

# Aruba & Curaçao

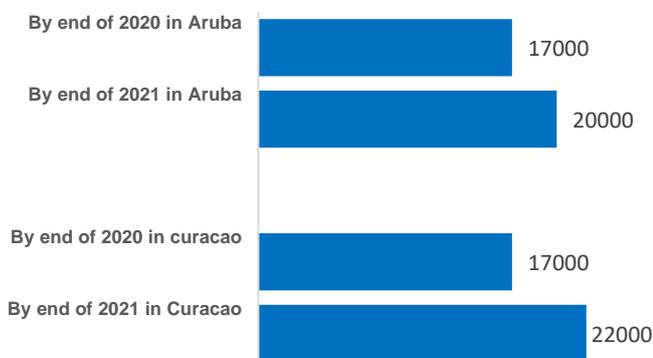
April – June 2021

An estimated **17,000** Venezuelan refugees and migrants reside in Aruba and **17,000** in Curaçao.

Partners report that the pandemic continues to lead to a significant rise of intimate partner violence. Specific vulnerabilities also exist among people presumed to have been trafficked and/or engaged in sex work, including women, girls and people from the LGBTIcommunity.

UNHCR provides information and guidance on the asylum process, to refugees and asylum seekers, while exploring local integration opportunities and assisting the most in need.

## Population of concern\*



\*Source: Estimates as per the RMRP 2021.

## CONTEXT

Curacao and Aruba host the largest number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants compared to the local population in the world, ranking 1st and 3rd on the list, with 159 and 102 displaced people per 1,000 inhabitants, respectively.

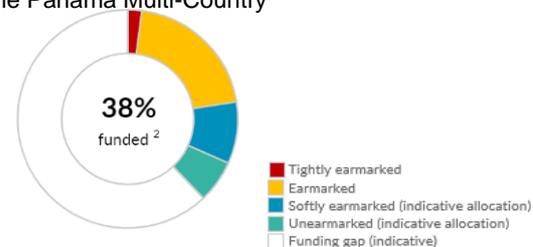
While most arrived to the islands as tourists or with an initial permit, many overstayed, and have struggled to regularize their status or to seek asylum, and remain without access to work authorization, public health and social services. The 1951 Convention applies to Aruba, but Curaçao does not consider itself bound by this instrument and there are no easily accessible avenues to obtain migratory status. This exposes Venezuelans to abuse, sexual and labour exploitation, and detention. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these risks, where livelihoods have become difficult to secure. Both Islands confirmed all refugees and migrants would have access to vaccines to help curb the spread of the virus, with several already having received first or second doses.

Considering the small size and limited absorption capacity in both islands, UNHCR continues to engage with partners, including under the Response for Venezuelans (R4V) platform, to facilitate access to legal counselling and legal assistance, primary health care, assistance to vulnerable refugees and migrants (including survivors of gender-based violence), integration, peaceful co-existence and self-reliance.

## FUNDING (AS OF 2 JULY 2021)

**US\$ 48.7 M**

requested for the Panama Multi-Country Office for 2021



1 The financial requirements for the Panama MCO include requirements for the Coronavirus Emergency and the Venezuela Situation. Aruba and Curaçao are part of the Panama Multi-Country Office in 2021 along with Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Panama, Nicaragua, Cuba and Belize.

2 The percentage funded includes indicative allocations of softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions

## World Refugee Day



To commemorate the strength and resilience of displaced people and call communities together in solidarity, UNHCR and partners in Aruba and Curacao held different events. In Aruba, dance groups made up of locals, refugees and migrants organised a **flash mob** on the white sands of Eagle Beach, in collaboration with partners HIAS and VeneAruba Solidaria.

In Curacao, several workshops were held in the spirit of healing, learning and growing, including on mental health, and livelihoods skill development.

## UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR works with one partner in Aruba and two in Curaçao, and supports both States in the delivery of assistance and protection to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers. UNHCR also works in coordination with four partners in the Aruba R4V platform and ten partners in the Curaçao R4V platform to provide responses on education, food security, health, integration, protection, shelter, WASH, and gender-based violence (GBV) among others. See the [R4V Subregional portal](#) for more information.

### Main Activities

Alongside the government, partner organizations, civil society, and faith-based organizations, UNHCR undertakes protection and solutions activities, including:



#### Protection

Along with partner HIAS, UNHCR monitors the situation of Venezuelans arriving in Aruba to ensure that assistance is provided to vulnerable individuals and families. Between April and June, 199 people in Aruba and Curaçao were counselled on legal status, humanitarian assistance, health, asylum, and other inquiries. 207 protection assessments were conducted through partner HIAS.



#### Legal Assistance

Between April and May, UNHCR protection team identified 33 persons that were in need of legal assistance and legal counselling on different issues, including detention and deportation, risk of eviction, document confiscation, cases requesting temporary stay on humanitarian grounds, civil rights for same-sex couples, and access to rights for persons living with HIV. In the month June, UNHCR protection team conducted 20 in-depth interviews in Aruba to establish possible protection and legal assistance needs and solutions. The legal assistance cases involved negative asylum decisions, detention measures, deportation orders, GBV related cases and lawful stay. During the reporting period, in Curaçao, UNHCR's partner HRDC provided legal assistance to 105 people on detention conditions, health, lawful stay and international protection. HRDC, through a court intervention, was granted official access to the detainees in the detention facility. As an outcome of the access, HRDC lawyer was able to release 15 persons detained on immigration charges through the guarantors.



#### Gender-Based Violence

GBV remains a particular concern in Aruba and Curaçao. In this context, UNHCR continued remote case management services for GBV survivors in Curaçao, to ensure access to different medical, psychological, and legal support services as well as material assistance and physical safety, through a survivor-centred approach. UNHCR is coordinating the response with different service providers and ensuring follow-up on the referrals for 12 GBV cases in Curaçao. Moreover, UNHCR organized a workshop for civil society organisations on the development of inter-agency GBV SOPs in Curaçao.



#### Advocacy

UNHCR and partners work closely with the Governments in Aruba and Curaçao to offer support and advocate for protection of people with international protection needs. In May, UNHCR in collaboration with a local photographer launched [Hidden Voices](#), and initiative to shine a light on stories of refugees and migrants from Venezuela amid pandemic.



#### Cash-based interventions and assistance

Through partners, UNHCR provides cash assistance to vulnerable individuals and families to meet basic needs, particularly those gravely affected by the pandemic. Between April and June, in Curaçao, 21 Venezuelans were approved to be provided with cash assistance to respond to urgent protection situations, 7 of them already received their cash assistance. In Aruba, through partner HIAS, 251 Venezuelans were approved for cash-based assistance, 134 of whom were first-time recipients



#### Access to medical services

In coordination with partner Foundation Salù pa Tur, in Curaçao, UNHCR provided 468 consultations on basic health, reproductive, prenatal and maternity care, psycho-social support, as well as HIV and diabetes care between April and June 2021. These included 108 home visits, 40 telephone consultations, 25 consultations for HIV cases, and 333 COVID-19 tests. Furthermore, 724 COVID-19 vaccines were administered. Through partner HIAS in Aruba, medical care vouchers were provided to 709 people during the reporting period in which 581 were first-time recipients. UNHCR and partners on both islands continue to support national vaccination campaigns for refugees and migrants to register and get vaccinated.



#### Community-based protection

Through partner HIAS and community mobilizers, 41 people were referred to services. Furthermore, to strengthen community-based protection efforts, UNHCR is supporting community-based organisations in both Aruba and Curaçao through outreach activities, trainings, and workshops.

Thanks to donors in 2021: The UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France and the European Union, as well as to the following donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Algeria | Armenia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | Estonia | Finland | France | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Portugal | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Sweden | Switzerland | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | United Kingdom | Private donors

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<sup>1</sup> Article 3 ECHR is the national procedure to seek international protection in Curaçao. It entails protection against torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. Article 3 ECHR procedure<sup>1</sup> has been the only pathway for individuals to seek international protection in Curaçao