

ProActividad

Creating jobs, preventing HIV and reducing homophobia in a “Tolerance Through Tourism” project in Dominican Republic

Overview

ProActividad is a social enterprise providing out of school and at risk youth with job and business training and experience. In April 2015, it received a CVC/COIN Mini-grant of US\$18,000 to launch an eight-month pilot project called “Tolerance Through Tourism”. It used the Mini-grant to leverage grants from three other donors, adding another US\$60,000 to the project’s budget. Then in August 2015, it received a CVC/COIN Action Research Award of US\$22,000 to provide baseline evidence for future action.

The project took three strategic approaches. The first trained 27 young LGBT leaders who then provided training, mentoring and supervision to 100 LGBT youth in Dominican tourist centres, all with the aim of providing them with knowledge and skills surrounding their sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and employability. The second provided 70 LGBT youth with specialized training (as managers, housekeepers, cooks, guides, and activity animators) and employment in the delivery of villa-based vacations to LGBT tourists. The third built alliances with government, civil society and private enterprise with the aim of increasing understanding and respect for all LGBT, not only tourists and workers in the travel and tourism industry. As a result of the project, LGBT are now working with the Ministry of Tourism to develop a National LGBT Tourism Strategy and are also establishing their own holiday company, All Included Travel.

Travel and tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy. It contributed US\$7.6 trillion (10% of global GDP) to that economy in 2014. Dominican Republic is the fifth most popular tourist destination in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States, Mexico, Canada and Brazil. Travel and tourism accounted for 16% of the Dominican Republic’s GDP in 2014. Travel Agent Central is the world’s leading website informing travel agents about potential destinations for their clients. In December 2015, it posted an article on how to sell LGBT travel to the Caribbean. The article said LGBT spend US\$200 billion on travel every year but prefer destinations where they know they will feel safe and welcome. It listed several safe and welcoming countries in the Caribbean. The Dominican Republic was not one of them but, thanks to ProActividad, the Dominican Republic is on its way to being included on such lists in the future.

About ProActividad

Young leaders develop and test a proposal

ProActividad (“ProActivity”) can trace its roots back to a proposal developed and tested by Dominican youth during a three-year (2003-2006) project financed by Germany. Known as the GTZ Supra Regional Project “Youth and AIDS in the Caribbean” (ProSuRe), it hosted a series of tertulias (informal get-togethers) that gave marginalized youth opportunities to mingle and exchange information, ideas and experiences with officials from the Ministry of Health and other health and social service providers.

Members of Los Muchachos y Muchachas de la Mesa de Atras (Boys and Girls at the Back Table) were among the marginalized youth who attended. They were an informal group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) friends who gathered at the back of a café because they were too young to get into bars. They added that, even if they had been allowed into bars, they might

not have been welcome in each other's preferred bars because they were such a mixed group. Also attending were members of *Jóvenes por Siempre* (Youth Forever), a mutual support group for youth living with HIV (PLWH), and of *Red Nacional de Jóvenes* (National Network of Young People), a country-wide network of youth groups concerned not just about HIV but about young peoples' overall health and well-being.

Members of the three groups seized on the idea of a café/youth centre at which all marginalized youth would feel welcome. They formed a committee which fleshed out a proposal for a centre where youth could just drop in and hang out but also access facilities (e.g., a clinic, a computer room, space for meetings, recreation and performance) and programmes that would provide them with:

- life skills, job training, jobs, and help establishing their own businesses and thus reduce their temptation to engage in behaviour that puts them at high risk of HIV
- training and opportunities to advocate and educate for human rights and the elimination of stigmatization and discrimination against any young people based on their ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender or sexuality
- knowledge and skills that would help them develop healthy and responsible sexual attitudes and behaviour
- access to friendly, non-judgemental health services that would help them conserve or improve their sexual and reproductive health, including through HIV and STI counselling, testing, treatment and care.

During the final months of ProSuRe, the committee tested some elements of their proposal by operating a space in the ProSuRe offices as a café/youth centre on Thursday through Sunday evenings and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

COIN picks up and carries on, launching YurWorld

In early 2008, *El Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral* (COIN) picked up where ProSuRE left off and launched a new COIN project called *Jóvenes de la Vida Real* or Youth in the Real World (YurWorld). With a €60,900 grant from Germany's GIZ-BACKUP Initiative and additional support from UNAIDS and other partners, YurWorld embarked on a ten-month (July 2008 to May 2009) capacity building exercise.

The exercise included a new round of *tertulias* and laid foundations for a range of programmes that became the subject of one of three case studies in a 2012 German Health Practice Collection publication on civil society contributions to health. The publication was cosponsored by German International Development (GIZ), the Global Fund and the International Council on of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO). Independent peer reviewers from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance singled out YurWorld for special mention. They deemed it "a wonderful example of best practice" in strengthening the capacity of marginalized groups to participate in the response to HIV.¹

An evaluation of Phase One (January 2011-March 2013) of the CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Youth Project describes YurWorld's early work in more detail.² It also describes how that work helped

¹ Adams, S. (2012). Reinforcing civil society contributions to health: A publication in the German Health Practice Collection. Eschborn, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

² Adams, S. (2013). CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project: Phase One (January 2011-March 2013). An Independent Evaluation. Santo Domingo, CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project.

lay the foundations of the CVC/COIN Project and how YurWorld became a vehicle for the Marginalized Youth component of the Project in Dominican Republic. Worth mentioning here are:

- **A clinic providing primary health care to marginalized youth.** At its headquarters in Santo Domingo's Alta Gracia district, COIN offers primary health care to LGBT, sex workers and drug users of all ages at its *Clinica de Salud Integral*. Via YurWorld, it opened an extension called *El Centro Salud Joven* (CeSaJo) in the Colonial Zone close to the bars and public spaces favoured by marginalized youth, including LGBT, sex workers and drug users. In 2012, it moved CeSaJo to a nearby neighbourhood where it had enough space for the clinic plus YurWorld's offices and some elements of a youth centre. It did this with licensing and other assistance from the Ministry of Health's Division for Controlling STIs and HIV (DIGECITTS) plus financing from the CVC/COIN Project.

In 2014, COIN drew CeSaJo's functions back into its headquarters for two reasons. First, YurWorld had been unable to attract enough financing to build the multi-function youth centre of its dreams but it had succeeded in establishing programmes that could be delivered through outreach from COIN's headquarters. In addition, the CVC/COIN Project had helped COIN establish a human rights observatory – *El Observatorio de Derechos Humanos para Grupos Vulnerabilizados (ODHGV)* – in its headquarters. The psychologist at *Clinica de Salud Integral* provided counselling to people reporting human rights violations. These same people sometimes also needed medical attention because they were victims of sexual assault and other forms of violence. Thus, it now made sense to have marginalized youth become familiar with COIN's headquarters as a place they could go for help dealing with a range of concerns, including their psychological, medical and human rights problems.

- **Outreach through peer education.** YurWorld helped develop and test CVC/COIN's Facilitator's Manual³ for training peer educators and, subsequently, it helped CVC/COIN train peer educators for *Fundación Red de Jóvenes Unidos de Guachupita* (FURJUG), *Este Amor* and other small CSOs representing and serving marginalized youth and adults across the country.
- **ProActividad.** (See below.)

COIN/YurWorld establishes ProActividad

Elias Ramos was a member of *Los Muchachos y Muchachas de la Mesa de Atras* and of the committee that developed and tested the proposal for the café/youth centre under the umbrella of ProSuRe. He has been YurWorld's Project Manager since its launch in 2008 and explains that, when they established *ProActividad* that same year, they had their original vision of a multi-function café/youth centre with outreach in mind.

ProActividad serves the social enterprise function such a centre would have served. That is, it provides marginalized youth with life skills and with job and business training and experience. The name expresses COIN/YurWorld's belief that the best way of preventing HIV and AIDS among marginalized youth is to take a proactive approach that provides them with all the knowledge, skills, training and opportunities they need to build their self-confidence, to give them hope for their futures and to live healthy, responsible, productive and rewarding lives.

³ Vega, A. (2014). Sex Positive Model for HIV Prevention & Promotion of Sexual Health: Facilitator's Manual. Kingston and Santo Domingo, CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project.

From 2008 to 2015, *ProActividad* was constrained by the fact that many donors are ready to support projects that focus very specifically on sexual and reproductive health, HIV and human rights but few are ready to support projects that broaden their focus and address the full range of factors that impact on the health and well-being of marginalized youth in a country like the Dominican Republic.

Within those constraints, *ProActividad*'s first project was to run a youth café for eight months in 2009-2010 during the off-hours of a commercial café, until the owners closed the café and left the country. Subsequently, *ProActividad* established its expertise in three areas of service provision:

- **Office support**, including multi-lingual secretarial services and translations, teleconferencing, photocopying, communications via fax and courier, and arranging for rental of office space, conference rooms and cubicles/work stations.
- **Event management**, including arranging for venues, catering, lighting and sound systems, other equipment and furnishings, and transportation.
- **Printing, web-hosting and design**, with a Print Shop that offers in-house graphic design and can handle work produced with most graphic design software and, also, trimming, folding, scoring, perforating and shrink-wrapping. Its products include posters, flyers, brochures, stationery with letterhead, business cards, and forms. In addition, it offers web page design, web page hosting, online advertising and computer programming.

Over the past two years, *ProActividad* has been turning its attention to Dominican Republic's booming tourism industry and its potential to provide job and business training and experience and rewarding employment to marginalized youth.

ProActividad proposed a "Tolerance Through Tourism" project. In 2015, COIN/YurWorld arranged to have *ProActividad* registered as a not-for-profit civil society organization that specializes in social enterprise. Its full official name became *ProActividad para la Cooperacion y Desarrollio* (PROACODES) — "ProActivity for Cooperation and Development" — and it applied for and received a CVC/COIN Mini-grant of US\$18,000 for an eight month (April – December 2015) grant for a "Tolerance Through Tourism" project. The essence of their proposal was to take advantage of these facts: the Dominican Republic is the most popular tourist destination in the Caribbean; the country's tourism industry already accounts for a large share of its GDP and has the potential to contribute more; LGBT tourists constitute significant untapped potential; LGBT tourism could increase recognition and respect for the human rights of LGBT and reduce prejudice and discrimination against them; not least, it could create jobs and business opportunities for young LGBT and other marginalized youth.

The next sections of this paper put the "Tolerance Through Tourism" project in context, first, of conditions that impact on marginalized youth in Dominican Republic and, second, of the untapped potential of LGBT tourism to improve conditions. The paper then describes the "Tolerance Through Tourism" project in some detail, concluding with results achieved, lessons learned and the way ahead.

Conditions that impact on marginalized youth in Dominican Republic

Rapid economic growth but need for structural reform

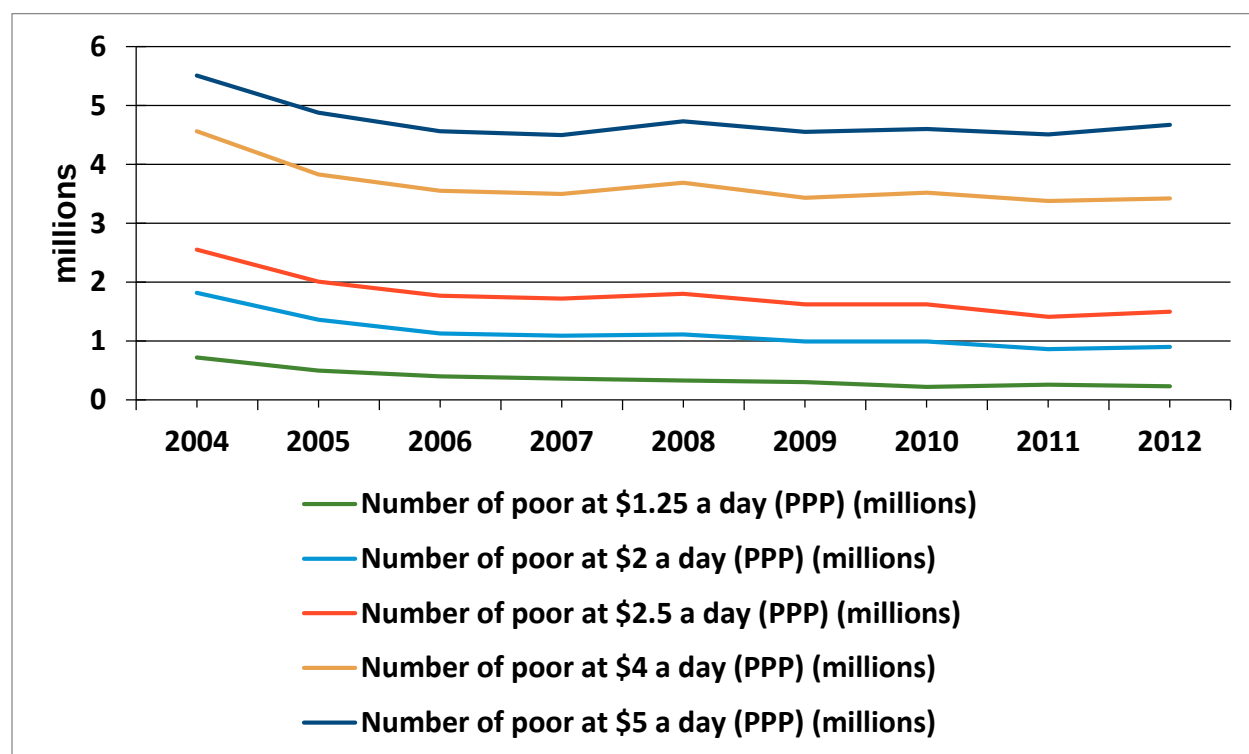
In November 2015, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission spent 10 days in the Dominican Republic assessing the state of its economy. It concluded that it is among the most dynamic of all

economies in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its growth averaged 7% in 2014 and 2015 and was projected to remain around that level in 2016 and to be an average 4.5-5.0% per year going forward.⁴

The IMF concurred with a September 2015 World Bank report that said, notwithstanding the good news about overall economic growth, there was considerable evidence of need for structural reform. Real wages had declined by 27% since 2000 and a large share of the jobs created by economic growth were low-skill and low-wage in the informal sector of the economy. Among the actions needed would be strengthening education and job training and “backward linkages from tourism and export processing zones to domestic manufacturing and agriculture.” In other words, those two sectors should rely less on foreign suppliers and more on Dominican suppliers so they generate jobs for Dominican workers.⁵

Poverty and inequality

The World Bank classifies Dominican Republic as an Upper Middle Income Country and estimates that its Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is the equivalent of US\$6,040 (2014) or, in terms of purchasing power parity, US\$12,600 (2014). Its figures also show that those per capita figures hide gross inequalities and that 35.9% of all Dominicans live below the national poverty line.⁶ Dominican Republic has a population of 10.41 million (2014) and the graph below, drawing from World Bank data and produced by <http://knoema.com>, shows how many Dominicans were living on the equivalent of US\$5 per day or less in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) from 2004 to 2012.



⁴ IMF (2015). IMF Staff Concludes the 2015 Article IV Mission to the Dominican Republic. Press Release No. 15/535, November 23, 2015. Washington DC, International Monetary Fund.

⁵ World Bank (2015). Dominican Republic Overview. Updated September 08, 2015. Washington DC, World Bank.

⁶ <http://data.worldbank.org/country/dominican-republic> accessed on 14 February 2016.

The Social Watch Report 2012 finds that “inequality is the biggest obstacle” to human development in Dominican Republic and that, despite 40 years of rapid economic growth, there has been little social investment. “Since 2004 Dominican Republic has been third from last among the countries of the Americas in terms of relative investment in social policies, and this is reflected mostly in the population’s poor access to health and education services and social assistance.”⁷

Impacts of inequality and lack of human rights protection on marginalized youth

Another paper in this series reports on COIN's *Observatorio de Derechos Humanos para Grupos Vulnerabilizados (ODHGV)* — another beneficiary of CVC/COIN Mini-grants — and discusses in some detail how inequality and lack of human rights protection impact on all the sub-populations most at risk of HIV, including men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers, drug users and youth marginalized by poverty, ethnicity and other factors. Drawn from that paper are the following examples.

El Fundación Red de Jóvenes Unidos de Guachupita (FURJUG) represents and serves marginalized youth in the poorest barrios of Santo Domingo. It reports that youth marginalized by poverty are offered education of such poor quality that they drop out early and do their best to earn money in an economy that offers them few legitimate job opportunities but many temptations to drug dealing, petty crime and transactional and commercial sex. Traditional Catholic values mean they have next to no education in sexual and reproductive health and next to no access to sexual and reproductive health services. Young girls, in particular, are highly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse by older men but they don’t turn to authorities for help because they fear those authorities will subject them to even more sexual exploitation and abuse. Many experience unwanted pregnancy and, having no access to safe and effective abortion, suffer serious lifelong injury or death from attempts at non-medical abortion.

Este Amor promotes and supports HIV and STI prevention among young men who have sex with men (MSM). It reports that young men marginalized by poverty often engage in transactional sex with older men and, even if they say they are heterosexual, become bisexually-behaving. Extreme homophobia among their peers and in their communities makes them extremely secretive and reluctant to take up offers of HIV prevention and testing for fear they will be exposed as MSM. Those who are more visible as suspected MSM, if only because of their manner and appearance, are often expelled from school and harassed by the police and may be arrested and released only after submitting to sexual abuse.

HIV among marginalized youth

According to estimates by UNAIDS, HIV prevalence among Dominican adults (15-49) peaked at more than 2.0% circa 2001 and was 1.0% in 2014.⁸ The annual number of newly diagnosed cases was down sharply, in part because effective treatment reduces viral loads so people living with HIV (PLWH) are less likely to transmit HIV to their children or sexual partners. Dominican Republic’s 2014 country report to UNAIDS says that HIV prevalence has been on a plateau since 2005, partly due to effective treatment and survival of PLWH but also due to continuing high incidence of new cases among MSM, sex workers and drug users.⁹

In 2008, a behavioural and serological survey (BSS) used the snowballing method (e.g., recruiting a few known MSM and asking those MSM to recruit more) to cover more than 1,200 each of MSM, sex workers and drug users. It counted all biological males who have sex with other males as

⁷ Social Watch (2012). “Inequality is the biggest obstacle” in Social Watch Report 2012. Montevideo, Uruguay, Social Watch.

⁸ <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/dominicanrepublic> accessed on 14 February 2016.

⁹ CONAVIHSIDA (2014). Informe Nacional Sobre los Avances. 23 March 2014. Santo Domingo, Consejo Nacional para el VIH y el SIDA.

MSM but, in the analysis, broke them down into sub-categories. It found HIV prevalence of 6.1% among all MSM but 17.2% among those who self-identified as transgender women, 10.8% among those who self-identified as gay and 4.3% among those who self-identified as neither transgender nor gay. In addition, it found HIV prevalence of 4.8% among female sex workers and 8% among drug users.¹⁰

In 2012, a new BSS covered sex workers and MSM in five of the country's 31 provinces, chosen because these five had large cities or were popular tourist destinations.¹¹ In one of the five, the prevalence of active syphilis among MSM had grown from 8.7% in 2008 to 19% in 2012. In another, a popular high-end tourist destination, HIV prevalence was 12.1% among its sex workers and 9.1% among its MSM. Only 27% of its MSM made regular use of condoms during sex.

In 2011, CVC/COIN surveyed 274 marginalized youth in poor barrios of Santo Domingo including 49 gang members, 46 involved in transactional sex, 69 using drugs, 72 having sex with same-sex partners, and 38 living with HIV. Sixty three percent were male and their average age was 20 years.¹² Some of the finding were:

- Their average age of sexual initiation was 13 years. Over the past year, 65% had had casual sexual partners, 51% had had regular sexual partners and 23% had had “outside partners” in addition to their regular partners. The fact that they had outside partners in addition to regular partners meant they were practicing highly risky “multiple concurrency”, which connects people in networks through which HIV spreads rapidly.
- 90% recognized condom use as a means of HIV prevention but only 59% said condoms were easy to find and a significantly smaller percentage of those involved in transactional sex found them easy to find.
- 56% said they had been taught how to use condoms but many were misinformed about how to use them correctly. Some had misinterpreted the message that they should have two condoms on hand for anal sex (in case one breaks) to mean they should wear two condoms at once (which increases the chance of breakage).
- Only 49% said they found it comfortable to use condoms and many said they did not trust condoms.
- 70% had been tested for HIV but, of those, only 64% had been tested within the past year.
- 39% of all marginalized youth had been bullied with name-calling but this was the case with 61% of those having sex with same-sex partners.
- 54% said they had been victims of discrimination in their own families; those most likely to have experienced such discrimination were HIV-positive.

Worth noting, too, are several studies by Mark Padilla, a medical anthropologist, looking at “bisexually-behaving males” in the Caribbean “pleasure industry”, some focussing on popular tourist destinations in the Dominican. Sometimes called “gay for pay”, these are young males who exchange sex for cash or gifts from both males and females and are often found working as hotel,

¹⁰ COPRESIDA (2009). 1er Encuesta de Vigilancia de Comportamiento con Vinculación Serológica en Poblaciones Vulnerables: Gay, Trans y otros Hombres que tienen Sexo con Hombres (GTH), Trabajadoras Sexuales (TRSX) y Usuarios de Drogas (UD), República Dominicana, año 2008. Santo Domingo, Consejo Presidencial del SIDA (COPRESIDA).

¹¹ DIGECITSS (2012). El estado epidémico del VIH en la República Dominicana Informe final del análisis y consulta sobre el tipo de epidemia. Santo Domingo, Dirección General de Control de Infecciones de Transmisión Sexual y SIDA (DIGECITSS)

¹² Hasbún J et al (2012b). Baseline Study on Marginalized Youth in Trinidad, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic: A Report on the Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results. Santo Domingo, CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project, September 2012.

bar, swimming pool or beach staff or else just hanging out in places where they have opportunities to connect with locals or tourists who look like good prospects.¹³

The untapped potential of LGBT tourism to improve conditions

UNWTO promotes inclusive socio-economic development through tourism

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), based in Madrid, is a United Nations agency that promotes responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism guided by the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. The code sees tourism as an opportunity to increase mutual understanding and tolerance among the diverse peoples of this world and to promote adherence to the full range of international conventions on human rights including those against all means of exploiting adults and children for cheap or illicit labour or pleasure.

The UNWTO is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and to reducing poverty through sustainable tourism. The Dominican Republic has been a UNWTO member country since 1975 and is now one of 157 member countries.¹⁴

Economic impact of tourism on Dominican Republic

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), based in London, is the world's leading authority on socio-economic contributions made by travel and tourism. Its 2015 Annual Economic Reports covered 184 countries and the one on Dominican Republic¹⁵ made these observations:

- Travel and tourism contributed US\$7.6 trillion (10% of global Gross Domestic Product) and 277 million jobs (1 in 11 jobs) to the global economy in 2014. It is one of the fastest growing economic sectors; international tourist arrivals surged to almost 1.14 billion in 2014; visitors from emerging economies account for a growing share of arrivals, up from 38% in 2000 to 46% in 2014.
- Direct spending by visitors (e.g., on accommodation, transportation, entertainment and tourist attractions) accounted for 5.0% of Dominican Republic's GDP in 2014. Based on current trends, it is projected to grow but not as rapidly as the country's broader economy so that it will account for 4.5% of GDP in 2025.
- Direct spending plus indirect spending (e.g., by investors) plus induced spending (e.g., by tourism industry workers) added up to total spending on travel and tourism that accounted for 16% of Dominican Republic's GDP in 2014. Based on current trends, total spending is expected to grow but not as rapidly as the country's broader economy so that it will account for 14.5% of GDP in 2025.
- Direct employment in travel and tourism accounted for 188,000 jobs, or 4.4% of all employment in the Dominican Republic in 2014, while total employment related to travel and tourism accounted for 624,000 jobs, or 14.7% of all employment. Based on current trends, total employment in travel and tourism is expected to grow but not as rapidly as all employment so that it will account for 13.7% of all employment in 2025.
- The total contribution of travel and tourism to Dominican Republic's economy was the equivalent of US\$10.1 billion in 2014. This made it the first ranking country in the Caribbean. Cuba was second (US\$8.2 billion) and Jamaica was third (US\$3.9 million).

¹³ A list of Mark Padilla's articles and books on this subject can be found at <https://gss.fiu.edu/people/faculty/mark-padilla/>.

¹⁴ <http://www2.unwto.org> accessed on 15 February 2016.

¹⁵ WTTC (2015). Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015, Dominican Republic. London, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

The WTTC report concurred with the IMF and World Bank reports discussed earlier, suggesting travel and tourism could be contributing even more to the Dominican Republic's economy. It suggested this would require more spending on tourism planning and development, including more education to qualify Dominicans as workers in the whole travel and tourism supply chain.

UNWTO and IGLTA promote LGBT tourism

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) is the leading member-based global organization dedicated to LGBT tourism. It became the first LGBT organization to become an affiliate of the UNWTO and is now one of the UNWTO's 480 affiliate members. Others include the *Asociacion de Hoteles y Turismo de la República Dominicana* (ASONAHORES), Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and Caribbean Office of Trade and Industrial Development Ltd.

In January 2012, UNWTO and IGLTA released the Global Report on LGBT Tourism.¹⁶ It says that LGBT tourism accounts for an estimated US\$140-165 billion share of all spending on global tourism every year. In addition to making significant contributions to national economies it makes significant contributions to reducing homophobia by increasing: exposure to and understanding of LGBT people; recognition that is in the economic interests of countries to become known as places where LGBT people will feel safe and welcome. The report contains a number of case studies showing, for example, how the Governments of Spain and South Africa and the Cities of Barcelona, Madrid and Cape Town all benefit by promoting LGBT tourism and catering to the needs of LGBT tourists.

“Gay Tourism Matters”

The Gay European Tourism Association (GETA) has more than 4500 members with an interest in promoting LGBT tourism and attracting LGBT tourists to their airlines, accommodations, attractions and so on. It maintains a website (www.geta-europe.org) for those purposes and on that website can be found the findings of its 2012 study, *Gay Tourism Matters*. The findings include that 2.6 percent (26 million) of all Western, Central and Eastern Europeans are now openly LGBT. Openly LGBT people more often come from the higher income European countries with better human rights protections and they tend to be well-educated and to have well-paying jobs. This means they account for a disproportionate share of all European spending on tourism. Their spending on tourism is worth €50 billion per year.

The global travel industry recognizes the potential of LGBT tourism

Travel Agent Central (www.travelagentcentral.com) is the world's leading website designed to inform travel agents about potential destinations for their clients. On 21 December 2015, it posted an article, “How to Sell LGBT Travel to the Caribbean.” The article estimates that LGBT singles, couples and groups of friends spend as much as US\$200 billion per year on travel and points out that, on average, LGBT people probably spend more than others tourists because their disposable income is higher and many travel without children. Travel agents should know, however, that growing numbers of LGBT do have children so agents should ask. The article says that LGBT may not boycott homophobic countries but, upper-most on the minds of many of them when they book travel is that they will feel safe and welcome in their chosen destinations. It lists a number of safe and welcoming countries in the Caribbean but Dominican Republic is not one of them. It also lists a number of suitable hotels and resorts but none of them is in Dominican Republic.

¹⁶ UNWTO (2012). Global Report on LGBT Tourism. Madrid, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

A growing number of major international corporations within and outside the travel and tourism industry take a pro-LGBT approach in their employment policies, their marketing and their customer/client relations. This is made evident by the growing numbers that sign up as partners of the IGLTA (www.iglta.org/partners) and as members of the American National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce or NGLCC (<https://nglcc.org/corporate-partners>). When it comes to recognizing not only that LGBT have fundamental human rights but that they can make significant contributions to socio-economic development, the pro-LGBT approach is where the future lies.

United States has millions of potential LGBT visitors to Dominican Republic

Based on the annual number of tourist arrivals in 2013, the top five tourist destinations in North, Central and South America and the Caribbean are: 1) United States, 69.8 million; 2) Mexico, 24.2 million; 3) Canada, 16.6 million; 4) Brazil, 5.8 million, and 6) Dominican Republic, 4.7 million. In Dominican Republic, two-thirds of all tourism receipts are from nearby United States.¹⁷ The US has millions of potential LGBT visitors who might add to those receipts if they were made to feel safe and welcome.

ProActividad's "Tolerance Through Tourism" project

Getting started

On 18 and 19 September 2014, representatives from the travel industry in the United States met with a group of Caribbean LGBT human rights activists to look at ways in which they could collaborate to support each other's work.¹⁸ The meeting discussed how tourism, in general, offers opportunities for the personal growth of both tourists and residents of host countries and how it contributes to mutual understanding and tolerance of the full diversity of human experience. It discussed, in particular, how LGBT tourism could contribute to understanding and tolerance of LGBT residents of the Caribbean and how it could provide them with jobs and business opportunities.

The meeting considered the kind of evidence presented earlier in this paper, including that spending by LGBT accounts for a disproportionate share of all spending on tourism and may be worth as much as US\$200 billion per year. It concluded that the Dominican Republic would be the best place for a pilot project forging an alliance among public, private and civil society stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry and aiming to promote LGBT tourism and support LGBT residents of the host country. Factors that favoured the Dominican Republic included:

1. It has no laws against male-male sex and no laws restricting entry of LGBT people to the country. Instead, it has a General Youth Law that specifically prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. By contrast, 11 English-speaking Caribbean countries have retained out-dated anti-buggery laws from the colonial era and some have added laws barring entry by LGBT people.
2. It already has well established and visible LGBT communities in Santo Domingo, the Provinces of Santiago, Puerto Plata and Higüey and in most of its popular tourist areas. Santo Domingo's Colonial Zone is well known to be "gay friendly" and it has numerous businesses catering to LGBT people. Other Dominican cities and tourist resorts also have LGBT-owned and LGBT-friendly businesses, including hotels.

¹⁷ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL> and <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dr.html>, accessed 15 February 2016.

¹⁸ The Travel industry and the Caribbean LGBT Community: First Steps (Meeting Report)

3. In the Dominican Republic, public opinion towards LGBT persons has been improving rapidly in recent years. In 2004, a survey for the *Fundació Global Democràcia y Desarillo* (FUNGLODE) found that 57.8% of Dominicans thought gay people should not be allowed to advocate for their rights.¹⁹ Just nine years later in 2013, a Newlink survey found that 55% of Dominicans are in favour of civil unions for LGBT people.²⁰ In 2014, another Newlink survey found 62.2% of Dominicans would accept a gay son or daughter.²¹ The improvement in public attitudes towards LGBT is made evident by the fact that the residents of Santo Domingo's inner city neighbourhoods come out in droves to support the annual Gay Pride parade as it passes through their streets.
4. COIN/YurWorld's ProActividad already exists as a social enterprise that could implement the pilot project.
5. COIN has a history of good relations with the country's government and a number of its ministries and agencies. This bodes well for good relations with government ministries and agencies operating in the travel and tourism sector.
6. The Dominican Republic has a well-developed LGBT movement that includes:
 - a. Independent activists in media, politics, law and health
 - b. Men's groups organized around LGBT health and HIV
 - c. Women's groups organized around feminism, women's rights and gender issues
 - d. *Iglesia de la Trinidad* (www.icmsantodomingo.com), an LGBT church affiliated with Metropolitan Community Churches worldwide.

The conclusion that the Dominican Republic would be the best place for a pilot project and the identification of ProActividad as the best vehicle for the project resulted in OutThink Partners' agreement to donate the time and expertise of two leading LGBT travel and tourism consultants, Charlie Rounds and Steve Roth. Their knowledge and connections to the LGBT travel industry informed ProActividad's decision to take two leaps forward into the travel and tourism industry. First, it applied for ProActividad's registration as ProActividad para la Cooperación y Desarrollo (PROACODES), an independent not-for-profit civil society organization that specializes in social enterprise. Second, it applied for a CVC/COIN Mini-grant of US\$18,000 to finance an eight month project called "Tolerance Through Tourism". With registration and grant in hand, ProActividad launched the eight month pilot project in April 2015.

Doing a situation analysis

ProActividad had been part of COIN/YurWorld since 2008 and COIN/YurWorld had been playing a central role in implementing the CVC/COIN Project in Dominican Republic since 2011. This meant the *ProActividad* team had most of the knowledge, experience and access to evidence they needed to do the situation analysis they summarized in their proposal for the CVC/COIN Mini-grant.

In addition to mentioning some of the evidence described earlier in this paper. The situation analysis mentioned the preliminary findings of a 2014 World Bank Study on the economic costs

¹⁹ Cabral C. D. et al (2006). Ciudadanía y democracia en la República Dominicana: informe sobre la Encuesta de Opinión Pública Nacional. Ediciones FUNGLODE. Available at: <http://editorialfunglode.com/index.php/libros/ciudadani-a-y-democracia-en-la-republica-dominicana-informe-sobre-la-encuesta-de-opinion-pu-blica-nacional-detail>.

²⁰ El Día (2013). La mayoría de los dominicanos aprueba la unión homosexual. 17 April 2013. Available at: <http://eldia.com.do/la-mayoria-de-los-dominicanos-aprueba-la-union-homosexual>

²¹ New Link (2014). Encuesta sobre la discriminación en la sociedad. 31 March 2014. <http://www.buenastareas.com/ensayos/La-Omosexualidad/55366953.html>

of homophobia and exclusion of LGBT in India. Those findings included that the costs in lost productivity are impossible to estimate accurately but that anywhere from 0.6% to 3.8% of all Indians are LGBT and the cost in lost productivity due to homophobia and exclusion is anywhere from US\$244 million (0.1% of GDP) to US\$7.7 billion (1.7% of GDP) per year. The added costs to the health care system are from US\$712 million to US\$23.1 billion per year due to higher rates of HIV, depression and suicide among LGBT because they are subject to stigmatization and discrimination.²²

The situation analysis also mentioned studies done by the Williams Institute, University of California School of Law, finding that policies to include LGBT can significantly increase GDP at local, state and national levels.²³

Defining strategies

ProActividad established three strategies for the “Tolerance Through Tourism” project:

Address the structural drivers of the HIV epidemic among Dominican LGBT

This strategy is rooted in a vision inspired by *Los Muchachos y Muchachas de la Mesa de Atras* (Boys and Girls at the Back Table). In 2008, this vision was embraced by COIN/YurWorld and inspired its decision to launch *ProActividad*. The vision expresses belief that the best way of preventing HIV and AIDS among young LGBT and other marginalized youth is to take a proactive approach that provides them with all the knowledge, skills, training and opportunities they need to build their self-confidence, to give them hope for their futures and to live healthy, responsible, productive and rewarding lives. It recognizes that providing them with specific HIV-related knowledge, skills and supplies (e.g., condoms and water-based lubricants) plus access to friendly, non-judgemental health services is essential but, nonetheless, far from sufficient.

Advance LGBT-inclusive economic development that empowers LGBT to reach their full potential

This strategy expresses commitment to a vision of the Dominican Republic as a country where LGBT residents can live with dignity and free from poverty, stigmatization, discrimination and violence. It recognizes that, to do so, they need life skills, job and business management training, and jobs and businesses that can sustain full and rewarding lives.

Promote a more inclusive, just and tolerant Dominican Republic

This strategy is informed by the Global Report on LGBT Tourism (2012), produced jointly by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA). It says that LGBT tourism reduces homophobia by increasing exposure to and understanding of LGBT people from around the world and, also, by increasing recognition that it is in the economic interests of a country to become known as one where LGBT people feel safe and welcome. The strategy aims to turn the Dominican Republic into such a country.

Planning four streams of activity in four popular tourist destinations

ProActividad’s proposal for its CVC/COIN Mini-grant lays out four streams of activity to take place mainly in four of the country’s most popular tourist regions: 1) Distrito Nacional/Santo Domingo

²² www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/SAR/economic-costs-homophobia-lgbt-exclusion-india.pdf accessed on 17 February 2016.

²³ <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu> accessed on 17 February 2016.

Province on the central south coast, containing the oldest city in the Americas and one famous for its historic sites, night life and proximity to beach resorts; 2) San Pedro de Macoris, La Romano and La Altagracia Provinces in the country's southeast, famous for their beach resorts; 3) Puerto Plata and Samana Provinces on the country's north coast, also famous for their beach resorts; 4) La Vega Province in the interior, popular with eco-tourists who attracted to its historic towns, parks, mountains, cloud forests and waterfalls. The four streams of activity are:

Activity Stream 1: promoting sexual health, life skills and employability

This stream involved designing and delivering a programme aiming to prevent HIV and STIs among LGBT residents of popular tourist destinations and, also, to provide them with the life skills and attitudes that would equip them for jobs in local tourism. Planned activities (and specific targets, where mentioned in the proposal) included:

- In each of the four tourist regions, recruiting and training a Regional Coordinator (aka LGBT peer leaders) and 8 Promotors (aka LGBT peer educators) in a three day training workshop [*Targets: 4 workshops, 4 trained Regional Coordinators, 48 trained promotors*]
- In each of the four regions, having the Regional Coordinator and Promotors deliver the programme to individuals and, twice per month, to groups [*Targets: 48 group interventions and 500 individual interventions*]
- In each of the four regions, having a mobile clinic available twice per month to ensure ready access to LGBT-friendly HIV and STI counselling, testing and treatment [*Targets: 8 mobile clinic visits, 60 LGBT served*]
- Providing referral and accompaniment to health care centres whenever appropriate [*Targets: 20 LGBT served, a total of 30 LGBT know their HIV-status after returning to get their test results at mobile clinics or health care centres*]

Activity Stream 2: forging relations between LGBT and tourism businesses

This stream aimed to identify LGBT businesses or potentially LGBT-friendly businesses that cater to tourists (hotels, restaurants, tour providers, etc.) with a view to exploring opportunities for marketing to LGBT tourists, employment of LGBT people and promotion of tolerance and respect for all LGBT people, whether locals or visitors. Planned activities included:

- Mapping the four regions, noting names and locations and contact details of LGBT businesses and LGBT-friendly businesses
- Sharing results of the mapping with LGBT and businesses on the map and discussing the potential for mutually beneficial collaboration
- Establishing or strengthening networks connecting LGBT and businesses on the map
- Organizing joint LGBT/business events to build their capacity for mutually beneficial collaboration
- Support a global initiative of National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce in the United States and help them establish a Dominican affiliate (now established and called *Cámara de Comercio LGBT de la Republica Dominicana*).

Activity Stream 3: fostering LGBT jobs and businesses in travel and tourism

This stream aimed to provide training and find employment for LGBT people in their local travel and tourism industries and to help them establish their own local businesses. Planned activities included:

- Facilitating two one-day training workshops in each of the four regions with results to include:
 - Identifying tourist attractions and activities of potential interest to LGBT tourists
 - Preparing excursion packages for consideration by tour operators
 - Training local LGBT in budgeting, marketing and sale of excursion packages
 - Training local LGBT in event planning, organizing, managing and logistics
[Targets: 8 workshops, 80 LGBT trained]
- Organizing “Fam” (familiarization) visits by tourism reporters and operators from the United States *[Target: 2 “Fam” visits, 30 reporters and operators familiarized]*

Activity Stream 4: promoting the benefits of LGBT tourism and, therefore, of making the Dominican Republic and its tourist destinations safe and welcoming places for all LGBT, including visitors and locals

This stream aimed to convince the Dominican media, general public, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, tourism police (*Cuerpo Especializado Seguridad Turistica* or CESTUR), and operators in the Dominican travel and tourism industry (airlines, hotels, etc.) that it was in everyone’s best interests to make the country safe and welcoming and to market Dominican tourist destinations to potential LGBT visitors from abroad. Planned activities included:

- In each of the four regions, workshops for tourism police sensitizing them to human rights and other issues of concern to LGBT people *[Targets: 4 workshops, 40 police officers sensitized]*
- In Puerto Plata and Punta Cana (La Altagracia), hold meetings with travel and tourism businesses to discuss the potential offered by LGBT tourism
- Two workshops for Dominican media on the potential of LGBT tourism and economic advantages of making the country safe and welcoming
- Training for tourism industry personnel (provided via a number of the other activities mentioned) on how to make their businesses LGBT-friendly *[Target: 60 tourism personnel trained]*
- Developing a website selling Dominican LGBT tourism to potential LGBT tourists and travel agents
- Developing a tourism initiative that brings Dominican LGBT together with their family and friends to collaborate on LGBT tourism.

[Building a network of international, national and local partners](#)

ProActividad was still operating under the umbrella of COIN/YurWorld when its representatives attended the September 2014 meeting that lead to decisions to have it registered as an independent social enterprise and to apply for a CVC/COIN Mini-grant. It emerged from that meeting with some key international partners lined up, including the National Gay and Lesbian

Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) of the United States and OutThink Partners, specialists in strategic communities and advocacy for LGBT and in LGBT tourism.

From the outset, those early partners donated in-kind and/or financial support to the project and used their networks of contacts to win in-kind and/or financial support from a number of other international and national partners. Contributions of partners included:

- **OutThink Partners** donated time of two senior consultants who provided technical assistance, contacts and introductions throughout.
- **The United States Embassy in Dominican Republic**, via openly gay Ambassador James "Wally" Brewster Jr. and his husband Bob Satawake, hosted a welcome reception for the project team and provided technical assistance and other support at strategic moments.
- **The Global Fund against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**, via the PANCAP/CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project, was the source of the CVC/COIN Mini-grant of US\$18,000 that got the project started in April 2015. In August 2015, it became the source of a CVC/COIN Action Research Award of US\$22,000 to finance research providing baseline evidence for future work.
- **The Robert Carr Network Fund (RCNF)** provided a grant of US\$25,000. The CVC/COIN Mini-grant and the RCNF grant financed most of the sexual and reproductive health (SHR) and HIV-related work plus a large share of the LGBT capacity-building and empowerment work.
- **The Arcus Foundation, via the Kevin J. Mossier Foundation**, provided a grant of US\$30,000 which financed much of the work more specifically related to developing the capacity of LGBT to promote LGBT tourism and participate in that industry as employees or tourism operators.
- **Marriott Hotels Santo Domingo** proved to be a key partner. It provided a US\$5,000 grant plus an in-hotel programme that gave LGBT hands-on training in hospitality and that provided. It also donated accommodation, food and beverage services to related events.
- **Westin Hotels & Resorts, Paradisus Resorts and Accor Hotels** provided similar support at their various locations in Santo Domingo and in tourist resorts.
- **Jet Blue** donated airline tickets for an international event.
- **The NGLCC and Human Rights First**²⁴ provided technical and financial assistance to support LGBT tourism advocacy and related activities.
- **The Ministry of Tourism** provided bus transportation and promotional material and engaged with other project participants to develop a National LGBT Tourism Strategy.
- **Ministry of Culture and Cuerpo Especializado Seguridad Turistica (CESTUR)** were hosts of and participants in a number of the project's events.

Many other local tourism operators, besides the major hotel chains and the airline already mentioned, participated in the project. One result was establishment of *Cámara de Comercio*

²⁴ See related Human Rights First article and video at www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/HRFReportLGBTinDR.pdf and www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/voices-equality-dr-john-waters

LGBT de la Republica Dominicana, a new affiliate of the NGLCC. Another was the more active membership of *Asociacion de Hoteles y Turismo de la República Dominicana* (ASONAHORES) the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA).

Implementing the plan

ProActividad's monthly and end-of-project reports to the CVC/COIN Project Unit show that it carried through with all activities in all activity streams, but made modifications to their planned length and content. The modifications were mostly in the direction of extending length and enriching content, thanks to the project's success at accumulating in-kind and financial support from partners. The streams are best conceptualized as flowing in parallel but some activities fit equally well into two or more streams. Some of the activities were:

- From June through November 2015, a series of events introduced the project to government officials, travel and tourism operators, LGBT leaders and others. The United States Embassy and OutThink Partners played key roles and the events resulted in the partnerships with the Marriott, Westin, Paradisus, Accor, and Jet Blue mentioned earlier. They also secured the collaboration of the National AIDS Programme (CONAVIHSIDA) and Ministry of Tourism. Events included:
 - Presentation of the project to potential partners at an event in Santo Domingo where United States Ambassador James “Wally” Brewster delivered the key-note address.
 - A meeting at the Ministry of Tourism attended by the Ambassador's husband Bob Satawake, the Minister of Tourism and the Executive Director of CONAVIHSIDA.
 - Five technical meetings with Ministry of Tourism staff, with numerous telephone consultations between meetings.
 - A meeting with the Director of the *Asociacion de Hoteles y Turismo de la República Dominicana* (ASONAHORES) and the Deputy Minister of Tourism to inform ASONAHORES about the project and help secure the collaboration of its members. This was followed by a number of meetings with those members in different regions.
 - A meeting in Punta Cana (La Altagracia Province) where Ambassador Brewster again gave the key-note address. The costs were covered by Westin Hotels and Resorts and attendees included the Executive Director of ASONAHORES and some high profile players in the travel and tourism industry. A senior consultant from OutThink Partners gave a presentation on the benefits of LGBT tourism and of increased competition for such tourism due to the thawing of relations between the United States and Cuba.
 - Workshops for staff at two Marriott hotels and Santo Domingo on how to make LGBT tourists feel safe and welcome. These helped forge a relationship with Marriott that led to the generous financial and in-kind donations mentioned earlier and later.
- In June 2015, the project engaged with more than 30 LGBT in Puerto Plata, La Romana/La Altagracia and La Vega and had them map LGBT/potentially LGBT-friendly travel and tourism businesses.
- With mapping done in La Vega, the project facilitated a three-day workshop/Tourism Forum to discuss the results in that Province. Participants included 20 LGBT from three

towns (La Vega, Jarabacoa and Santiago) and they chose their Regional Coordinator, identified potential Promotors and sketched out a draft plan for LGBT tourism.

- Also in June, the project hosted a Fam (familiarization) tour by 10 LGBT prominent travel journalists and bloggers, 5 from the United States and 5 from Latin America. The tour had these elements:
 - Marriott Hotels picked up much of the cost of the tour and it started with a reception at one of their hotels in Santo Domingo.
 - On the second day, the tour visited the mountain town of Jarabacoa in La Vega Province where local LGBT had organized a number of activities including white water rafting, paragliding, horse riding, a guided walking tour, and a reception at the end of the day.
 - On the third day, Ambassador Brewster, his husband Bob Satawake and the Executive Director of CONAVIHSIDA were among the participants in round table discussion on LGBT tourism. The discussion was followed by a lunch hosted by the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) of the United States, who (with funding from USAID) were working to establish an affiliate organization in Dominican Republic. The day ended with a reception in the Ambassador's residence during which LGBT Dominicans spoke of how the "Tolerance Through Tourism" project was impacting on their lives.
 - On the fourth day, the tour visited the Provinces of La Romana and San Pedro de Macoris where LGBT youth trained and supported by the project acted as tour guides and animators and prepared and served a lunch at a seaside villa.
- In August 2015, the project facilitated a four-day workshop to train 15 LGBT as Regional Coordinators and Promotors.
- The project facilitated mapping in La Romana/La Altagracia and that region's first three-day workshop/Tourism Forum.
- The project facilitated courses for a total of 27 LGBT participants in housekeeping and food preparation/cookery in two towns in La Vega Province, Juan Dollo and Jarabacoa. The food preparation/cookery courses were conducted by two renowned Dominican chefs.
- The project followed the La Vega courses with an event for travel agents and tour operators from the United States. This was an opportunity to get the American's feedback on La Vega's draft plan and to revise it accordingly.
- In September 2015, the project facilitated a three-day course in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and sexual diversity. Held in Santo Domingo and attended by 19 Regional Coordinators and Promotors, the course paid special attention to factors that make LGBT in tourism regions particularly vulnerable to behaviour that puts them at risk of HIV and STIs.
- Also in September, *ProActividad* began working with the *Observatorio de Derechos Humanos para Grupos Vulnerabilizados* (ODHGV) to train tourism police (CESTUR) officers. (Another publication in this series describes the work down by ODHGV, which was also supported by the CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project.)
- In October 2015, the project hosted a second Fam (familiarization) tour, this one by 8 representatives from by 8 American travel and holiday companies: Travel Leaders, the

leading network of travel agents in the United States; Carson Wagonlit, a leader in business travel; Cruise Planners; MLT Vacations; Hans Ebsten; Alyson Adventures, OutWest; Global Adventures. The tour had these elements:

- Three days in Punta Cana courtesy of the Westin Hotels & Resorts and other hotels. As on the June Fam tour, LGTY youth trained and supported by the project acted as tour guides and animators and prepared and served a lunch at a seaside villa.
- Three days in Santo Domingo courtesy of Accor Hotels' Hostal Nicolas de Ovando. The hotel provided a gala lunch which was attended by Ambassador Brewster and was an occasion to talk about the potential for LGBT tourism in Dominican Republic and to strengthen the relationship between *ProActividad* the *Asociacion de Hoteles y Turismo de la República Dominicana* (ASONAHORES) and its members.
- In November and December 2015, Regional Coordinators and Promoters in Puerto Plata, Samana and La Vega began rolling out peer education, monitoring and supervision that, in those two months, reached 120 young LGBT in individual and group interventions. They left 30 of these young LGBT with skills in outreach to and animation of small groups.

Achieving results

ProActividad's end of project report for the "Tolerance Through Tourism" project identifies these achievements:

- With the US\$18,000, leveraging an additional US\$60,000 in financial support plus generous in-kind support from the United States Embassy and major players in the international and local travel and tourism industries.
- Mapping travel and tourism businesses in four regions containing the country's most popular tourist destinations and developing plans for local LGBT collaboration with those businesses.
- Training 27 LGBT as Regional Coordinators and Promoters and having them provide training, mentoring and supervision to 100 other LGBT who participated in the project.
- Courtesy of Marriott Hotels, providing residential training in a Marriott hotel to 19 young LGBT.
- Providing a total of 70 LGBT with life skills and employability training and also with specific training as managers, housekeepers, cooks, tour guides, and animators.
- Linking with other projects and programmes supported by the CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project to deliver sexual and reproductive rights (SHRH) education plus HIV and STI testing and treatment to 120 young LGBT in tourism regions.
- Establishing an LGBT holiday company called All Included Travel with its own website (www.lgbttourismdr.com) and providing villa-based vacations to LGBT from abroad.
- Providing familiarization tours to 18 international travel journalists, bloggers and travel company operators and using these tours not only as opportunities to promote LGBT tourism to the Dominican Republic but to get input on how best to attract LGBT tourism.

- Sensitizing more than 100 executives, employees in the travel and tourism, tourism police and others in ways of making the country a safe and welcoming destination for LGBT tourists.
- Establishing a new partnership between LGBT and the Ministry of Tourism, partnership that is now developing a National LGBT Tourism Strategy.
- Helping establish the *Cámara de Comercio LGBT de la Republica Dominicana*, a new affiliate of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) in the United States; helping make the *Asociacion de Hoteles y Turismo de la República Dominicana* (ASONAHORES) a stronger, more active member of the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA); establishing a network linking travel and tourism operators to LGBT groups for future communications and collaboration.
- Establishing a new partnership between LGBT and the Ministry of Tourism, partnership that is now developing a National LGBT Tourism Strategy.

National and international media comment

ProActividad has been saving articles from the online sites of international and national media on LGBT tourism and the “Tolerance Through Tourism” project. Here is a sample of what these articles have had to say:

El Dinero is a Dominican economic and financial newsletter. On 9 February 2015 it published an article on the 2015 International Tourism Fair in Spain. It said participants presented evidence that LGBT tourism accounts for 10% of the global volume of tourists but 15-16% of the global expenditure by tourists. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimate that LGBT tourism is growing at a rate of 10.3% per year, compared to 3.8% per year for tourism in general. The article’s author had asked the Executive Vice President of the *Asociacion de Hoteles y Turismo de la República Dominicana* (ASONAHORES) to comment and he replied that the possibility of promoting LGBT tourism to the Dominican Republic is far away because of an entrenched culture that resists.²⁵

Hosteltur is a Spanish trade publication for the travel and tourism industry. On 25 February 2015, it published an article quoting James “Wally” Brewster, the American Ambassador to Dominican Republic, as saying that promoting LGBT tourism to the Dominican Republic is difficult due to lack of enthusiasm from the country’s Ministry of Tourism.²⁶

El Nacional and *7 Días* are popular Dominican newspapers. From 15 February to 13 June, they published a series of articles reporting on controversy surrounding the articles mentioned above. Some of the articles seemed to say that the country was not as homophobic as the two articles seemed to suggest, while other articles seemed to agree either with people who were against or people who were for greater tolerance of LGBT and the promotion of LGBT tourism.

The Washington Blade is the oldest LGBT newspaper in the United States. On 20 Jun 2015, it published an article telling the story of Guerrero, a 22 year old cross-dressing man who lived in the town of La Vega, La Vega Province. Guerrero said he had been an LGBT activist for five years and that, during that time, he had witnessed “something powerful” in terms of people’s increased understanding and tolerance. LGBT people now felt comfortable going to any nearby hospital and that was far from the case a few years ago. He is now involved in the “Tolerance Through Tourism” project and looks forward to seeing La Vega becoming an even more beautiful place than it

²⁵ www.eldinero.com.do/8944/el-turismo-gay-representa-el-16--gasto-total-del-sector-en-el-mundo/

²⁶ http://www.hosteltur.com.do/122060_embajada-eeuu-dice-no-apoyara-turismo-dominicano-si-no-se-abre-al-mercado-lgtb.html

already is. He said there is still homophobia and violence against LGBT but the American Ambassador was helping to change attitudes and he, Guerrero, was optimistic about the future.²⁷

The Blade published another article on 23 June 2015. It spoke of the American Ambassador and of some of the criticism he had been taking from prominent figures in the Dominican Republic but also of the fact so many Dominicans were apologizing for what these figures had said. It quoted the Ambassador's husband, Bob Satawake, as saying the haters had done everyone a favour by putting the conversation on newspapers' front pages and prompting reactions that proved Dominican culture is not one of hatred at all.²⁸

Sin Etiquetas is a Peruvian LGBT newspaper. On 19 June 2015, it published an article on the "Tolerance Through Tourism" project and an associated tour for international LGBT journalists and bloggers. It said they had learned that there was far more to the Dominican Republic than just Punta Cana, the famous beach resort. It spoke of one town in La Vega Province as "paradise" and other towns as places where LGBT people can feel free in an idyllic world where love has no labels. It quoted an LGBT hair dresser confirming there are "bubbles" in the country where LGBT can feel like that and saying he thinks the bubbles will multiply and then multiply some more.²⁹

Another article in *Sin Etiquetas* on the same day spoke of the American Ambassador and his husband and how their participation in events associated with the "Tolerance Through Tourism" was of tremendous importance to all LGBT people. The article expressed some scepticism about the Dominican government's sympathy for LGBT and their issues but also commented that the Executive Director of the National HIV and AIDS Council (CONAVIHSIDA) had stood beside the Ambassador and his husband for a photo and had said, "They are an example of how to be friendly, warm and decent. The Ambassador is the best we've had. He is a man who feels part of the country and who wants to help us."³⁰

Lessons learned

ProActividad's end of project report highlights two lessons:

The global tourism industry offers unique opportunities to advance LGBT rights

Since the 1970s, growing numbers of major international corporations and smaller national and local businesses have been recognizing that LGBT people constitute both a significant market for their products and services and a significant source of good employees. In addition, they have been recognizing that pro-LGBT marketing and employment policies can earn the good will of many potential non-LGBT customers and employees. Their marketing strategies and messages seldom advocate for LGBT rights directly but, instead, simply illustrate recognition and respect for those rights in action. These more subtle approaches to LGBT rights can be equally effective and sometimes even more effective than direct LGBT human rights activism. The global tourism industry offers unique opportunities for these more subtle approaches but also unique challenges. Part of making sure that destinations are safe and welcoming for LGBT tourists is making sure tourists are not exposed to high risk of contracting HIV and STIs.

Opposition can be countered with positive messages about LGBT tourism

Some religious organizations have long histories of opposition to all manner of human progress but some also have long histories of being in the vanguard of human

²⁷ www.washingtonblade.com/2015/06/20/increased-tourism-good-for-lgbt-dominicans/

²⁸ www.washingtonblade.com/2015/06/23/gay-u-s-ambassador-husband-prioritize-human-rights/

²⁹ <http://sinetiquetas.org/2015/06/19/turismo-lgbt-5-razones-para-conocer-este-paraiso-secreto-de-republica-dominicana>

³⁰ <http://sinetiquetas.org/2015/06/19/el-embajador-de-ee-uu-en-republica-dominicana-y-la-lucha-por-la-causa-gay/>

progress. *ProActividad* did not anticipate the lengths to which some religious groups went to scare-monger about LGBT tourism when it first began publicizing the “Tolerance Through Tourism”. The media was happy to carry their stories at the outset but became much less so as the project and its many prominent partners (including major international hotel and resort groups, with hotels and resorts in Dominican Republic) got out positive messages about the economic potential of LGBT tourism.

Looking ahead

ProActividad was already well-established as a successful social enterprise when, in 2015, it was registered as an independent not-for-profit organization and applied for a CVC/COIN Mini-grant to kick off the “Tolerance Through Tourism” project. It was intended as a pilot project. It has been highly successful as such and has laid the foundations on which it can scale up, strengthen and add to the ways it supports LGBTI engagement as employees and business owners in Dominican Republic’s tourism industry and the ways it makes the country safer and more welcoming for all LGBT, both visitors and locals.

Worth noting is that potential LGBT visitors to the Dominican Republic are as socio-economically diverse as the larger populations of their homelands and have varying travel needs and tastes. Some have children. Some are back-packers with affordability upper-most on their minds. Some are comfortably well off and looking for luxurious vacations where they can indulge their tastes for high culture and the best of local cuisine. Some may just want places to unwind, relax and sleep at the end of their days. Others may want organized and animated events. *ProActividad* plans to continue increasing its knowledge of the global LGBT tourism market and identifying niches of that market that LGBT-owned businesses might best serve, as well as identifying ways LGBT people can participate in and benefit from the broader LGBT and non-LGBT tourism markets. It now has a well-established network of partners who can assist it in these endeavours. In addition, it has developed a model from which LGBT in other Caribbean countries could well learn.

The CVC/COIN Profiles of Good Practice Collection

All projects covered in this series of CVC/COIN Profiles of Good Practice were supported by the CVC/COIN Vulnerabilised Groups Project, a component of the PANCAP Round 9 Global Fund Project (January 2011-March 2016). They include a variety of projects from the six countries covered by the CVC/COIN Project and at least one demonstrating an effective approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) among each of the Project's six target populations: men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender women, sex workers, drug users, prisoners, and marginalized youth. A project's exclusion from coverage in this series in no way implies it was not good practice.

Stuart Adams, the consultant who did the final evaluation of Phase One of the CVC/COIN Project (January 2011-March 2013), participated in the selection and then researched and wrote each Profile. To be approved for selection, a project had to meet or come close to meeting all five of the criteria for good practice recommended by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) plus three additional criteria used by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) when it selects projects worthy of being covered by publications in the German Health Practices Collection. The eight criteria are:

- **Relevant:** For example, based on sound behavioural, serological or other evidence of need for the intervention.
- **Effective:** For example, indicated by reliable evidence of results measured against objectives and targets established at the outset.
- **Efficient:** For example, makes good use of whatever human, financial and other resources may be available, including collaboration with partners that add value.
- **Impactful:** For example, reaches or demonstrates potential to reach large numbers of target populations with effective HIV prevention, treatment and care; creates safe environments where human rights are recognized and respected.
- **Sustainable:** For example, is sufficiently relevant, effective and efficient to merit continuing support from existing partners and to merit support from potential new partners.
- **Empowering:** For example, provides people from at-risk groups with knowledge, skills and tools to engage in responsible sexual behaviour or to assert their right to essential health care.
- **Transferable:** For example, develops and demonstrates the use of methods and tools that can be adapted for use by other organizations in other locales.
- **Well monitored:** Regularly gathers, analyses and reports data to measure results against objectives and targets and to identify any problems that may require corrective action; records events and personal stories to preserve qualitative information that may enrich knowledge and be useful for educational or advocacy purposes.

Collectively, the projects and programmes profiled in this series have made significant contributions to knowledge about HIV and how to respond to it among vulnerabilised groups in the Caribbean.