the public sector. Fourth, the systems that integrate the different levels of accountability are not interconnected and lack a system of incentives to favour institutionalisation.

In order to fully reap the benefits of the policy levers explored in this review, including digital government, public innovation, and administrative simplification, the government of the Dominican Republic should focus on rationalising its administrative structure so as to minimise duplicities, strengthen whole-of-government co-ordination, pursue the integration and shared use of information systems, and focus on capacity building at the institutional and municipal level for planning and evaluation. MAP could play a key role in leading this transformation of the governance underpinnings of service delivery in the Dominican Republic. The following recommendations, built around key building blocks of a governance framework for service delivery, namely planning and vision setting, co-ordination and delivery, monitoring and evaluation and accountability, could help the Dominican Republic capitalise on existing institutional structures for better service delivery.

### ***Aligning vision and planning to provide whole-of-government direction***

In recent years, the Dominican Republic has created new structures, tools and processes to improve strategic planning and define a long-term vision for the country. These reforms represent a step in the right direction to create an enabling environment for achieving inclusive growth. Through a participatory and consensus building process, the country launched the National Development Strategy 2030 (NDS), a policy framework that reflects political consensus and sets broad national priorities. In addition to the NDS, the country developed other planning tools linking the long-term vision with medium-term plans to operationalise the NDS at the sectorial and territorial levels. Among others, the PNSPS was created to provide a four-year whole-of-government policy roadmap, aligned, in principle, with the overarching goals of the NDS.

Challenges associated with the sequencing and alignment of the planning tools, as well as with capacity related issues, will need to be addressed in order to fully leverage the institutions and processes developed. In particular, the sequence between central and sectorial planning processes and tools, which in their current version preceded the preparation of both the NDS and the PNSPN, could be improved. In addition, stronger capacity at the level of the Institutional Planning and Development Units would assist the public sector in embracing its vision for planning, monitoring and evaluating policies, together with laying a stronger foundation for operating beyond a silo approach. Finally, the interconnection between priority setting through planning and resource allocation in the short and long term, both through the PNSPS and the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, should be improved.

**Box A.1. Recommendation: Leverage the potential of existing whole-of-government planning processes and tools to inform policy design and implementation**

**In the short term**

- Reactivate the role of the Council of Ministers in defining the next four-year programme of Government, including through an evaluation of the implementation of the current PNPS (2012-2016).
- Align institutional and municipal plans with the guidelines of the NDS and the future PNSPS 2016-2020.

**In the medium term**

- Strengthen the capacity of the Institutional Planning and Development Units to better articulate sectorial planning, monitoring and evaluation with the central systems.
- Leverage the role of MAP as a change and institutional strengthening agent.

**In the longer term**

- Conduct multidimensional ex ante budget impact assessments to determine the long-term impact of budget decisions, particularly in key expenditure or priority areas.
- Build a stronger link between the medium-term vision set out in the NDS and budget and spending decisions.

***Empowering vision through better needs identification and information sharing***

Effective and efficient policy design and implementation cannot take place if the government does not understand the needs of different population groups, particularly when considering inclusive growth. The Dominican Republic has several tools to assess citizens' needs. If used properly, these tools (which include the Poverty Atlas, the SIUBEN and the ENIGH and ENHOGAR surveys) can provide key information to design effective and efficient interventions to reach the most vulnerable population, both based on population groups and place-based considerations.

There are challenges associated with the integration of these tools and the use of the information they generate for policy design. In particular, interoperability, full access across the public sector, and use of information for needs assessment, user identification and the planning process, remains to be achieved.

**Box A.2. Recommendation: Achieve the full potential of existing information systems through a stronger focus on interconnection and needs assessment for policy design**

**In the short term**

- Evaluate how the information generated by the Poverty Atlas, the SIUBEN and the ENIGH and ENHOGAR tools are integrated, or not, into policy design and evaluation in key areas of government.

**Box A.2. Recommendation: Achieve the full potential of existing information systems through a stronger focus on interconnection and needs assessment for policy design (continued)**

**In the medium term**

- Interconnect the available government systems that produce key information for demand assessment and monitoring and evaluation, particularly in the social sector.

**In the longer term**

- Strengthen the National Statistical Office of the Dominican Republic's (ONE) capacity to develop guidelines for the production of statistics and to coordinate and govern the National System of Statistics.

***Strengthening co-ordination at the central, territorial and sector policy levels***

A functioning centre of government is key to ensure inclusive growth, as it aligns interventions and identifies joined-up outcomes. According to the legal framework of the Dominican Republic, the highest policy co-ordination body in the country is the Council of Ministers. Created by the Public Administration Law, this body plays a key role in defining, co-ordinating, monitoring and evaluating government policies. However, in practice, the role of the Council of Ministers is undermined by the lack of regulation to guide its operation.

The legal framework states that the role of the Council of Ministers is supported by Policy Co-ordination Cabinets. These Co-ordination Cabinets are responsible for policy co-ordination at the sectorial level, and offer an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of the government to deliver joined-up outcomes, and provide horizontal guidance on key policy outcomes. However, the majority are non-operational. In addition, their structure as planned is rigid and does not render itself to a flexible use in support of mission driven demands by the Council of Ministers.

At the territorial level, the Dominican Republic faces significant challenges associated with territorial disparities, in part because most of the services related to inclusive growth are centralised in urban centres. To achieve territorial cohesion, the last wave of institutional reforms created new structures and tools to identify policy complementarities and achieve joined-up outcomes in the territory, including municipal, provincial and regional plans, as well as Development Councils at the municipal, provincial and regional levels.

However, given the lack of enacting regulations, and the absence of the single planning regions, there is still much to do in order to achieve co-ordination at the territorial level. Issues related to capacity building efforts, and the sequencing and alignment of planning at the central and sub-national level, persist.

**Box A.3. Recommendation: Strengthen co-ordination at the centre of government**

Strengthening co-ordination at the centre of government level will deliver a whole-of-government approach to better service delivery in the following ways:

**In the short term**

- Enable and leverage the co-ordination role of the Council of Ministers.

**Box A.3. Recommendation: Strengthen co-ordination at the centre of government**  
(continued)

- In parallel, rationalise and update Policy Co-ordination Cabinets to fulfil their role in steering the design, implementation and assessment of policies.

**In the medium term**

- Fully leverage the role of MAP to strengthen the institutional foundation for whole-of-government co-ordination.

**In the longer term**

- Develop a system of incentives that creates a culture of co-ordination among the highest levels of government.

**Box A.4. Recommendation: Strengthen co-ordination mechanisms between the central and local levels of government**

**In the short term**

- Approve and implement single planning regions.

**In the medium term**

- Take advantage of the opportunity created by the incoming administrations at the national and local levels to launch and articulate the municipal, provincial and regional committees in order to create the conditions to implement municipal, provincial and regional plans.

**In the longer term**

- Develop the capacity of Municipal Planning and Development Units to provide them with the competencies necessary to articulate municipal planning with central planning.

***Delivering joined-up outcomes through better co-ordination of social programmes***

Co-ordination of social sector institutions and policies is a foundational priority to achieve more inclusive growth. For example, the interaction of education and health interventions is key for increasing the capacities and opportunities for citizens to thrive. There has been some progress for the Dominican Republic in this area, particularly related to the social protection system, but some challenges persist associated with a proliferation of actors with similar responsibilities, and some political economy issues that undermine policy co-ordination.

A clear and effective co-ordinating structure is necessary to enable a whole-of-government approach to planning and delivering key social outcomes. The current focus on implementation of key programmes has generated duplicities and taken over from a focus on steering and co-ordination. In the long term, alternative institutional settings

could be considered, as many of the objectives pursued by these programmes are complementary, and directly or indirectly linked to the activities at the line ministry level.

**Box A.5. Recommendation: Rationalise and strengthen co-ordination and alignment in the social sector**

**In the short term**

- Appoint and define a clear co-ordinating structure to enable effective co-ordination of social policy.

**In the medium term**

- Rationalise the size and administrative structure in the social sector.
- Focus on co-ordination and information sharing mechanisms to deliver joined-up outcomes across administrative structures and specific programmes.

**In the longer term**

- Consider alternative institutional set ups to facilitate an integrated approach to social programmes.

***Fully capitalising on the vision of the new national monitoring and evaluation system and on existing accountability mechanisms***

Monitoring and evaluation are key elements in the policy-making and policy-shaping cycles associated with inclusive growth. They provide the necessary information that allow authorities to distil lessons that will feed the policy-making process, while providing periodic information to ensure that policies are moving in the right direction. In the case of the Dominican Republic, although monitoring and evaluation have been present for more than 50 years, it was only until recently (September 2015) that the government formally created a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system. Despite this recent effort, challenges persist associated with the lack of connectivity among government systems to inform monitoring and evaluation. This is hindered by the lack of resources available for the National Statistical Office of the Dominican Republic (ONE) to develop the statistics and indicators needed to measure progress and impact.

Monitoring and evaluation efforts can be further anchored through a fully institutionalised accountability system. Accountability matters for inclusive growth as it can provide horizontal incentives for policy co-ordination and the delivery of joined-up outcomes, while protecting underserved populations against the organised interests of powerful groups. This review focuses on four types of accountability: 1) vertical accountability to the centre of government to account for policy objectives and joined-up outcomes; 2) internal accountability for institutional strengthening; 3) client accountability to improve the quality of services; and 4) social accountability to build trust and strengthen transparency. Challenges associated with the need to connect the different tools and processes linked to the different levels of accountability, as well as the need to develop an appropriated system of incentives, were identified.



**Box A.6. Recommendation: Deepen existing accountability mechanisms through more integration and adequate incentive building, paving the way for renewed monitoring and evaluation**

**In the short term**

- In the context of the launch of the new national monitoring and evaluation system, assess the integration of existing performance management systems.
- In parallel, launch the interconnection of all systems that exist to gather user feedback and identify avenues for using this information for service improvement, monitoring and re-design. Interconnecting user feedback tools to enhance client accountability.

**In the medium term**

- Strengthen the link between vertical accountability and internal accountability to improve institutional performance.
- Strengthen internal accountability by enhancing incentives for institutional strengthening.

**In the longer term**

- Consider an integrated approach to monitoring the quality and impact of key services, including through direct user feedback.
- Build partnerships with civil society organisations to strengthen the Observatory of Public Policy.

**Administrative simplification can assist in untangling the current regulatory framework, and set the foundation for a whole-of-government regulatory policy**

Together with spending and taxing, regulating is one of the key policy tools available to governments to promote social welfare and economic prosperity. In particular, service delivery, including high quality healthcare, education and employment as critical drivers of opportunity and inclusion, is always framed by government regulations. If the regulatory framework is too complex, it may hamper access to public services to certain groups of citizens, and create unnecessary regulatory burdens to public authorities/service providers, leading to inefficiencies. The application of regulatory policy principles can help to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of regulation, rendering service provision more agile and accessible.

Despite important reforms aimed at improving competitiveness and private sector growth, the lack of a comprehensive administrative simplification strategy, and a subsequent regulatory reform programme, has reduced the possibility of achieving better economic outcomes. In addition, a priority focus on business related simplification has not tapped into the potential that regulatory management tools, such as administrative simplification, can unleash for a more efficient, citizen-centred government.

Available comparative data is illustrative of the current regulatory policy gap in the Dominican Republic. The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) shed light on the quality of regulation for 215 economies around the world. These indicators stem from a research dataset that summarises views on quality of regulation provided by enterprises,

citizens and expert surveys, think tanks, universities, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations. In 2014, the WGI ranked the Dominican Republic (51), below both OECD (87), and Latin America and the Caribbean (54) averages. Anecdotal evidence suggests that administrative burdens and formalities have grown both in number and complexity, which has created a regulation jungle that is difficult to follow and comply with, as well as increased costs and multiplied barriers for citizens and the public administration to better deliver public services.

Aware of these challenges, the government included administrative simplification as a priority area in the National Development Strategy 2030 (*Estrategia Nacional de Desarrollo 2030*), and the National Multiyear Plan for the Public Sector 2013-2016 (*Plan Nacional Plurianual del Sector Público*). The Organic Law for the Public Administration sets the legal basis for the Ministry of Public Administration to be the governing body in charge of simplification measures.

In addition, the government has implemented several simplification efforts that have been hindered by a lack of co-ordination or a clear strategy. Current initiatives include one-stop shops (both digital and physical), centralisation of registries on formalities, a programme on formality simplification, and the implementation of citizen service charters.

In this context, there lies an important opportunity to match simplification efforts and initiatives with broader government reforms and priorities to leverage the potential for a more ambitious simplification programme. This could focus resources and create a comprehensive strategy that improves the delivery and inclusiveness of public services, led by MAP.

Such a strategy should focus on the improvement of quality and the delivery of public services by identifying unnecessary bureaucracy and cutting red tape in specific areas that most contribute to inclusive growth. This would allow, amongst other benefits, for the freeing up of working hours for the public administration, therefore improving efficiency and quality, increasing state revenues, and enabling the citizen to do administrative procedures digitally. Recommendations for the government are detailed below.

### ***Broadening the scope of simplification efforts and aligning them with other policy objectives***

In the Dominican Republic, as in many other countries, major simplification efforts have been predominantly business-oriented, as can be seen with initiatives such as the trade one-stop shop (VUCE). While these initiatives may have an impact on economic growth, they leave behind an untapped potential to make regulations aimed at citizens and the public sector more efficient and less burdensome.

Synergies should be explored by adapting the current simplification initiatives for simplifying formalities and the processes where the outcome would improve the delivery and inclusiveness of public services. In order to do this, the government should first assess administrative burdens (quantitatively and qualitatively) with efficiency in mind to better target resources and outcomes. The measuring process itself will help flag potential reduction proposals that may help improve service delivery.

**Box A.7. Recommendation: Establish a simplification strategy aimed at improving inclusiveness and delivery of public services**

**In the short term**

- Broaden the scope of the simplification efforts to include citizens and the public administration.
- Decide on areas or sectors where simplification would enable citizens and the public sector to better deliver public services as a first step.

**In the medium term**

- Prepare a broader whole-of-government simplification strategy, identifying which regulations and formalities will be reviewed, and the mechanisms to conduct such reviews.
- Use the administrative burden quantification process to identify potential simplification proposals with the data found during the measurement.
- Engage with stakeholders to find burdensome administrative procedures and possible simplification proposals.
- Set targets, and accountability mechanisms bound to those targets, where each public sector entity commits to simplify the most burdensome formalities and services within their purview by a specific number or percentage.

**In the longer term**

- Review the stock of regulation periodically *ex ante* and *ex post* to guarantee regulatory quality.

***Establishing sufficient institutional structures to engage with stakeholders and sub-national governments***

The Ministry of Public Administration, as the governing body, should have enough political support and tools to put pressure on ministries and agencies to complete simplification efforts. This should be sought by strengthening the institutional structures supporting burden reduction, including engaging with stakeholders to understand their needs, providing sufficient political support at the ministerial level, and improving co-ordination to include the sub-national level.

Service delivery remains fragmented, with different levels of quality across regions, which reflects in part the fragmentation of regulatory frameworks in the Dominican Republic. Having discretionary requirements that vary by the sector or municipality frustrates citizens and hampers trust in government.

**Box A.8. Recommendation: Create efficient institutional structures that engage with stakeholders and sub-national governments**

**In the short term**

- Create a high-level regulatory committee within the government that supports and oversees regulatory improvement efforts, including administrative simplification.
- Establish a network of “simplification officials” inside relevant agencies to meet regularly.

**Box A.8. Recommendation: Create efficient institutional structures that engage with stakeholders and sub-national governments (*continued*)**

**In the medium term**

- Harmonise simplification efforts with ongoing digital government initiatives.
- Open a channel of communication with stakeholders to improve regulatory proposals by establishing an advisory committee composed of business associations, civil society organisations, consumer protection organisations, and/or academia.
- Develop the capacity of civil servants at the sub-national levels of government.

***Developing an assessment strategy that enables the improvement of the simplification programme***

Developing an evaluation strategy for the simplification programme, which can be used as input for the improvement of further simplification efforts and initiatives, is a challenge that has not yet been addressed in the Dominican Republic. As stated before, monitoring and evaluation are key elements in the policy-making and policy-shaping cycles associated with inclusive growth. This allows the public sector to learn from experience and make corrections if results do not reach expected outcomes. Currently, MAP reports on outputs but not on outcomes, which limits the potential of simplification measures.

The publication and communication of these results promotes transparency and accountability measures that could, if practical, lead to the opening of a communication channel to receive further simplification proposals by the public and government officials. Administrative simplification initiatives can be part of the joined-up outcomes to be revised by the national monitoring and evaluation system. This could raise the better regulation agenda's political importance as a key element for better service delivery.

**Box A.9. Recommendation: Assess the effectiveness of the simplification programme**

**In the short term**

- Implement periodical reviews to guarantee the effectiveness of the programme.

**In the medium term**

- The evaluation and accountability strategy should evolve to assess outcomes, not only outputs.
- Communicate the results of assessments to the public.

**In the longer term**

- Develop guidance on the most effective and efficient means of reducing regulatory burdens.

***Reaping the benefits of an explicit and binding regulatory policy***

The Dominican Republic is currently implementing one of many regulatory management tools; this expertise should be seized to move to a larger and more ambitious policy that looks into the regulatory policy cycle. The challenge includes developing a fully-fledged regulatory policy strategy that could introduce other regulatory management

tools, such as regulatory impact assessments, control mechanisms to prevent the creation of new burdensome regulation, and ex post evaluations.

The implementation of management tools aimed at improving the quality of the rule-making process would need to be accompanied by an administrative unit that guarantees oversight, co-ordination and control. Both the creation of an administrative unit, and the introduction of new regulatory management tools to guarantee quality regulation, should be done in a progressive and gradual manner.

**Box A.10. Recommendation: Design an explicit whole-of-government regulatory policy**

**In the medium term**

- Compile all simplification efforts to gain an oversight and enable co-ordination of the overall strategy.

**In the longer term**

- Design and establish a progressive regulatory policy strategy for the Dominican Republic.
- Establish an administrative body in charge of overseeing better regulation.

**Leveraging digital technologies to improve access to public services, support economic activity and foster social inclusion**

Digital government initiatives in the Dominican Republic started in 2004, after the 2003-2004 banking crisis, as part of broader efforts to modernise the public sector, improve service delivery and mitigate the consequences of the crisis. These activities are developed with the mission of supporting public sector operations through efficiency gains, improving the competitiveness of services for the private sector, and facilitating citizen access to information and communication technology (ICT) and public services.

In 2004, the Dominican Government established the Presidential Office for ICT (OPTIC) through the Presidential Decree No. 1090-04. This office aims to support the use of digital technologies, modernise and transform the public administration, and improve its relationship with citizens. Furthermore, the National Development Strategy explicitly recognises the “development of electronic government” as a strategic line of action to support the creation of a more efficient, transparent and performance-based public sector.

However, the modernising momentum started in 2004 has dwindled, and the implementation of digital government in the 2008-2016 has experienced an average performance when compared to other countries of the LAC region. In 2003, the Dominican Republic ranked 60<sup>th</sup> of 191 countries in the United Nation’s (UN) e-Government Index, but had fallen back to 98<sup>th</sup> position by 2016. This is mainly explained by progress made by other countries and significant methodological changes made to the index. In 2016, Dominican Republic ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> when compared to countries of Central America. Still, the Dominican Republic’s score has remained consistently near the average score of the LAC region while other peers, such as Costa Rica, have made faster progress in the same period of time. Since 2012, however, there has been a new push for digital government, with the development of a sound policy framework. Although there is a

n evident gap between existing norms and regulations and their implementation that is not simply explained by the normal adaptation process necessary for most new regulations. Public institutions are often not aware of existing policies and regulations, and authorities in the field of digital government do not necessarily have the tools and policy levers to ensure their enforcement and implementation.

Despite clearly established national priorities in the field of digital government, concrete efforts made in recent years, and growing demands from its constituency, the government of the Dominican Republic has not yet been able to translate these efforts into a transformation of how citizens interact with public authorities. Digital government performance in the Dominican Republic has been average relative to peer countries in the LAC region and globally. The following recommendations seek to unleash the potential of digital government and highlight areas of opportunity in the use of digital technologies by the public sector that can favour better service delivery and more inclusive growth in the Dominican Republic.

### ***Clarify and reinforce the governance and co-ordination frameworks of digital government, ensuring coherence across levels of government***

OPTIC was established in 2004 to lead the implementation of digital government; it was ratified in 2007 through the Presidential Decree 229-07. However, since 2008 the situation has become more ambiguous, both legally and operationally. The law 41-08 of 2008 on public administration, which created the Ministry of Public Administration, provides it with the legal basis to claim the lead on digital government policy development and implementation. The scope of the Ministry's responsibilities in the field of digital government have not yet been specified and operationalised by a Presidential decree. Insufficiently clear roles and responsibilities undermine the accountability of public institutions, making the institutional framework less intelligible for Dominican citizens and other public institutions, and increasing the risk of a lack of coherence in policy implementation.

OPTIC and the Ministry of Public Administration have been able to manage this ambiguity thanks to the good working relations of the political authorities and senior management of both institutions, who have progressively clarified their scope of work and forms of collaboration through inter-institutional agreements. While OPTIC and MAP have been able to find an ad hoc way to manage this tension, the solutions seem potentially unstable and overly dependent on the good will of incumbents. It is therefore advisable to work on the clarification of roles and responsibilities and the strengthening of institutional channels of co-ordination.

Over the last few years, the Dominican Republic has progressively put in place a robust regulatory framework for digital government, complemented by adequate technical standards and guidelines. However, their implementation still lags behind, partly due to the weak policy levers of the *de facto* governing body for digital government (OPTIC). The lack of decisive levers to enforce the existing rules for ICT use in the public sector hinders the government's ability to drive change and ensure the implementation of the policy framework in place. The governing body for digital government would benefit from strengthening its ability to effectively structure strategic ICT investments by providing an adequate mix of incentives in order to facilitate central government's ICT project performance and reap the efficiencies of shared solutions and increased agility and data flow.

The new policy lever mix should facilitate the mandatory use of business cases and ICT project management models for projects above a specific budget threshold. The use of these tools forces project managers to outline the rationale of ICT projects, identify their specific objectives, and determine how they will be achieved. However, these tools are mainly used for their value in supporting project managers, while their potential for data collection on ICT projects is overlooked. Monitoring project implementation and benefit realisation can provide relevant insights that lead to the identification of key drivers of success and failure in ICT project management, and allow project managers to identify weaknesses and make adjustments early on, ensuring efficiency.

**Box A.11. Recommendation: Strengthen governance and co-ordination frameworks to facilitate the implementation of digital government and ensure coherence across government**

**In the medium term**

- Clarify the governance of digital government policies, in particular the roles and responsibilities of OPTIC and the Ministry of Public Administration.
- Improve the co-ordinating unit's ability to enforce the regulatory framework of digital government by revising and strengthening its policy levers.

**In the longer term**

- Reinforce the monitoring and evaluation of digital government policies through the collection of more granular data on ICT project management and implementation.

***Ensuring that all key enablers for digital government and digital service delivery are in place***

The use of digital signatures was approved in 2002 through law 126-02 regulating digital signature. However, its implementation has been slow. While there are existing solutions for digital signatures, the uptake remains low, hampering the public sector's ability to deliver transactional services through digital channels.

Efforts exist to expand the use of the digital signature, but they currently focus exclusively on its use by public institutions and officials. This approach constrains the potential of such a tool to provide secure digital transactional services through adequate identification of the user. Coupled with the absence of a common digital identity for accessing public services and entitlements, this situation limits the public sector's capacity to deliver customised digital services that respond to user needs.

**Box A.12. Recommendation: Establish key enablers for digital government and digital service delivery**

**In the short term**

- Extend the use of the digital signature to enable the delivery of transactional services through digital channels.

**In the medium term**

- Ensure that identification and authentication mechanisms are supported by mobile devices both for SMS-enabled and mobile internet-based services.

**In the longer term**

- Develop a common digital identity for service users that can be used across the administration.

***Improving access to public services and fostering a more inclusive approach to digital service design and delivery to support more inclusive outcomes***

To increase access to public services, OPTIC has developed a multi-channel service delivery strategy that comprises the Punto GOB, the Government Contact Centre (call centre providing service information) and the Government Portal. At time of writing, there is only one Punto GOB service centre located in Santo Domingo Este. Making this strategy effective requires that the Punto GOB centre relieves the stress produced by the over-centralisation of person-to-person public service provision around the city centre of Santo Domingo, and brings service delivery to remote communities far away from the most relevant economic centres of the country.

There appears to be substantial untapped potential in the use of alternative service delivery channels, such as social media and mobile phones. The impact on service quality can be meaningfully amplified through the development of a structured approach to using social media as a systematic feedback loop that informs the process of continuous service improvement. It can also be used as a channel for service delivery. The biggest potential for leveraging ICT to deliver services may reside in mobile technologies. Contrary to other forms of technological devices, mobile phones are widely available throughout the population, providing a cost-effective channel for reaching the most vulnerable segments of the population. Currently, mobile penetration stands at around 90% (World Bank Group, 2014b), and is expected to reach and surpass 100% in the coming years; with the number of smartphones users growing increasingly fast. These conditions provide an excellent opportunity to explore and develop SMS and App-enabled mobile government services (m-government).

The weakest element of existing policy instruments for digital service delivery concerns the absence of reference to the service design process. In a context where cultural preferences tend to favour person-to-person contact, the uptake of digital services requires not only access to ICT, but a service that is highly convenient and provides content aligned with user needs and priorities. Ensuring that services have a user-friendly design can meaningfully impact the uptake of digital services. The current approach to digital service delivery does not sufficiently leverage open government data and the



opportunity it offers for economic and social innovation and value creation through a user-driven approach.

Despite existing regulations that make feedback loops for public services mandatory, these mechanisms are not sufficiently streamlined and their integration into the continuous improvement process is not clearly defined. The lack of co-ordination of feedback mechanisms has led to a duplication of efforts, including online platforms.

The ability of public institutions to use technology to deliver better services varies significantly throughout the public sector. The institutions responsible for public financial management tend to have achieved a greater maturity in their use of technologies, whereas basic service providers (such as schools, hospitals, social assistance programmes) often lack the capacity to use technology effectively.

**Box A.13. Recommendation: Enhance access to digital services and develop a participatory approach that supports more inclusive outcomes**

**In the short term**

- Incorporate alternative service delivery channels to the multi-channel service delivery strategy.
- Develop a strategy to leverage digital technologies in ways that foster the co-design and co-delivery of public services.

**In the medium term**

- Significantly extend the network of Punto GOB to alleviate service stress in an over-centralised service delivery in Santo Domingo, D.N., and improve access to public services in remote areas.
- Establish an m-Government strategy and programme that seeks to capitalise on the opportunities offered by high mobile uptake in the country for public service delivery.
- Develop training and capacity building exercises for digital service delivery aimed at public institutions.
- Develop an open government data strategy or policy that seeks to promote the opening of government data and promote its re-use for economic and social value creation.

**In the longer term**

- Set up a sound monitoring and evaluation system for service delivery through alternative channels, such as social media and mobile devices.
- Set up a monitoring and evaluation system for open government data that allows the government to follow the opening and re-use of data.
- Create a whole-of-government approach to public service delivery, framed by a service delivery strategy.
- Consolidate and streamline feedback loops for public services and digital service delivery, avoiding the duplication of work and platforms.

### ***Strengthening data governance for public sector intelligence to support inclusive growth***

Digital technologies can help the Dominican Government unleash value data in three ways: 1) better exploiting digitally-enabled data analysis to understand societal problems; 2) embedding data use throughout the policy cycle; and 3) putting in place governance arrangements to ensure responsible and coherent use of data that benefits citizens and strengthens public trust.

For these to be achieved, the Dominican public sector should significantly improve the interoperability and integration of its information systems and data, allowing policy makers to access more reliable and granular data than they do today. The Dominican government could also, in the medium term, pursue big data analytics capabilities to inform policy making and service design and delivery. This could provide powerful insights into the areas of economic activity, healthcare, public transportation and urban planning, disaster and risk management, service design and delivery, and policy making in general; ultimately enhancing public sector performance and productivity.

The building of a data-driven culture in the public sector would benefit from setting up incentives that support evidence-based decision making, as well as from strong knowledge and experience sharing mechanisms for civil servants, which support the capacity-building efforts of public institutions.

#### **Box A.14. Recommendation: Establish robust data governance for public sector intelligence to support policy making and service delivery**

##### **In the short term**

- Ensure the interoperability of public sector information systems and data.
- Perform an assessment of the official statistics and data system of the Dominican Republic to ensure the sound foundations of the data-driven public sector.

##### **In the medium term**

- Develop a strategy to further a data-driven culture in the civil service.
- Clarify the governance of data in the public sector.
- Set up a data squad in central government that is able to provide advice and deploy data analytic capabilities to support public institutions in their digital service delivery and policy making efforts.

##### **In the longer term**

- Develop an overarching data policy for the Dominican public sector.

## **Unleashing the innovative potential of the Dominican public sector to create new and more effective services and drive inclusive growth**

The Dominican Republic faces increasingly complex policy challenges, including poor basic public services, such as healthcare and education, where outcomes are below expectations; acute vulnerability to climate change; accelerated urbanisation with poor urban planning; high insecurity and low trust in crime prevention and prosecution authorities; significant infrastructural needs; persistent poverty; and significant financial constraints and budget rigidities for the public sector. Many of these challenges have proven to be pervasive and have resisted traditional ways of working to find solutions. This stresses the need for the government to become an innovation agent that actively looks for new and more effective ways to tackle these challenges through innovative policy making and service delivery.

The OECD Public Innovation Framework offers a useful model to assess the innovation environment in the Dominican Republic, including 1) the organisation of work; 2) rules and processes; 3) the flow of data, information and knowledge; and 4) the capacity of human resources to drive innovation. As in any whole-of-government strategy, an institutional leadership role is essential, in this case by MAP through its Vice Ministry of Innovation and Modernisation. It is crucial that an overarching strategic approach provides a clear vision for fostering innovation and overcoming common barriers, such as unfavourable regulatory frameworks, poor co-ordination, lack of resources, inadequate leadership championing public sector innovation, short political cycles, hierarchical and siloed ways of working, non-meritocratic bureaucracies, limited skills and use of innovation processes and methods, lack of data, and weak knowledge and innovation networks. The following recommendations may help MAP to develop a forward-looking public sector innovation strategy.

### ***Reinforcing organisational frameworks to facilitate and promote innovation in the public sector***

The organisation of work in the public sector is a key factor that enables innovation, the flow of ideas, and the mix of skillsets required to complete specific tasks or missions. As a number of innovation delivery units start to emerge across public institutions, the Vice Ministry of Innovation and Modernisation is expected to play a leading role in driving innovation in the public sector to support service improvement and the more efficient and effective use of public resources.

However, the Vice Ministry of Innovation and Modernisation is unable to play this role, partly due to the lack of human and financial resources it experiences since its creation in 2012, but mostly because of a lack of a common vision and strategy for promoting innovation in government, which leaves a major gap in the Dominican public sector innovation ecosystem. It is of utmost priority for the MAPM to work on the development of a common vision for an innovative Dominican government, and build institutional capacities to co-ordinate and support, technically or financially, innovation across the public sector.

**Box A.15. Recommendation: Strengthen organisational arrangements to facilitate and promote innovation in the public sector**

**In the short term**

- Assess the current needs and gaps in the current public sector innovation ecosystem and develop an action plan to reinforce the public sector’s ability to innovate.
- Strengthen the operational and analytical capabilities of the Vice Ministry of Innovation and Modernisation.

**In the medium term**

- Make MAP an effective innovation hub for central government by building its ability to co-ordinate and support innovation across the public sector.
- Sensitise and support senior managers in public sector institutions in understanding the role, ways of working and monitoring of innovation delivery units, and supporting their work through effective motivation.

**In the longer term**

- Work with relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system for innovation in the public sector.

***Using an evidence-based approach for red tape reduction to create regulatory frameworks that enable and support public sector innovation***

Unnecessary or obsolete regulation can constrain a civil servant’s ability to innovate and ensure quality and timeliness in service delivery. The literature consistently points to rules and processes that are potential barriers to public sector innovation, for example, excessively regulated service areas, such as medicine or education, could prevent service providers from designing and delivering more tailored services in areas that are linked to society’s general well-being and considered elements of an inclusive society.

However, de Jong (2016) argues that the prevalent perception of rules and processes as barriers to innovation should be balanced with the role of administrative regulation as a way of preserving the continuity of the bureaucracy and ensuring adequate controls and accountability. These controls may be justified and linked to adequate accountability mechanisms and help preserve bureaucratic stability. In this sense, the Dominican bureaucracy should closely monitor interactions between public innovators and administrative regulations, producing quantitative and qualitative data that can support an evidence-based approach to red tape reduction.

**Box A.16. Recommendation: Create a dynamic and evidence-based approach towards red tape reduction for enabling innovative services**

**In the short term**

- Systematically review the stock of regulations and develop tools to enhance its visibility and understanding for public officials and external stakeholders.

**Box A.16. Recommendation: Create a dynamic and evidence-based approach towards red tape reduction for enabling innovative services** *(continued)*

**In the medium term**

- Design, test and develop a monitoring system that helps assess how civil servants seeking to innovate public sector operations interact with existing rules and regulations.

**In the longer term**

- Link the data and information collected through the implementation of such a monitoring system to the government’s regulatory quality and administrative simplification agendas.

***Improving the flow of data, information and knowledge to facilitate the emergence of learning organisations and support the work of innovators***

Data, information and knowledge are essential components of learning and innovative organisations, and the broader public sector innovation environment (OECD, 2015). These elements are also critical for sound policy making and effective service delivery, allowing the public sector to effectively tackle multidimensional issues, such as persisting poverty. Interviews with different public sector innovators in the Dominican Republic revealed that the flow of data and information for innovation is one of the main challenges they must face when trying to understand complex policy or service delivery problems, or designing new approaches to tackle problems.

The lack of knowledge about existing data assets in the public sector further hinders the flow of data across public institutions. Having a clear view of the availability of data, and where it sits in the public administration, can lead to improved decision making and a rationalisation of data collection efforts through greater data sharing. Ultimately, improving the flow of data across the public sector will demand enhanced data governance and data sharing capabilities that can lead to more structured and tailored poverty reduction programmes, as well as a better understanding of private sector competitiveness challenges.

From a public sector innovation perspective, MAP could play a critical role in improving data and knowledge management in the public sector by promoting more cross-agency collaboration and exchange of data, information and knowledge to support better policy design and implementation. In collaboration with other organisations, such as OPTIC, the National Statistics Office and other partners, it can help map existing data assets and identify data needs for public institutions.

The absence of knowledge or innovator networks can present a barrier to public sector innovation in the Dominican Republic. Policy challenges increasingly involve a great number of actors dealing with interdependent issues, with different layers of complexity (Dawes, 2009). In this sense, innovation challenges are also knowledge challenges that should bring together multiple and diverse skillsets, methods and ways of working to collaborate in finding new solutions. The Ministry of Public Administration should foster the creation of networks of innovators to facilitate peer learning and experience sharing among public innovators.

**Box A.17. Recommendation: Enhancing the flow of data, information and knowledge across public institutions to create an environment that is conducive to public sector innovation**

**In the short term**

- Launch a network of public sector innovators to foster peer learning and knowledge sharing across public institutions.
- In collaboration with institutions such as the National Office of Statistics, the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, OPTIC and the National Institute of Public Administration, participate and contribute to the assessment of the National System of Statistics and data governance arrangements, and develop an action plan to improve the production, storage, sharing and processing of data in the public sector.

**In the medium term**

- Raise awareness among political authorities and senior management about the relevance and importance of creating a sound management of data and knowledge throughout the public sector.
- Strengthen the governance of statistics and data in the Dominican public sector.
- Establish a data squad within the Vice Ministry of Innovation and Modernisation that functions as a shared resource of data capabilities.

**In the longer term**

- Develop a knowledge management strategy for central government, enhancing its ability to transform knowledge into innovations.

***Developing a strategic approach to human resource management in the Dominican public sector to stimulate innovation***

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Administration, the Dominican Republic has been able to push forward a reformist agenda since 2008, progressively putting in place a comprehensive legal framework for the civil service that covers administrative career regimes (law 41-08, Decree 524-09 and Presidential Instructive 81-2010 on civil service recruitment), public sector compensation (Law 105-13), and performance assessment frameworks (Decree 525-09). Over this period of time, the number of career civil servants has consistently increased, although not quickly enough, human resource directions have been made mandatory for all public institutions, and their teams have been steadily trained. The Ministry of Public Administration has also set up the Public Employment Management System (SASP), improving its ability to monitor and control the public service (OECD, 2015).

Despite these achievements, the policies aimed at strengthening the civil service have faced some pervasive challenges and resistance as they affect political and financial interests of organised and influential groups. This reality tends to align political incentives with the status quo, and generates mismatches with the existing legal and regulatory framework (OECD, 2015). Law 105-13, which aimed to regulate wages and compensation in the public sector and move to a common pay system, has faced strong resistance against its full implementation, particularly by autonomous agencies of the central government. Similar forms of resistance have emerged against efforts to

rationalise and create a merit-based civil service, hindering the ability of the public sector to plan and manage its workforce and contain the growth of payroll costs (OECD, 2015).

Performance-based management should be extended to leadership positions to ensure a better alignment of their incentives with the successful implementation of policies and effective service delivery under their responsibility. This is a crucial element of human resource management for innovation, as the development of adequate leadership and organisational cultures are an essential motivating factor for public employees to innovate. Senior management is necessary to create a culture of excellence, performance, openness and innovation.

Given the lack of resources, and the basic deficiencies of the public service, the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP) has concentrated its continuous education and training on a number of core management competencies, strategic planning, human resource management and basic training, such as digital literacy. As the public sector professionalises, however, it is important that it keeps its role in the training of civil servants at all levels of responsibility, developing more specialised capacity building exercises in areas such as public service design, data analysis, project management and purpose-oriented stakeholder engagement techniques, as well as training courses that target the development of more senior management skills.

The strengthening of INAP should be complemented with the development of a robust system to determine skill needs and availabilities, which would allow the Dominican public sector to take strategic actions to attract, develop and retain skilled civil servants based on existing assets. It can also help public institutions better determine how to collaborate and mix skills to improve outcomes and solve concrete problems.

It is not clear how existing performance assessment frameworks take into account innovativeness or creativity, or how they impact career perspectives for civil servants. This could diminish the civil service's motivation to innovate. The current revision of performance assessment regulations is an ideal opportunity to further stress the role of innovation in public service quality, strengthening incentives for public innovators.

### **Box A.18. Recommendation: Managing human resources strategically to stimulate innovation**

#### **In the short term**

- As the Dominican government revises its existing performance assessment frameworks, it should focus on strengthening aspects that would allow it to enhance the innovative potential of Dominican civil servants.

#### **In the medium term**

- Strengthen the role of INAP in the training of civil servants, including at the most senior and executive positions.
- Develop strategies and programmes to build a culture of openness and collaboration among civil servants.
- More clearly link national excellence awards, such as the National Award for Service Quality and Promising Practice, to public sector innovation and to communities of innovators in the public sector.

**Box A.18. Recommendation: Managing human resources strategically to stimulate innovation** *(continued)*

- Design a classification and typology of innovation delivery units, the needs they usually respond to, their usual activities and skill needs, expected results and suggested performance assessment tools.

**In the longer term**

- Implement organisational performance assessment frameworks and systems that make political authorities and senior management accountable for the implementation of policies and the delivery of services under their responsibility.
- Develop increasingly sophisticated public employment monitoring mechanisms that allow the Ministry of Public Administration to have a clear view of existing skills within the public administration, and identify skill needs in the public sector.



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