

# Aruba & Curaçao

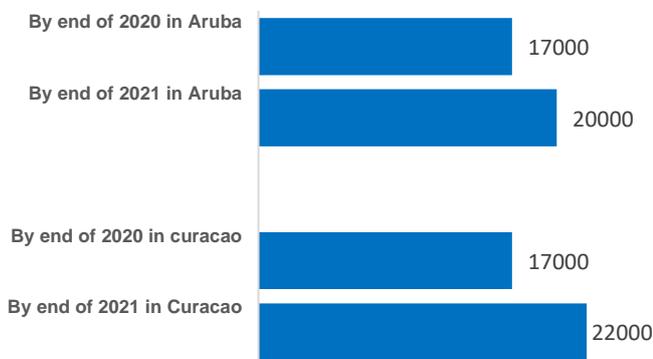
February - March 2021

Estimated **17,000** Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Aruba and **17,000** in Curaçao.

Aruba and Curaçao continue to receive the outflow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, who often undertake dangerous journeys to reach safety.

UNHCR provides information and guidance on the asylum process, regularization and documentation to refugees and asylum seekers, while exploring local integration opportunities and assisting vulnerable profiles.

## Population of concern\*



\*Source: Estimates as per the RMRP 2021.

## CONTEXT

The islands host the largest number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants compared to the local population in the world, with 1 in 6 in Aruba and 1 in 10 in Curaçao being Venezuelans.

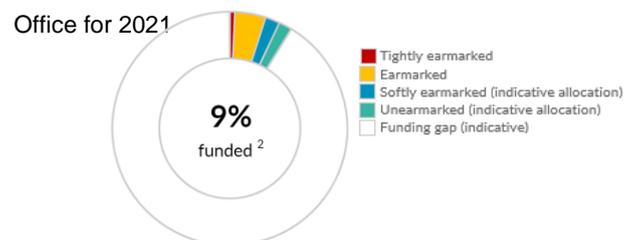
While most arrived to the islands as tourists or with an initial permit, many overstayed, and have struggled to regularize their status therefore remaining in an irregular status in both countries, without access to public health and social services. The 1951 Convention applies to Aruba, but Curaçao does not consider itself bound by this instrument and there are no easily accessible avenues to obtain legal status. Lack of a regular status further exposes Venezuelans to abuse, sexual and labour exploitation, and detention. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these risks, and both Islands confirmed all Venezuelan 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 through social cohesion campaigns and livelihood opportunities for Venezuelans.

## FUNDING (AS OF 6 APRIL 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



## UNHCR AND PARTNERS COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On 8 March we walked together through the community of Rancho, towards equality for all women to celebrate #InternationalWomensDay. Stichting Rancho organized this walking tour through Rancho for UNHCR, IOM and HIAS to raise awareness on the important role that women play in society as well as the assistance that the organizations provide to vulnerable people in Aruba.

With the participation of communities and women, including refugees and migrants, we wish to realize equal access to education, work, health and legal services. [Check out UNHCR's Facebook Page for more updates.](#)

## 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 February and March, 88 people in Aruba and Curaçao were counselled on legal status, humanitarian assistance, health, education, or documentation. 187 protection assessments were conducted through partner HIAS.

#### Legal Assistance

UNHCR continues to provide legal assistance to people of concern lacking the means to access justice. Between February and March, through lawyers or by staff legal associates, UNHCR in Aruba provided legal assistance to seven Venezuelans. Furthermore, UNHCR provided legal counseling to 44 people through the helpline. In Curaçao, partner HRDC received 102 calls to the helpline, and made 109 referrals to outside services for health, psycho-social, and material needs. Moreover, HRDC submitted 13 individual requests for protection under Article 3 of ECHR<sup>1</sup>, and 8 cases were provided with legal assistance via a lawyer. As part of UNHCR's efforts to strengthen support to persons who do not require intervention by a lawyer, UNHCR organized an online mini-workshop for 4 partners in Aruba and Curaçao to equip them to file alimony requests, and created different legal templates and organized a short workshop for Human Rights Defense to equip them with the tools to file requests for protection based on national procedures.

#### Gender-Based Violence

GBV remains a particular concern in Aruba and Curaçao. Partners have reported that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to lead to a significant rise of intimate partner violence. Specific vulnerabilities also exist among persons presumed to have been trafficked and/or engaged in sex work, including women, girls and LGBTI persons. In this context, UNHCR commenced 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. Moreover, UNHCR hosted a workshop in Curaçao on GBV for 60 participants (including in-person and online attendees) from government (Ministries of Social Affairs and Justice, Police Sexual Offense Unit, Public Prosecutor, Department of Foreign Affairs), civil society, and UN organizations.

#### Advocacy

UNHCR and partners work closely with the Governments in Aruba and Curaçao to offer support and advocate for protection of Venezuelans with international protection needs. Specific areas of advocacy have focused on access to education and health care, access to asylum procedures for persons in detention, as well as highlighting some of the challenges faced by Venezuelans who are unable to renew local documentation due to expired Venezuelan passports.

#### Cash-based interventions and assistance

Through partners, UNHCR provides cash assistance to vulnerable individuals and families to meet their basic needs, particularly those gravely affected by the pandemic. In Curaçao, 8 Venezuelans were approved to be provided with cash assistance to respond to urgent protection situations, four of them already received their cash assistance. In Aruba, through partner HIAS, 26 Venezuelans were approved for cash-based assistance, 16 of whom were first-time recipients.

#### Access to medical services

In coordination with partner Foundation Salù pa Tur, UNHCR has provided basic health care, reproductive, prenatal and maternity care, psycho-social support, as well as HIV and diabetes care in 2,126 consultations for undocumented refugees and migrants in Curaçao between February and March 2021. These included 40 home visits, 21 consultations for HIV cases, and 463 COVID-19 tests. Furthermore, 250 Covid-19 vaccines were administered. Through partner HIAS in Aruba, medical care vouchers were provided to 88 people during the reporting period in which 69 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, 55 people were referred to services. 61 people were also provided with language (Papiamentu, Dutch, English) and other courses (Aruban history, technology for beginners, parenting and family courses).

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#### For more information:

In Aruba and Curaçao, Kelly Bendelow, Protection Officer, [bendelow@unhcr.org](mailto:bendelow@unhcr.org)

In MCO Panama, Diana Diaz Rodriguez, Communications Officer, [diazdi@unhcr.org](mailto:diazdi@unhcr.org)

<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' has been the only pathway for individuals to seek international protection in Curaçao