

# PROTECTION

June 2021



TRAFFICKING  
SUB-SECTOR



## Context

Long before the Venezuelan crisis or the pandemic, human trafficking, and smuggling<sup>1</sup> were a reality in the sub-region. Colombian, Dominican, and Haitian nationals, among others, have continuously been lured to Caribbean countries on false promises of high-paying jobs in tourism, construction, hospitality, domestic work, and mining.

The identification of Venezuelan victims of trafficking (VoTs) by national institutions is estimated to be higher every year across Caribbean countries. This phenomenon is directly connected to the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and the outflow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants (R&Ms) to the sub-region since 2017, due to the deteriorating political, human rights and socioeconomic situation in the Latin American country,<sup>2</sup> further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 Trafficking in persons is “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include [...] the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”  
 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol thereto

1 Human smuggling involves the provision of a service—typically, transportation or fraudulent documents—to an individual who voluntarily seeks to gain illegal entry into a foreign country.

2 In Trinidad and Tobago, for two consecutive years, Venezuelans represented over 90% of the identified victims of trafficking: 14 victims were Venezuelans out of a total of 14 in 2018 and 33 victims were Venezuelan out of a total of 34 victims in 2019, Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2019 and June 2020, Department of State, United States of America.

Regular entry pathways are severely limited. Border closures due to the pandemic combined with stricter entry requirements due to the pandemic have prompted Venezuelans to resort to dangerous boat journeys, exposing them to risks of smuggling and trafficking, and [shipwrecks](#), which have taken the lives of over a hundred people since 2019; others have been harmed, exploited, and in some cases, have gone missing.<sup>3</sup> These patterns notably increased in the latter part of 2020.<sup>4</sup> The closure of borders to mitigate the spread of [COVID-19](#), and to prevent the violation of immigration regulations, disrupted pre-existing irregular routes, leading to the creation of alternate ones with heightened risks. Such journeys continue taking place along irregular routes, with sub-regional countries reporting ongoing irregular entries by boat, including in Aruba, Curaçao and Trinidad and Tobago, with more pendular movements in Guyana along its shared fluvial/land border with Venezuela. This has heightened the danger as well as health and protection risks for people on the move.

Recruitment tactics of trafficking networks usually involve nationals from Venezuela, and sometimes former victims themselves who, in exchange for a fee, contact vulnerable individuals in the country of origin. Recruitment methods have shifted to online<sup>5</sup> induced by pandemic limitations, thus facilitating access to potential victims with scams that prey on their socioeconomic vulnerability. Once in the country of destination, [job offers turn into sexual exploitation](#) or forced labour,<sup>6</sup> and servitude being coerced to work through the use of violence or intimidation, or by more subtle means such as accumulated debt or debt bondage,<sup>7</sup> retention of identity papers, limitation of movement, threats of denunciation to immigration authorities,<sup>8</sup> and threats to the lives of family members back home. Emanating from the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, these trafficking networks have increased numbers of potential victims within easy reach. Insufficient social support, exacerbated by COVID-19 measures, have resulted in Venezuelans being less equipped to navigate increased socio-economic challenges and being more easily deceived into exploitation.

**R4V partners strongly condemn human trafficking and are aware that refugees and migrants are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked or to falling victim to serious crimes and human rights violations. R4V partners seek to ensure that programmes to prevent human trafficking and to assist victims of trafficking are available and accessible to those in need.**

## Overview

Legal, economic, social, and logistical factors specific to Caribbean sub-regional countries affect the and capacity to combat trafficking in persons (TiP). Aruba, Dominican Republic, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago are bound by the United Nations [Convention against Transnational Crime and Protocols](#)<sup>9</sup> and in recent years, all five countries have taken significant steps to fight smuggling and trafficking. These have included adopting legal frameworks and establishing national institutions that identify and assist survivors, including specialized police forces and law enforcement units for investigating and prosecuting trafficking crimes using a victim-centered approach. Moreover,

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3 Situation Report, R4V Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela in the Caribbean, April/May 2019.

4 [OHCHR | Press briefing notes on Venezuelans Trinidad and Tobago](#)

5 Human Traffickers use online platforms to recruit victims.

6 The meanings of Forced Labour, International Labour Organization, article of 10 March 2014.

7 Debt Bondage- Debt bondage/Bonded Labour is work exchanged for a debt which, ultimately, can never be paid. Also known as bonded labor or debt slavery, workers are told they can pay off a loan of their own or of a family member by working it off.

8 Venezuelans' Vulnerability to Exploitation, Trafficking and Discrimination, Central America and the Caribbean, July 2019, DTM, The UN Migration Agency (IOM).

9 The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

governments set up a Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC)<sup>10</sup> Counter-Trafficking Network in 2016 to enhance cross border collaborative efforts.

Despite progress in the fields of prevention, identification, protection, prosecution and partnerships, and the support of R4V partners, trafficking trends in the sub-region continue to rise with many victims remaining unidentified or inadequately assisted, and with reports of an increased proportion of teenage girls affected by the situation of trafficking. Resources were allocated by R4V partners to support the prevention and protection of victims, with dedicated and trained staff, although needs are not being fully met. Investigations and prosecutions are lengthy, and few perpetrators are brought to court and sentenced. Traffickers continue to reap large profits and impunity prevails.

Furthermore, some sub-regional countries' [stance to detain and deport](#) irregular arrivals especially during COVID-19, translates into greater protection-risks, and does not allow for the eventual possibility of integrating VoTs who may be at risk in their country of origin. Additional resources are urgently needed to conduct prevention activities and to identify and assist victims.

The US Department of State (2020) Trafficking in Persons<sup>11</sup> report ranked four of the five sub-regional countries as Tier-2 Watchlist, meaning the respective authorities does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but are making significant efforts to do so, including prosecuting and convicting more traffickers and complicit officials. It also demonstrates overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. The exception was Guyana which ranked Tier-1, having fully met the required standards for eliminating trafficking.

## Aruba

In 2006, the Aruban parliament amended the criminal code and criminalized the trafficking of persons for labour and sex work under [Articles 2:239, 2:240, and 2:241 to 2:247 of the penal code](#), in alignment with international treaties. A year later, the government established an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary task force under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice and issued a National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan (2018-2022) to prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute offenders. Additionally, the Bureau of Victim Assistance operates a special hotline for victims of all crimes, including of trafficking.

Although trafficking networks linked to Aruba's tourism-dependent economy continue to deceive vulnerable individuals into exploitation, the identification of victims is declining. The government did not report identifying any VoTs in 2019, while small numbers of cases are under investigation to confirm trafficking cases in 2020 and 2021, in a stark contrast to the seventy-one (71) identified victims in 2017 and despite the simultaneous increase in the number of Venezuelans arriving in Aruba.<sup>12</sup>

Victims are granted a six-month temporary immigration stay but may be deported after this period. In an already challenged protective system, this may discourage victims from trusting institutions and filing complaints. To revitalize response on counter trafficking, R4V partners initiated a dialogue with the government on TiP in 2019, conducted an awareness raising campaign in early 2020 and collaborated with authorities in the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to TiP.

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10 The CMC is a consultative forum of governments and international organizations, which exchange information and best practices on migration issues.

11 The US Department of State assigned Tiers to different countries based on the plans and responses to Trafficking in Persons Trafficking in Persons report (2020).

12 Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2019, Department of State, United States of America, p. 81.

## Curaçao

Curaçao has legalized and actively regulated the business of prostitution,<sup>13</sup> but [Articles 2:154, 2:239 to 2:247 of its penal code](#) criminalize sex and labour trafficking and prescribe penalties of up to nine years' imprisonment or fines for offenses involving a victim 16 years or older, and up to 12 years' imprisonment or a fine for those involving a victim under the age of 16. Despite this, [sexual exploitation](#) of women is common, and sex trafficking has developed into a regular business amid the displacement crisis.

The Government established a Counter Trafficking National Task Force and developed referral mechanisms and a national action plan (2017-2022). In May 2019, the Office of the Public Prosecutor announced the establishment of a new directive concerning human trafficking and human smuggling.

Furthermore, the non-governmental organization Stichting Slachtofferhulp (Victim Support Unit/Foundation SSHC) has been contracted by the Government to provide assistance and manage a hotline for human trafficking victims. With a limited budget from the Government of Curaçao, the Victim Support Unit cooperates with an umbrella organization consisting of twenty-six (26) NGOs active in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response. In 2020, the [Government has also assigned the University of Curaçao](#) the task of mapping out the nature and scope of human trafficking to improve response and prevention.

Even though trafficking networks continue to be active in Curaçao, authorities have reported a decrease in the number of identified victims from forty-four (44) in 2018 to three (3) in 2019<sup>14</sup> and throughout 2020 and 2021. Additionally, the government reported difficulties in providing adequate assistance, particularly related to shelter and specialized services targeting trafficking victims. In 2018, thirty-three (33) Venezuelans possibly affected by trafficking, who had not cooperated with law enforcement against their traffickers were detained and deported to Venezuela.<sup>15</sup>

In this context of acute needs, R4V partners carried out training for government counterparts on victim identification, protection, and assistance (including interviewing techniques) and supported the drafting of standard operating procedures (SOPs) on identification and protection of trafficking victims to improve referral mechanisms and coordination. One R4V agency collaborated with the government of Curaçao in 2021 on the creation of SOPs on the identification, referral, assistance, and protection of victims of human trafficking with a victim-centered and humanitarian approach. The document has gone before the Council of Ministers for approval and is expected to be published by mid-2021. Additionally, the previous/outgoing government set aside funding for a broad communication campaign on TIP.

## Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, the [137-03 Law on Human Smuggling and Trafficking](#) (2003) criminalizes all forms of labour trafficking and some forms of sexual trafficking. A National Plan against trafficking and smuggling was adopted for the period 2017 to 2020 and [a special unit of the Attorney General's Office](#) was made responsible for counter trafficking activities, including the investigation and prosecution or the management of a shelter for victims of trafficking. Additionally, the Ministry of Women currently runs shelters for survivors of GBV, where victims of trafficking can be accommodated as well.

In recent years, the Dominican Republic has prosecuted fewer cases, moving from forty-nine (49) and forty (40) cases respectively in 2015 and 2016, to five (5) cases in 2018 and twenty-two (22) in 2019. Convictions have

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13 The law allows foreign women in the island with a three-month working permit to engage in legal prostitution.

14 Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2019, Department of State, United States of America, p.177.

15 Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2018, Department of State, United States of America, p.166.

declined, moving from twenty-two (22) convictions in 2018 to five (5) in 2019.<sup>16</sup> In 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rescue interventions diminished, and restrictions imposed on bars and night clubs led to the use of private apartments, making sexual exploitation schemes far less visible for authorities.

According to local NGOs, as challenges and needs increase, further specialization and coordination are needed in governmental services to assist victims. R4V partners have supported the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Women with training and technical assistance and with the provision of relief to survivors by upgrading shelters and services. Partners have also advocated for **Law 137-03** to be amended to align it with international standards. Legal provisions like the requirement to prove force, fraud, and coercion of child victims<sup>17</sup> should be amended, and further access to permanent residency for victims should also be clarified, by detailing the administrative rules to obtain resident and work permits. This process continued with the new parliament sworn into office in August 2020. In 2021, an R4V partner started actively working with the Special Prosecutor for Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants, (PETT) on the new operating guidelines of that entity.

## Guyana

Guyana's parliament passed the [Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act](#) in 2005 and established a national task force two years later, including a TiP force in the National Police and a Counter Trafficking Unit in the Ministry of Social Protection. Under this act, VoTs are protected and not criminally liable for offences committed as a direct result of their trafficking situation. It also offers a wide range of concrete protections and benefits to victims, including the possibility of receiving social benefits. A hotline for trafficking victims, two shelters and two transitional facilities are also run by the Ministry of Social Protection, renamed Ministry of Human Services and Social Security in August 2020.

Efforts by R4V partners to support counter trafficking in Guyana resulted in the development of SOPs for the prosecution of traffickers and assistance to victims of trafficking, prevention campaigns and training workshops. Additionally, a network of international and national organizations named N-TIP was established to improve coordination and referral mechanisms.

Despite governmental and R4V efforts, according to the inter-agency GBV assessment carried out by R4V partners in March 2019, trafficking is among the most prevalent protection risks for Venezuelan women in Guyana.<sup>18</sup> According to government data, 225 victims were recorded for the year 2020, reflecting an increase in the number of victims compared with 2019, in contrast to the decrease recorded from the prior year.<sup>19</sup> The identification of victims remains challenging, especially in remote areas with weak institutional presence and fast-developing mining industries. Settlements in the vicinity of mines in regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 are areas of high concentration of hotels, bars, and night-clubs, where sex traffickers exploit vulnerable individuals, including Guyanese citizens from Amerindian communities. When Venezuelan victims are identified, language barriers to access services and communicate with authorities are also an issue. Additionally, the absence of work permits for Venezuelans hampers the ability of VoTs to secure formal livelihoods and to integrate.

Guyana continues to maintain Tier 1 status as the country continues its fight against TiP.<sup>20</sup> In March 2021, a two-day workshop was held by R4V partners to begin the draft of a three-year national action plan to respond to TiP cases. Additionally, the Government of Guyana with support from one R4V agency has reviewed and updated draft

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16 Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2020, Department of State, United States of America, p.189.

17 Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2019, Department of State, United States of America.

18 Inter-Agency Rapid Gender-Based Violence Assessment Report in Guyana, 25-30 March 2019. R4V.

19 [Caribbean R4V Trafficking in Persons Background Note 2020](#).

20 Tier 1 is the highest rank in TiP, it does not mean that a country has no human trafficking problem, rather, it indicates that a government has made efforts to address the problem that meet minimum standards. *Trafficking in Person Report, Department of State, United States of America - Tier System (2020)*

counter-trafficking legislation to include more updated practices which will also ensure the protection of all VoTs, which is pending delivery to Parliament.

## Trinidad and Tobago

In 2011, Trinidad and Tobago *proclaimed* and enacted the *Trafficking in Persons Act*, which established an investigative ministerial committee, the Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU) comprised of police and immigration officers as well as a legal counsel. The act also designated an operational branch in charge of providing direct assistance to victims: The National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons, incorporating different government agencies responsible for providing care for physical and psychosocial needs of victims.

*An independent investigation* conducted between July 2019 and February 2020 indicated that around 4,000 victims were trafficked from Güiria Venezuela in the last four to six years in a form of *modern-day slavery*. Trafficking cases involve mainly young Venezuelan women and girls, between the ages of 15 and 21.<sup>21</sup> These trends identified in terms of age and gender of the victims and the vulnerable situation of unaccompanied and separated children are of concern, and require greater coordination between the CTU, the Children’s Authority and other relevant stakeholders, to respond to the needs of these groups through a multi-sectoral approach.

As the humanitarian crisis continues and the number of suspected cases increases, the state’s capacity and resources to adequately respond, identify and provide victims with specialized services as outlined in the Trafficking in Persons Act, are strained. Some victims without documentation are reluctant to report incidents as there is distrust of authorities and fear of arrest, detention, and deportation. There is also a fear of retaliation against their families in their countries of origin. The 2019 T&T government registration and extensions of work and stay permits exercise hopes to reduce risk of exploitation and abuse, by virtue of regularizing the status of vulnerable R&Ms.<sup>22</sup>

While interventions by CTU, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), Immigration and other government and state actors have led to the identification and rescue of victims and the detention of perpetrators, there is a need for strengthened capacity of the judicial system to aid in prosecution and convictions. Although national efforts have led to charges, there has not yet been a conviction of human trafficking perpetrators under the Trafficking in Persons Act.

## Achievements

Throughout the subregion, R4V partners have contributed to establishing or improving referral pathways to guarantee access to appropriate services and assistance for victims of trafficking, like legal advice, medical care, psychosocial support, shelter, food assistance, non-food assistance, training and sensitization. They have supported the drafting of SOPs to ensure a consistent and structured response, as well as respect for confidentiality and safety of victims. In addition, government and non-government officials and front-line responders have been trained on referral mechanisms and to apply protection principles when required, and sensitization campaigns were carried out throughout the sub-region.

Issues related to TiP are addressed in Protection Working Groups and promote a rights-based and survivor-centred approach to counter-trafficking activities. R4V partners also participated in Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) efforts to enhance multi country cooperation and joint operations in the sub region.

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21 “Searching for safety, Confronting Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Venezuelan Women and Girls”, Devon Cone and Melanie Teff, Field Report, August 2019, Refugee International. See also [here](#).

22 [The Government of Trinidad and Tobago announced that the permits would be extended until the end of December 2020.](#)



PEOPLE REACHED WITH  
ASSISTANCE RELATED TO  
TRAFFICKING, 2019-2021 (JUNE)

1,364

In **Aruba**, partners launched an awareness campaign on TiP prevention which included a series of webinars and the distribution of literature related to TiP prevention. Moreover, R4V organizations and the TiP/HT task force (CMMA)<sup>23</sup> initiated a service mapping exercise with all collaborating organizations to develop SOPs, trainings, and sensitization campaigns on TiP. Objectives of this effort was to further set tasks, roles and improve cooperation among actors including partners and NGOs. Objectives of this effort was to further set tasks, roles and improve cooperation among actors including partners and NGOs. Further, as part of an awareness raising campaign and in collaboration with R4V partners, The CMMA \*(Task Force) launched a film "[Otro Banda Di Lama](#)" ([Across the Ocean](#)) on the 10th April, 2021, a short film on human trafficking that focuses on the Venezuelan population coming to work to Aruba. In **Curaçao**, partners created a brochure related to TiP which was distributed in 2021. Additional literature on sexual exploitation in the context of TiP remain under review.

In the **DR** partners successfully carried out rescue operations, assisting trafficked Venezuelan women in the latter part of 2020. Furthermore, two partners carried out a joint Mapping of Actors, [launched in 2021](#). One R4V partner also provided support for reintegration, return, and technical support to the Office of the Special Prosecutor against Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons (PET) in 2021. The same partner continues to support the National Migration Institute and its national migration school with training on TiP to state institutions. They also assist the National School of Public Ministry in training prosecutors and provide capacity building to the Ministry of Women.

The Government of **Guyana** in collaboration with R4V partners conducted several anti-trafficking and xenophobia awareness activities in English and Spanish during 2020 and continued in 2021. The Working Group on Human Trafficking also focused on developing SOPs to identify, refer, assist, and protect VoTs. Partners and local NGOs conducted a walk-through public awareness campaign on TiP in two regions at the beginning of 2021 where novelty items, posters, and brochures branded with anti-trafficking messages were distributed.

R4V partners in **Trinidad and Tobago** provided victims of trafficking with food and non-food items, including clothing, basic needs including food, water, and medicines, as well as hygiene supplies, baby and dignity kits, and temporary accommodation support and support legal assistance. Following an assessment, VoTs are also provided with life-saving information that includes resources available to R&Ms, emergency hotlines, COVID-19 prevention tips and labour rights. Platform members also provided referrals to partners that provide sexual and reproductive health services, STI testing, general and emergency medical support, legal aid, emergency shelter, registration of children, ESL classes, vocational training and women empowerment sessions to VoTs.

Additionally, R4V partners support capacity development for Trinbagonian government officials, NGOs, and civil society to raise awareness on human trafficking and sexual exploitation. These trainings are conducted to enhance the national and community-level counter trafficking response on Protection, Case Management, GBV including TiP, Human Rights, MHPSS, and unaccompanied and separated children.

In 2021, the British High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago hosted a virtual panel discussion on trafficking from Venezuela and the impact on neighbouring states to raise awareness and offer a forum for sharing experiences and best practices to stimulate discussion and encourage greater regional cooperation. Also in March, the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with support from the Government of the United States and the Government of Switzerland, brought challenges related to prosecution of TiP cases to the spotlight through an event entitled "*Technical Dialogue: Responses from Criminal Justice, Human Trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean: Voices from the exercise of the Judiciary.*"

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23 CMMA- The Coordination Center for HT/HS

## Challenges and Gaps

In a context of porous borders and irregular movements, **the identification of victims** is one of the main challenges in striving to counter trafficking in the Caribbean. After the implementation of visa requirements and the growing use of irregular border crossings, including creation of new routes, identification has become increasingly difficult, and there is consensus that underreporting of cases of VoT is leading to inaccurate numbers. At official entry points, the identification task is also challenging as many immigration officials are not specifically trained to detect signs of trafficking and victims may be reluctant to come forward or seek assistance for fear of reprisals or deportation.

Regarding **assistance** to identified victims, the counter trafficking institutional structure in Caribbean countries tends to focus on transnational crime and is not fully prepared to provide adequate humanitarian support, as it lacks specialized care services to protect and assist victims. Psychosocial, legal, and medical support offered by social services are generally not adapted to cater to the special needs of survivors of trafficking and lack a gender, culturally sensitive, child-friendly, or survivor-centered approach. Its structure relies on TIP services which are not always available in Spanish, where this is not an official language. Specialized shelters which provide all necessary services, a crucial element in keeping victims safe and out of traffickers' reach, are insufficient throughout the sub-region. Limited shelter options are compounded by high rental costs, which put individuals who are already in vulnerable conditions, at risk of eviction and of falling again prey to dangerous criminal networks.

Options for **long term solutions and re-integration** of survivors are limited. In many of the countries, legal pathways to regularize migratory status and obtain long-term permits, hence access to formal labor markets, are scarce. Survivors can only resort to informal livelihoods, which is not conducive to sustainable integration in the host country. This could also lead to dependency on external aid and the risk of returning to situations of exploitation due to difficulties in sourcing basic needs.

**Prosecution** processes continue to be lengthy and often discourages victims from pursuing the judiciary path. Building trust between victims and law enforcement actors requires continuous effort to strengthen the identification of victims and prosecution of offenders. Finally, **regional cooperation** within the existing frameworks of the CARICOM and CMC needs to be enhanced through increased information sharing agreements and joint investigation processes. Cooperation with the country of origin also needs to be strengthened.

The **COVID-19 outbreak** and subsequent lockdown measures further hindered the identification of victims and integration processes. The virus has not reduced human trafficking but instead led traffickers to shift locations and use less conspicuous modalities. Economic constraints due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions could put R&Ms at further risk of being trafficked and exploited. In parallel, the presence of the virus has prompted humanitarian actors to prioritize emergencies and lifesaving activities. In so doing, resources became available to support counter trafficking mechanisms, at least in the initial phase of the pandemic. The areas of security and healthcare have also been negatively impacted by staff rotations in strategic positions during the pandemic.



## Way Forward

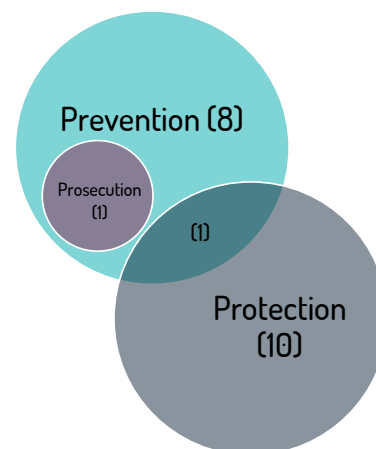
The R4V Platform will continue to support national efforts in the fields of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnerships.

**Prevention** will consist of bilingual awareness raising campaigns in public places and outreach activities to host and support displaced communities, with strong messages against the normalization/acceptance of sexual and labour exploitation that prevails in some countries of the sub-region. Prevention and awareness campaigns should also shift their focus from the victims and survivors to changing cultural patterns and behaviours of perpetrators. Assessment exercises to take stock of the specificities of the trafficking and smuggling situation in the five countries should also be conducted with partners to identify gaps, missing information, and ways to improve existing support mechanisms, ensuring access to information in remote areas and reaching out to the most vulnerable groups including people lacking resources such as internet, elderly, persons with specific needs and children.

**Protection** activities will seek to improve identification of victims and offer an enhanced protective and integrative response in the long term, with access to residency, sustainable livelihoods, and national protection systems. Advocacy to establish and strengthen asylum systems and access to international protection will be pursued. Partners will aim to reinforce protection mechanisms, inclusive of case management and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), to better respond to incidents, while engaging and supporting relevant stakeholders in responding to protection issues of VoTs and other vulnerable refugees and migrants, through capacity and technical assistance/advice. At the regional level, efforts will be made to take part in a victims' protection scheme that will allow relocation to third countries when suitable solutions within the receiving country are not available. Furthermore, clear, and standardized referral pathways will be established, and partners will provide direct emergency assistance to VoTs and vulnerable refugees and migrants. Workshops related to SOPs will also be prioritized for stakeholders.

**Protection and Prosecution** will also be supported through capacity development for care providers and law enforcement actors, with the objective of strengthening the victim-centered approach. Service providers will be assisted in adjusting their working modalities to physical distancing as long as the COVID-19 pandemic impacts the operational context. Where requested, R4V partners will provide legal advice to update, harmonize and improve national legislations, so they become consistent with international obligations and adjust to the numerous challenges faced by counter trafficking activities in the Caribbean.

**Partnerships** will involve enhanced sub-regional and regional coordination and collaboration with multi-country activities and the regular sharing of information.



*Number of activities by R4V partners in TIP response. Source: 2021 RMRP*