

Aruba & Curaçao

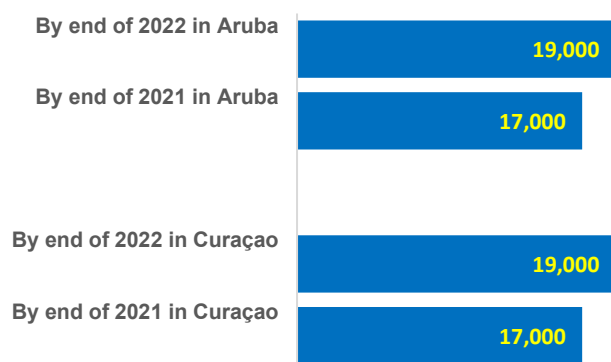
January - February 2022

As of December 2021, there are an estimated of **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.

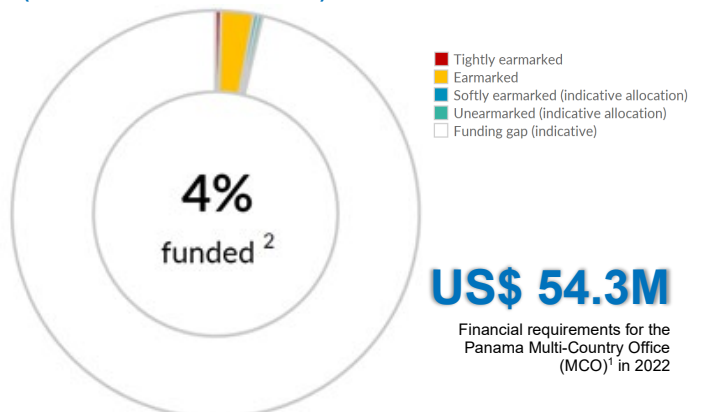
UNHCR continues to provide access to the asylum process, with **more than 1,200 asylum-seekers** having received **UNHCR documentation** and **refugee status determination** between January and February 2022.

Population of concern*



* Source: Estimates as per the RMRP 2022

STATE OF PLAY: FUNDING RECEIVED VS. FUNDING NEEDS (AS OF 22 FEBRUARY 2022)



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 Panama, Belize, Nicaragua, Cuba and the Southern Caribbean.

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

CONTEXT

Aruba and Curaçao host the largest number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants compared to the local population in the world, ranking 1st and 3rd, 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 and **remain in an irregular status without access to public health and social services**. The 1951 Protocol to the 1951 Refugee Convention applies to Aruba. However, Curaçao does not consider itself bound by the instrument, and - therefore - there are **no easily accessible avenues to obtain a regular status**. This situation exposes Venezuelans to **abuse, exploitation, and detention**. Moreover, the **COVID-19 pandemic** has further exacerbated these risks and vulnerabilities, as livelihoods have become difficult to secure. On the other hand, both Aruba and Curaçao have included **refugees and migrants in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns** to help curb the spread of the virus.

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

UNHCR completes small-scale livelihoods projects



Graduates of the bakery course with their kit

ASOCLCUR certificates and vouchers

Various small-scale projects started in late 2021 in Curaçao – seeking to promote livelihoods, enhance soft-skills, and build capacity of small community-based organizations – have concluded in February 2022. Some 35 graduates of the bakery and pastry course received start-up kits to begin their businesses, 25 persons completed the “Sembrar futuro” course focusing on sustainable agriculture, and 35 refugee and migrant adult students culminated the basic Papiamentu course. Finally, 579 persons engaged in exchanging and/or selling sex were supported through outreach activities, including workplace visits and distribution of informative flyers.

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, development actors, and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes protection and solutions activities, including:



Protection | UNHCR and HIAS continue to monitor the situation of Venezuelans in Aruba and provide assistance to vulnerable cases. In this sense, HIAS identified 35 persons with specific needs through protection screenings and referred them for assistance to internal and external services. Moreover, between January and February 2022, 124 people in Aruba and Curaçao were counselled on legal status, humanitarian assistance, health, resettlement, and other inquiries through UNHCR's two-way communication mechanisms.



Legal Assistance | Between January and February 2022, UNHCR identified 32 cases for legal assistance in Aruba, 6 of which were referred to a lawyer for further legal actions. In Curaçao, the Human Rights Defense Curaçao Foundation (HRDC) submitted 14 applications in relation to the domestic protection mechanism (Article 3 procedure¹) and continues to provide legal assistance to individuals intercepted at sea while attempting to enter irregularly.



Health | Thanks to HRDC's lobby efforts with a local insurance company, undocumented persons are able to request health insurance at a moderated cost, which might – however – still be too high for individuals with limited financial resources. Proof of legal residence was previously required to contract a private insurance policy. Moreover, between January and February 2022, UNHCR through partner *Foundation Salù pa Tur* (SPT) provided basic healthcare, reproductive, prenatal, and maternity care, psychosocial support, as well as HIV and diabetes care via 3,022 consultations for undocumented refugees and migrants in Curaçao; some 55 persons received STI and HIV screening tests and 45 persons sexual and reproductive health counselling. In addition, 331 individuals underwent COVID-19 testing at SPT. Moreover, HIAS supported 17 individuals, all of whom were first-time recipients cash assistance for access to healthcare in Aruba. Additionally, the Aruba Positive Foundation carried out a two-day distribution campaign of 70 boxes of condoms to persons engaged in exchanging and/or selling sex.



Gender-based Violence | Gender-based Violence (GBV) remains a serious concern in Aruba and Curaçao. Many women at risk of violence and abuse do not report their case to authorities or seek assistance for fear of detention and deportation due to their irregular status and financial dependency on their partners. In this context, UNHCR supported community-based organization *Famia Plania* in Curaçao to conduct outreach activities for 579 persons engaged in the exchange and/or selling of sex. Moreover, UNHCR and *Stichting Maatschappelijk Zorg en Herstel* continued to provide emergency shelter for undocumented GBV survivors in Curaçao.



Community-based Protection | As part of the community-based protection (CBP) activities, HIAS organized a recreational arts and crafts course for 13 refugee and migrant children in Aruba. Moreover, community volunteers referred 23 individuals to HIAS for assistance and support services. In Curaçao, partners ASOCOLCUR, VENEX, *Sociedad Bolivariana*, and *Famia Planea* completed CBP projects started last in late 2021, through which 96 refugees and migrants gained access to livelihoods training and workshops. Many of the participants could not have otherwise accessed capacity-building courses due to their irregular status or limited financial resources.

The UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: European Union, as well as to the following donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Algeria | Armenia | Belgium | Bulgaria | Canada | Denmark | Estonia | Finland | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | Netherlands | Norway | Peru | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Sweden | Switzerland | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | Private donors

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¹ 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.

UNHCR and Persons of Concern in Aruba & Curaçao

