

# Aruba & Curaçao

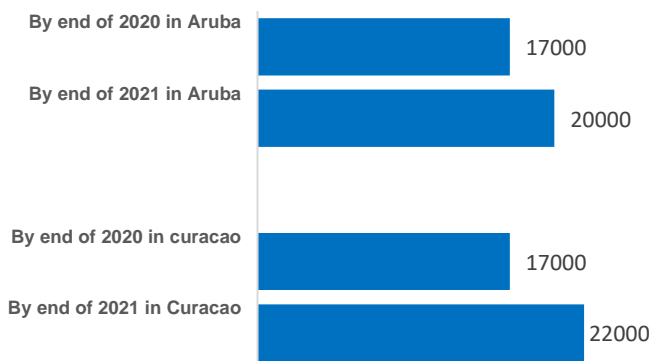
September-October 2021

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 the most vulnerable.

## Population of concern\*



\*Source: Estimates as per the RMRP 2021 Caribbean | R4V

## CONTEXT

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

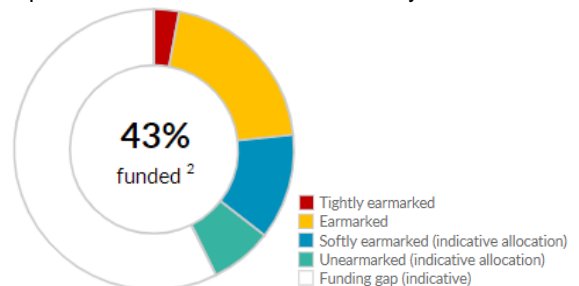
While most arrived at the Islands as tourists or with an initial permit, many overstayed, have struggled to regularize their stay and remain in an irregular status in both countries, without access to public health and social services. The 1951 Convention applies to Aruba, but Curaçao does not consider itself bound by this instrument and there are no easily accessible avenues to obtain a regular status. This lack of status exposes Venezuelans to abuse, 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 thousands already having received both 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 9 NOVEMBER 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

## Capacity-Building Sessions



UNHCR together with partners hosted a blended **workshop** (with both online and in-person participation) on the prevention and response to gender-based violence in Aruba. The workshop included a video message from the Prime Minister and the attendance of the new Minister of Justice and Social Affairs, Rocco Tjon. It also brought together over 100 stakeholders from the government, (I)NGOs, and civil society organisations.

UNHCR Aruba also organized an information-sharing evening for lawyers, legal professionals, and members of the Aruba Bar Association and the University of Aruba on asylum decisions and their quality, the applicable Refugee Status Determination elements, and international legal framework and standards.

## 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

In Aruba, UNHCR through HIAS conducted **protection screening for 59 individuals**, 31 of whom have specific needs and were referred to internal and external services, including legal assistance, multipurpose cash, psychosocial support (MHPSS), food assistance, and education. Moreover, between September and October, **171 people in Aruba and Curaçao** were counselled on humanitarian and legal assistance, and other inquiries. Additionally, UNHCR conducted **4 focus group discussions** with a total of **23 Venezuelans** in Aruba and Curaçao, where participants highlighted lack of access to documentation as a primary concern, as well as exploitation and lack of access to other rights and services, including healthcare.



### Legal Assistance

Between September and October in Aruba, UNHCR referred **15 cases to lawyers for legal assistance and legal interventions**. Moreover, in October, legal representatives with support from UNHCR **won 9 Higher Appeal cases** related to procedural aspects of asylum, detention, and deportation. Additionally, partner Human Rights Defense Curaçao (HRDC) conducted **over 95 screenings** in Curaçao to identify needs, referred **15 cases for MHPSS and medical aid**, and provided **legal assistance to 7 cases** for the Article 3 Procedure<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, following the release of *Amnesty International's report on Curaçao*, HRDC received requests from detainees, and conducted **120 calls and visits** to the barrack.



### Gender-Based Violence

UNHCR continues **remote case management services for GBV survivors** in Curaçao to ensure access to support services, material assistance and physical safety through a survivor-centered approach. UNHCR is coordinating the response with different service providers and ensuring follow-up on **referrals of 24 GBV cases** in Curaçao. UNHCR and partners delivered a **workshop on the prevention and response to GBV** in Aruba, with **over 100 participants** from the government, (I)NGOs, and civil society.



### Cash-based interventions and assistance

UNHCR through partners provides **cash assistance to vulnerable individuals and families** to meet their basic and protection needs. Between September and October, in Curaçao, UNHCR supported **17 Venezuelan households** to meet urgent protection needs. In Aruba, UNHCR through HIAS provided **128 Venezuelans** with multipurpose cash, 41 of whom were first-time recipients.



### Access to medical services

UNHCR through Foundation Salù pa Tur provided basic health, reproductive, prenatal, and maternity care, psychosocial support, HIV and diabetes care via **2,004 consultations** in Curaçao between September and October 2021. Moreover, **30 persons** participated in the Salù pa Tur **health outreach programme** and received general check-ups, and hypertension and diabetes screenings. In celebration of World Mental Health Day, UNHCR and PSI Skuchami organized a **webinar on MHPSS best practices for 40 participants** from 18 civil society organizations in Curaçao. In Aruba, UNHCR through HIAS delivered medical cash support to **45 Venezuelans** to access **primary care**, 27 of whom were first-time recipients, and provided CBI to **1 person living with HIV**.



### Community-based protection

To strengthen community-based protection efforts, UNHCR continues to support community-based organizations in both Aruba and Curaçao by assisting with their outreach activities, trainings, and workshops, including information delivery on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and awareness raising sessions on available services and referral pathways. In Aruba, UNHCR partner HIAS expanded its community outreach volunteers network with the recruitment of 22 new volunteers.

**Thanks to donors:** The UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, the European Union, and the UN Programme On HIV/AIDS, as well as to the following donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Algeria | Armenia | Australia | Austria | Belgium | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Cyprus | Denmark | Estonia | Finland | France | Germany | Holy See | Iceland | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Latvia | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | Morocco | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Peru | Philippines | Portugal | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Slovakia | South Africa | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | Thailand | Turkey | United Kingdom | United States of America | Uruguay | Private donors, including Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Spain, and Sweden

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

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