

REPORT

STUDY ON THE PROTECTION SITUATION OF VENEZUELAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE CARIBBEAN

November 2021



In the framework of



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GLOSSARY

CSO	is an umbrella term for Civil Society Organizations. For example, NGOs, NPOs, Faith-Based Organizations, International Agencies, Grassroots Groups, Red Cross Movement, or any other similar organization.
Interviewee	is a person that participated in an in-depth interview or on a focus group discussion during the research process.
Migrant	as an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. (International Organization for Migration 2019, 132).
Participant Group	is the category to which each interviewee or participant of this study is associated, including CSO, Government, refugees and migrants or local population.
Protection	is “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. International Human Rights law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law, International Refugee Law (IRL).” (IASC Protection Definition in Inter-Agency Standing Committee W/D and Caverzasio 2001).
Refugee and migrant participant group	is the name given to the participant group of this research which includes Venezuelan refugees and migrants.
Refugee	for the purposes of this study is a person recognized as refugee by a State or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, based on objective criteria related to the circumstances in their country of origin, which justify a presumption that they meet the criteria of the applicable refugee definition. (International Organization for Migration 2019, 171).
Smuggling (of migrants)	The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the irregular entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident. (International Organization for Migration 2019, 199).
Trafficking in Persons/Human Trafficking	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, at a minimum, the exploitation of 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. (International Organization for Migration 2019, 216).
R4V	is the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform of the Response for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This study was developed to identify current protection needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Aruba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago and present recommendations for strengthened protection responses. The study is presented in line with the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) commitment to protection as a central responsibility of its humanitarian response. It has been developed as part of the efforts of the Regional Protection Sector and the Sub-Regional Platform for the Caribbean.

Qualitative research was conducted through a stakeholder analysis to identify key informants for interviews and through focus groups discussions in collaboration with R4V partners. Additionally, data was collected via focused ethnographic observation through field visits.

Through this research, the main risks identified for refugees and migrants from Venezuela are described as follows. This list is not exhaustive, it just enounces those risks that were more frequently identified. Some of them should be observed on a wider scope to understand people vulnerability and exposure to new risks.

- Detention and deportation due to the lack of regular status.
- Violence, exploitation and abuse aimed at refugees and migrants due to increasing discrimination, xenophobia, usually focused on certain economic sectors or activities.
- Becoming victims of labor exploitation as a result of engaging in the informal labor market due to lack of documentation and work permits.
- Becoming victims of gender-based violence due to living conditions, overcrowding, and unequal opportunities.
- Health risks because of lack of access to basic services in irregular settlements (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene).
- Health risks because of lack of access to public or private health services.
- Health risks because of lack of access to necessities like food, non-food items, and dignified shelter.

- Becoming victims of human trafficking (VoTs) because of deception and false promises of dignified working conditions abroad.
- Becoming victims of violent acts and human rights violations because of smugglers and organized crime networks taking advantage of the desire of refugees and migrants to enter a country.
- Statelessness because of denial of access to local documentation, nationality of the country where a child is born, or denial of consular services.
- Refugees and migrants unable to access national protection systems while also not finding the conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return to their country of origin, thus remaining outside of any protection scheme.

A series of recommendations to respond to these protection needs are presented for international organizations (IOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), governments, host communities and refugees and migrants in the following areas/fields/sectors:

1. Communication and information
2. Cultural integration and inter-cultural understanding
3. Data generation
4. Access to housing, including shelter, and safe space
5. National policy making (including asylum access and regularization)
6. Capacity building
7. Access to work
8. Advocacy

Finally, additional information was noted for protection intervention design through a Do No Harm perspective and specific recommendations on policy development and project programming for all stakeholders involved in this research.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, the flow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants' and migration patterns have changed in the Caribbean countries that are in close proximity to Venezuela. The Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V¹ estimated that 224,000 Venezuelans would be present in the Caribbean by the end of 2021, with only 21,118 having regular status², including residence permits. Mixed flows from Venezuela include refugees and migrants in a constantly changing context. The period 2020- 2021 has been shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. If the migration, displacement, and population movement dynamics continue as before the pandemic, it is foreseeable that the softening of lockdown measures will lead to increased inflows from Venezuela to neighboring countries. Almost all refugees and migrants interviewed for this study indicated that in the short term they do not intend to leave the country where they are currently residing.

The pandemic has further exacerbated already existing challenges faced by Venezuelan refugees and migrants in countries of transit and destination. The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region is facing its biggest recession of the last century, although 2021's first semester showed some signs of improvement. According to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (World Bank 2021³), education access, general health access, work opportunities, extreme poverty and income inequality will increase due to the pandemic impacts. Also, a xenophobic discourse and sentiment has been nourished in some locations by the fear

of competition for jobs and an increase in crime. According to interviewees for this study, there is a strong perception that migration does not benefit the national economies, even though some evidence such as business opening, workers strengthening the labor market, capacity building, to name a few –stated by interviewees– may prove otherwise. Social networks and mass media influence each country's public perceptions related to asylum and migration dynamics, often with misinformation. These media tools have also been criticized for inciting xenophobia by labelling refugees and migrants as criminals.

1 <https://www.r4v.info/en/document/r4v-situation-report-caribbean-april-2021>

2 Projections may change since, in April 2021, the Dominican Republic adopted a "normalization plan" that aims at regularizing an estimate of 100,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants already residing in the country.

3 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/lac/overview>

Aruba, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago are the five countries hosting the highest number of Venezuelans in the Caribbean (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V, 2020a⁴). Venezuelans often travel irregularly or on tourist visas to these Caribbean countries. Most migrants do not have regular migratory status and remain undocumented, and asylum procedures remain extremely limited. By 2019, these five countries made entry visas a requirement for Venezuelans (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V, 2020a). Additionally, there are many Venezuelans who entered regularly and are now in situations where they are unable to extend their visas in the five countries and as a result have fallen into irregular status as overstayers. Some of them are not necessarily accessing existing protection systems. With the arrival of more refugees and migrants, wages and labor will be easily replaceable, so one may expect to see the increasing exploitation of refugees and migrants both in the formal and informal sectors (based on Hill 2019⁵).

More than 80% of refugees and migrants interviewed mentioned that they had experienced challenges because of their irregular status. Some of them perceived that there is a lack of a comprehensive protection program (one that includes access to documentation, formal work, shelter, and basic services all together) that could lead to their future economic autonomy. Without such support, individuals and families often search for a way to resolve these challenges on their own. This perception was also shared by some interviewees from local CSOs and grassroots organizations in all five countries. Refugees and migrants relying on the informal sector for protection has had a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Migration from Venezuela has the potential to enhance economic growth in the long term, but it is also creating tangible short-term challenges for schools, hospitals, and infrastructure amidst the pandemic in some of these countries which were already facing capacity challenges. It is expected that there will be further increases in irregular entries (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V, 2020a) leading to greater protection risks due to border closures, movement and entry restrictions and the increase of security agents on borders, because of COVID-19 preventative measures, which have challenged planning and response from governments, CSO, and international organizations throughout the region.

It is also important to consider that interviewees in all five countries positive perceptions coincided over the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in host communities. Residents, authorities, and CSOs talked about the contribution of refugees and migrants to the local economies. As an interviewee (CSO) said “migration can be positive, contribute to development, especially when safe, dignified, and regular”. Not only as part of their inclusion in the informal workforce, but also, skilled workers and highly educated professionals among them have been able to offer their services. It also stands out that for their skills and knowledge-sharing, refugees and migrants can contribute to their host communities.

Finally, Venezuelan refugees and migrants interviewed considered that some of the basic issues, like health services and food security that motivated their displacement, were improving in their host communities before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted.

1.1 STUDY SCOPE

This research aimed to better understand the protection needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Aruba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. These five countries constitute the Caribbean subregion of the R4V platform. Key protection needs had been identified in the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) in 2021 before the study: access to food, shelter, child protection, addressing gender-based violence and combating human trafficking and smuggling. One of the objectives of this study was to gather more information on each of these categories and to identify others for the sub-region.

Due to the size of the region, its geographical diversity, and the universe of refugees and migrants, a selection of key interviews was done with support of R4V partners. Participants included civil society organizations (CSOs) that provide humanitarian help for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, international organizations (IOs), local and national authorities, and refugees and migrants themselves. A detailed list of interviewees, focus groups, and field activities is included in section 5 of this report. Methodology, research tools, and questionnaires are available in Annex 1.

4 <https://www.r4v.info/sites/default/files/2021-06/Background%20Notes%20-%20Trafficking%20in%20Persons.pdf>

5 <https://scripties.uba.uva.nl/download?fid=673836>

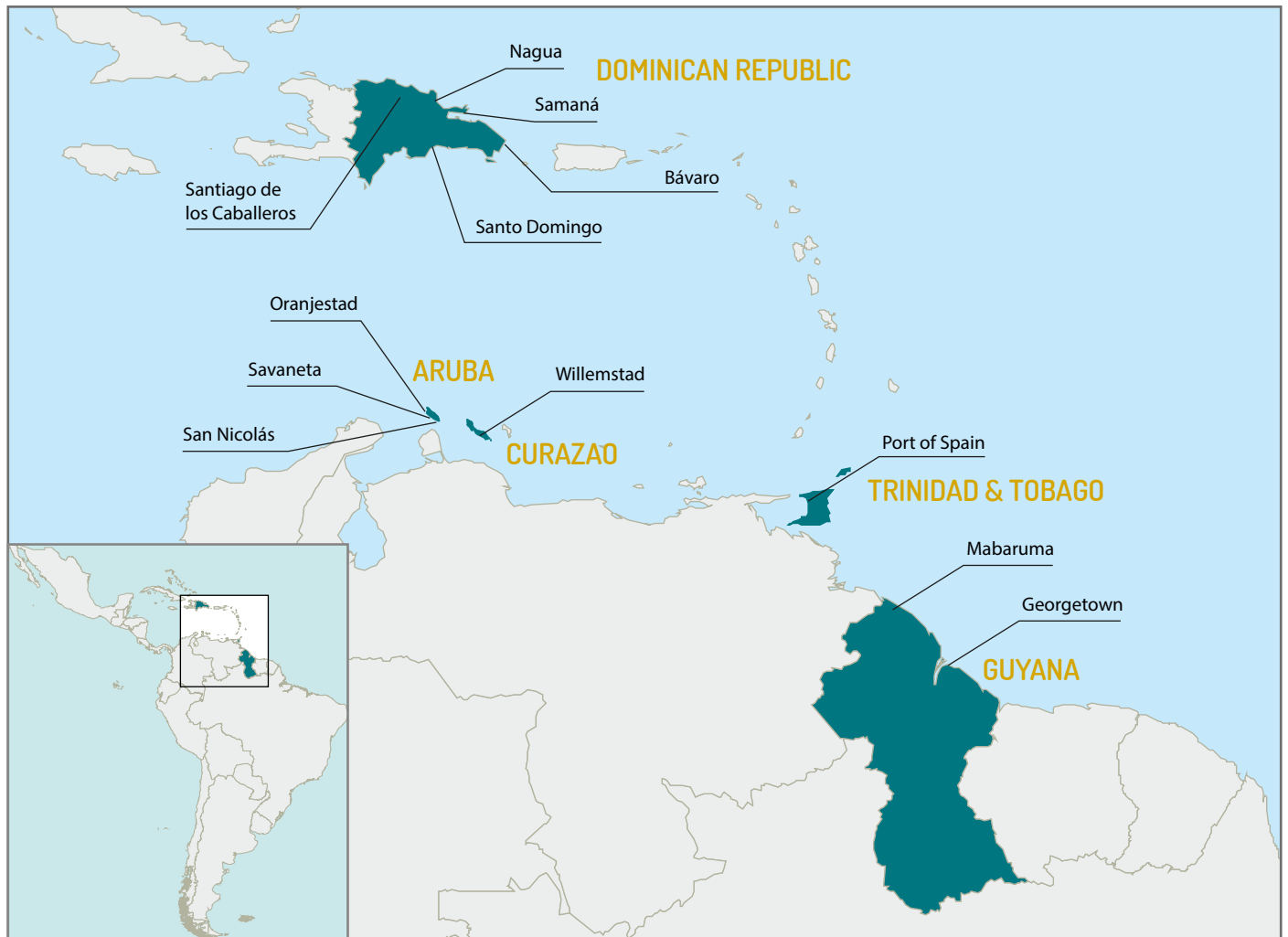
The table below details participant groups of persons (all adults) interviewed per country:

COUNTRY AND PARTICIPANT GROUPS	PARTICIPANTS	WOMEN	MEN	%	LOCALITIES OF FIELDWORK and of residence of participants*
 Aruba	31	20	11	22%	Aruba
Civil Society Organizations	11	5	6		Oranjestad
Governments (National)	5	4	1		Savaneta
Refugees and Migrants	13	10	3		San Nicolás
International Organizations	2	1	1		
 Curaçao	14	9	5	10%	Curaçao
Civil Society Organizations	4	3	1		Willemstad
Governments (National)	3	1	2		
Refugees and Migrants	6	4	2		
International Organizations	1	1			
 Dominican Republic	29	17	12	20%	Dominican Republic
Civil Society Organizations	13	7	6		Santo Domingo
Refugees and Migrants	15	9	6		Bávaro
International Organizations	1	1			Santiago de los Caballeros
					Nagua
					Samaná
 Guyana	43	22	21	30%	Guyana
Civil Society Organizations	1		1		Georgetown
Governments (Local)	3	1	2		Mabaruma
Refugees and Migrants	28	15	13		
International Organizations	11	6	5		
 Trinidad and Tobago	25	17	8	18%	Trinidad and Tobago**
Civil Society Organizations	4	3	1		Port of Spain
Governments (National)	6	5	1		
Refugees and Migrants	5	3	2		
International Organizations	10	6	4		
Total	142	85	57	100%	

*Where it was possible to register

**It was not possible to conduct fieldwork in Trinidad and Tobago due to COVID-19 restrictions.

MAP 1. Localities of residence of participants and fieldwork.



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration or R4V.

1.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CARIBBEAN SUBREGION: CONTEXT⁶

The Caribbean sub-region of the Inter-Agency Platform constitutes the countries that are part of the Caribbean Area surrounding Venezuela where most regularly refugees and migrants arrive to by land, sea, and air. It was stated by interviewees that the closer the countries, the easier it is to travel through short trips, for example to Aruba and Curaçao, and specifically to Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana. Most refugees and migrants from Venezuela who arrive in the Dominican Republic travel by airplane.

In the last four years there has been a significant increase in the influx of arrivals from Venezuela. Some of them had never been in these countries before and were searching for a place with more work opportunities, access to services, or better wages. Others used to travel on a cyclical or temporary basis (for business, seasonal work, or even leisure) to some of these countries but that changed due to social, economic, or political factors. Some of these individuals decided not to return to Venezuela and stay in these countries. As one of them said, “here you were able to make some US dollars to send back home. The *Bolívar* was devaluating and here you could earn more.” Another interviewee said that “things were getting worse back home. The last time I went back

⁶ On April 12, 2018, the UN Secretary-General, tasked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to lead and coordinate the response for the Venezuelan refugee and migrant situation at the regional level. The two agencies have since established an inclusive, overarching Regional Inter-Agency Platform (R4V) to steer the response to the Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The R4V aims at developing a coherent and coordinated regional operational response, in support of government authorities and national platforms, covering 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The R4V works through a humanitarian structure of nine thematic sectors to coordinate the operational response. It is composed of a regional platform, eight national platforms, and three sub-regional platforms.

I understood that I needed to leave.” Others just travelled from Venezuela “to get some dollars from ATMs” as in Aruba.

Venezuela has been an important social, cultural, and economical reference for the Caribbean. A common perception found in interviews, from all groups, was that the Caribbean countries used to be very fond of Venezuelan tourists just a decade ago. Travel for business, studies, and cultural exchange used to be very common in the early 2000s. Expressions like tourists and travelers from “Saudi Venezuela” were used to refer to Venezuelans who came from a land of available abundant resources due to oil extraction. This reference to economic growth linked to the oil industry was expressed by interviewees from all groups. In some of the islands, interviewees said that tourism from Venezuela was one of their biggest markets. As a sizable country with resources, Venezuela still plays an important regional role. Interviewees (all groups) said that there are still relations between countries that go from family level (parents, children) to State level (between governments and businesses). Interviewees (from all groups) agreed that all these countries share some common characteristics that are important to understand the context and to determine refugee and migrants' needs for protection.

For example, refugees and migrants interviewed in the Dominican Republic perceived this country to be very similar to their own in comparison to interviewees in other countries. But, apart from the Spanish language shared with Venezuela, interviewees in other countries also pointed out aspects of decades of different regional interactions. For example, interviewees said that historically, people from all five countries have also been migrants in Venezuela. As a Venezuelan interviewee in Guyana said “people [migrated to Venezuela] because of the economic boom, work permits were easy to obtain. You were able to find people from all around the world [in Venezuela]”. During the 1980s and 1990s, foreign nationals doubled in Venezuela (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2011, 40). Some interviewees (CSO, refugee and migrant participant groups) said that “Venezuelans were good with us, some of us know that. They used to take everybody in, now it is our turn”. For example Trinidadians visited as tourists, and the country purchased oil from Venezuela, but mainly Guyanese would have gone to Venezuela to work.

In social and cultural terms, Venezuelan refugees and migrants are no strangers to these five countries. What is new for them is the transformation of the perception towards them. Most of them are not tourists anymore, they are job seekers as well. New types of conflicts arise because of the competition for the same resources between refugees and migrants and nationals. As the Caribbean is a region with a

well-developed touristic industry, people used to travel from Venezuela for recreation. Residents of the five countries of the Caribbean subregion associate Venezuelans with money-spending tourists. There was a generalized perception among interviewees, especially in island destinations with family ties and with more Spanish speaking population (Aruba, Curaçao, and Dominican Republic). Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana were less familiar. Now the image of these “others”, of these new residents that arrive as refugees and migrants, have changed.

How local inhabitants perceive them and how refugees and migrants perceive themselves is key to understanding identity transformations. Interviewees of all participant groups agreed that these changes have been a process. During the last five years, it was perceived that less Venezuelans were returning to their home country, preferring to stay in the receiving Caribbean country. Over the course of the last five years, people arrived with tourist stamps or visas and extended their stay or overstayed their visas. Refugees and migrants with more resources applied for investor's visas or paid for residence permits. Depending on how they arrived, their economic resources, their documentation and access to regularization, different needs for the protection of refugees and migrants emerged. Therefore, refugees and migrants' needs cannot be generalized. Several factors need to be considered to understand the different needs they may have: the type of route and transport used to migrate, the required documentation and the access to basic services during their transit and at their arrival, such as food and shelter, and inclusion in national protection systems for assistance and protection on fulfillment of their rights.

Not only do refugees and migrants perceptions change after their arrival to a new country, but also the communities where they arrive are impacted by their migration processes. Governments and organizations need to make decisions. Which services can be provided and how? How will cultural exchanges take place to understand their culture and their needs? What benefits can they obtain as a society from their arrival? What are the costs of hosting them? Is there a way to include and integrate or should they remain *foreigners forever*?

When analyzing this context, cultural exchange and practices are of considerable importance. According to interviewees from all participant groups, this is key to addressing people's needs and this new regional dynamic.

1.2.1 Challenges for National Policy Implementation related to Refugee and Migrant Protection

All interviewees share the perspective that none of the five countries of the Caribbean subregion were prepared with a fully adequate legal framework or sufficient procedures or mechanisms for refugees and migrant's full protection. Also, these countries were already hosting refugees and migrants from Haiti, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, among other nationalities. Respondents felt that while some countries have decided to include assistance to refugees and migrants as part of their public policies, more capacity building for their staff such as training on refugee and migrant protection and assistance and language skills, as well as financial resources are needed.

According to some interviewees (CSO), harmful practices and restrictive policies have also been adopted as a response to this situation. "Governments try to protect their population; and migration is often seen as a threat", said an interviewee. Another interviewee (CSO) explained that "To stop deportations and police raids, you need political will. If you have political will, you can enable refugee and migrant regularization, give work permits, let them access public services and get respect for their rights."

In some instances, it was observed through the interviews that stakeholders preferred not to make decisions or install a policy response. An interviewee (CSO) said, "Some islands are still in a position of not making a decision". Whether to accept refugees and migrants or exclude them has become a difficult decision, often because these decisions come with a political cost, whether from opposing parties or their own constituents.

Furthermore, for countries like Aruba and Curaçao, as constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, need to consider other policy frameworks in installing their asylum systems and migration policies.⁷ Also, there is the fear of creating a "pull factor" of more people arriving that threatens other social aspects in a small country⁸. For example, an interviewee (CSO) in Aruba said, "Small islands have less than 120,000 inhabitants". Respondents noted that

sometimes they lack staff but also, they identify a need for capacity building for public servants.

Without adequate national policies to attend to the needs of refugees and migrants, it is also difficult to ensure protection and to provide basic services and access to rights. A Venezuelan asylum seeker or a migrant with no regular status will rarely go to the police for fear of detention and deportation. "Some government officials still do not understand that we are afraid of migration police." And it is the same on the other side in some countries, "police also have problems locating migrants and communicating with them."

1.2.2 The Venezuelan Migration Experience: Reality and Expectations

In all interviews, Venezuelan refugees and migrants expressed high expectations of finding a better life when leaving their home country. Perhaps for some people, movement is all about expectations. Phrases like, "I feel frustration, I don't have either one [my past reality] nor the other [the expected one]" were repeated often.

It was common to hear interviewees considering that "the best is about to come." Or that difficulties are temporary. Some reported that they would continue with their original plan, while others changed their initial plan. "I will just be here for some months, make some money and go to the United States. That was what I thought, but I have been here for two years now." This process is also part of the desire of a status regularization or getting a work or residence permit. When expectations meet reality, some refugees and migrants experience stress and anxiety.

This is a major issue for protection because information gaps make refugees and migrants vulnerable, usually to gender-based violence and exploitation, frequently because they cannot find a solution to their needs. For example, a CSO interviewee said, "Women sometimes think that the only possible road to get documentation is through a man [marriage or having a child]." This will be further elaborated in the later sections.

⁷ Foreign policy is a competency of the Kingdom (access to international instruments) but the countries have the responsibility of taking steps to ensure treaty obligations are met. Migration is a local competency in both Aruba and Curaçao. Curaçao does not consider itself bound to the 1951 Refugee Convention whereas Aruba is a signatory and has established a domestic asylum system which is separate from the Dutch asylum system.

⁸ This is associated with the condition of "insularity" that is used to explain the limitations of certain Caribbean States to fully address their challenges or needs by themselves because of their limited resources, area, and population.

2. KEY FINDINGS: PROTECTION NEEDS FOR VENEZUELAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN ARUBA, CURAÇAO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, GUYANA, AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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The following risks and needs for Venezuelan refugees and migrants are shared by interviewees in all countries, although it was stated that not all individuals, families or groups are at the same levels of risk and varies in each country.

2.1 ACCESS TO DOCUMENTATION AND REGULARIZATION

Lack of formal documentation such as residence, asylum process, work, or student permits were identified as a key and major risk by interviewees of all participant groups. The degree of priority depends on the country where they are. Access to a regular status is perceived as the first brick of a protection building that enables refugees and migrants to access all other types of public services. Interviewees and several studies show that there are many Venezuelans in Caribbean countries who entered regularly and are now in situations where they are unable to extend their visas in the five countries and as a result are falling into irregular status.

There are two types of refugees and migrants that were identified by interviewees of all participant groups that are facing vulnerability without a regular status:

- **Unregistered or undocumented.** Refugees and migrants who entered the country without proper documentation (International Organization for Migration 2019, 223), through regular or irregular border points, or that entered as tourists and extended their stay without authorization. They “can find themselves as undocumented in one of

the following two ways. First, they have documentation that acts as proof of identity, but they do not have documentation that proves their right to enter and stay in the country, or such documentation is fraudulent or no longer valid [...] Secondly, they do not hold any form of documentation that proves their identity, nor do they have any other proof of their right to enter and stay in the country.” (International Organization for Migration 2019, 223)

- **Irregular situation due to/linked to COVID-19.** Refugees and migrants who used to have regular migration status and were not able to update their documents because of lockdown limitations or interruption of asylum or immigration procedures. This was mentioned specifically by refugees and migrants interviewed in Aruba, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Interviewees from CSOs and refugee and migrant groups consider that, although some countries currently have, or had in recent years, public programs for normalization and regularization, these are not enough to respond to all protection needs. Officials from CSOs and international organizations with more experience on this subject agree that while no further legal frameworks are in place for regularization “things will be the same. People get a permit

but do not renew it due to: lack of resources, not fulfilling the requirements, long processing times, fear of deportation or government's officials making it difficult to do so. A humanitarian and comprehensive immigration policy would allow people to enter a country regularly, avoid exploitation, reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance the local economy through prioritizing activities on which new arrivals may get a job," an interviewee said.

Current initiatives of a temporary character were noted such as in Curaçao where the "government launched a temporary regularization program [...] that allows all migrants who entered the country regularly on or before March 13, 2020, to apply for a temporary one-year residence permit. The status additionally extends protection from deportation until September 22, 2021." Also, "the Dominican Republic in January introduced a temporary regularization program that allows Venezuelans who entered the country regularly between January 2014 and March 2020 to gain temporary protection through a 60-day nonresident legal status. This status will be renewed until the National Migration Council recommends the program's termination and will allow recipients to switch to a renewable, one-year student or temporary work visa, which are normally not accessible for those already present in the country." (Amaral 2021) Trinidad and Tobago's case is also of important consideration. According to the Internal Detention Center, over 80% of detained migrants were from Venezuela (Rodriguez and Collins 2021). "In June 2019, prior to the pandemic, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) conducted a Venezuelan Registration Exercise. This exercise registered 16,523 Venezuelan nationals and authorized successfully screened persons, in irregular circumstances, to work for a period of one year in Trinidad and Tobago with the possibility for six-month renewals upon expiry" (International Organization for Migration 2020).

Lack of documentation remains among the most pressing protection concerns for Venezuelan refugees and migrants. For example, during COVID-19 related lockdowns, refugees and migrants interviewed in Curaçao said that there were reported situations where some governments required an ID/passport for grocery shopping during restricted time windows which were a result of COVID-19 lock down measures. Therefore, this situation limited internal mobilization of refugees and migrants with no documents. Furthermore, lacking documents may reduce their willingness to report health conditions for fear of being identified, detained, or deported (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V, 2020b).

Interviewees from all countries said that they had trouble getting their own national documents when authorities in their host countries require them. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, recent surveys have shown (Chaves-González and Echeverría-Estrada 2020, 9, 11) that several Venezuelan refugees and migrants crossed while carrying only a national ID card from their home country, and not a passport. Most of them did not bring these documents with them, and, currently, all refugees and migrants interviewed agreed that it is even harder to get any of these documents nowadays. Some Venezuelan consulates lack personnel. An interviewee said, "we have to pay certain fees for our requests to go through". When immediate documents are necessary, some can get a consular letter that shows their basic data but not all governmental offices in the host countries accept it. In other cases, interviewees claimed that there is a corruption network running where you can get a passport outside of the official process in less than 48 hours through an international mail courier if you pay 700 or 800 USD.

Regarding international protection, there is limited asylum capacity in the Caribbean (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V, 2021a). Refugees and migrants face the lack of alternative regular stay pathways and delayed decisions in refugee status determination procedures, sometimes resulting in prolonged detention in inadequate conditions. Noteworthy is that, although a person, family or community fulfills the requirements to seek asylum not all countries recognize this category. As an interviewee from a CSO said, "some government officials actually prefer for us not to use the word refugee since not all countries are signatories of the 1951 convention."

Children's access to birth registration is especially important to access protection systems and avoid the risk of statelessness. Interviewees coincided that it is not always possible to get proper documentation when they leave Venezuela or national documents when born in the host country without receiving the country's nationality.

Another aspect to consider is that certain countries (Aruba and Curaçao, for example) require refugees and migrants to have a sponsor⁹, who is a national of the host country and who will assume responsibility for them as part of a work permit process. After the COVID-19 lockdowns, many interviewed refugees and migrants in these two countries explained that they had lost guarantors, and subsequently lost work permits due to forced closure of businesses.

9 A resident/citizen acting as a sponsor is required to obtain a work permit or to be released from detention.

Regularization programs are not new in some of these countries. Interviewees from all countries referred to programs in the past. As an interviewee (CSO) said, “It is a never-ending story. You will need to conduct special programs to regularize people forever because you do not have a proper [sustainable] legal framework for the subject.” Also, government and CSO interviewees explained that these programs usually leave some refugees and migrants out such as persons who arrived after the program was implemented.

Another issue identified is the vulnerability of people living with HIV or with other chronic diseases. For example, it was reported for Aruba that the legal framework does not facilitate refugees and migrants with specific health conditions to apply for a regular status and have no other option to access work permits.

Furthermore, some interviewees (CSO, refugees and migrants) said decreasing mental health and psychosocial wellbeing is part of the impacts of not being able to obtain a regular status. A respondent said, “People get paranoid, they fear everybody, they do not know who they can trust. Stress builds up and mental health deteriorates.”

2.2 ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS (FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION, AND SHELTER)

Food items, shelter, nutrition, and non-food items were mentioned by all interviewees as priorities to achieve the protection of refugees and migrants. “There are three, four families living in the same house”, said an interviewee from a CSO, “somebody needs to do something, it is not sustainable”. Lack of regular status leading to inability to exercise their rights led interviewees to consider themselves at more risk, especially because of the lack of access to the formal labor market. In some countries, “if you resolve the status regularization, then you give refugees and migrants tools to get these basic needs by themselves, but meanwhile it is not possible, they will need these sooner or later” (CSO). If governments and institutions cannot independently provide them, then people will be searching with their own means to find food and shelter. This need increased significantly after COVID lockdowns. “You can see it on the lists [of shared beneficiaries]”, said a CSO staff consulted.

In some countries nationals are facing the same problem. “With COVID this became a necessity for many, especially

in areas dependent on tourism”. For example, “in Curaçao, the economic crisis was [there] before COVID-19. Also, the economic actions [financial embargo, business, and trade restrictions] against Venezuelan oil and industry affected the island. A large number of jobs were lost. Not only do Venezuelans need support, but also a lot of the Caribbean citizens.”

Lockdown measures and economic impacts of COVID-19 increased the necessities of several families in all countries and interviewees said it was not possible to fulfill their basic needs. The need for adequate shelter also increased, according to authorities interviewed in all countries. “Some families have similar stories. Sometimes, the migration police asked us to find shelter for women and children having suffered from gender-based violence.” Several refugees and migrants in Aruba and Curaçao stated that they had received money or food vouchers; other countries provided support for unemployed persons, but interviewees agreed that the assistance was not always enough; for example, in some instances, threats of evictions continued for certain families.

2.3 ACCESS TO HEALTH

Another priority need identified for Venezuelan refugees and migrants to ensure their protection is access to health, and this includes health assistance in emergency, treatment for chronic diseases, preventive medicine, mental health, and psychosocial support. Primary healthcare may be available, although not always easily accessible (Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Guyana, and the Dominican Republic). In some of the countries, especially Trinidad and Tobago and Dominican Republic, there are challenges to access secondary and tertiary health.¹⁰ As a CSO interviewee said, “health systems are underfunded, overcrowded, and sometimes insufficient”. The refugee and migrant influx increased the demand for health services. The result has been a lack of access to healthcare services and having to resort to private services which tend to be expensive. Due to this situation, the health of refugees and migrants who report migrating for better access to health services, in some cases, is worsening. An interviewee (government) said that “it is not unusual for [refugees and migrants] to contract new diseases, [when] they came here for treatment.” In Guyana, for example, this situation has been reported for dengue. As an interviewee (CSO) said “Aruba also mentioned that since COVID-19, people seem to have forgotten other diseases and have not prepared for dengue which usually

¹⁰ Costs are usually the biggest barrier.

spikes in the rainy season. Some countries reported that Venezuelans contracted measles and lice, as in their home country they had not been vaccinated and medicines to prevent lice were not available.”

There is also a link between access to documentation and health. At a regional level¹¹, most of refugees and migrants who seek health services have a regular status. “Twenty-nine per cent of women and 24 per cent of men who have access to health services have been to a social security hospital. Of the group of women who reported that they have been to the hospital, 37 per cent are refugees or asylum seekers, 34 per cent are residents and six per cent have no regular migration status” (International Organization for Migration 2021,1) Interviewees (all groups and countries) concur that when it is possible to access medical treatment¹², refugees and migrants often end up with huge debts. For example, in Aruba an interviewee said, “If you give birth to a child then you may have an unpayable debt with the hospital.” Another interviewee (CSO) expressed, “In Trinidad and Tobago, refugee and migrant women can deliver their babies in government hospitals for free, but they cannot, for example, get treatment for cancer and other specialized treatments.”

Another challenge in accessing health services is information management when systems are not equipped to include refugees and migrants or have barriers for irregular migrants. Undocumented refugees and migrants can be difficult to track in some health systems, thus it is difficult to continue to provide medical assistance. An interviewee (CSO) stated “You can give them basic medication, check blood pressure, assess if there is a need for an urgent operation, but there is no follow up. You are not able to find them again later.” Also, problems were identified due to language barriers. In Guyana, a government interviewee said that it is hard to get “bilingual medical staff in each community that can help identify [refugees and migrants in need] particularly at hard-to-reach areas.” The same situation was identified in Trinidad and Tobago. When medical assistance is made possible, refugees and migrants may not be able to get their medication or follow their treatment, a common situation when only emergency care is guaranteed: “When the clients get their prescriptions, there is no way to monitor them to get assistance. Treatment cycles can't be completed.”

Some governments have searched for solutions, such as public and CSO initiatives like health services (*Salú pa Tur* in Curaçao stands out as an example), fee waivers in certain hospitals

for some special cases, and collective health insurances managed by CSOs (Dominican Republic). Also, Venezuelan communities organize crowdfunding, or fundraising events and R4V partners also assist with medicines, treatments and medical supplies. Responding to health needs remain a humanitarian priority leading to protection, according to interviewees from all participant groups.

Interviewees from CSOs, as well as refugees and migrants, pointed out that health needs for people with physical and mental disabilities are usually left aside from protection programs. Some of them left Venezuela searching for medical assistance, others acquired a disability abroad after an accident or disease. In any case, limited access to services was identified. “Maybe you can get some pills, but if you cannot pay you are left out of other services” said an interviewee in Curaçao. Another interviewee expressed that “if you get a disability and you have no access to health services, then the only thing you can do is learn how to live with it. You may get something to help you out through charity, but not a lot.” Another vulnerability issue is that some people with disabilities do not have a formal diagnosis and thus are not able to receive medical treatment. As an interviewee (CSO) said “local people with disabilities are also left aside, so we can hardly expect better treatment for a refugee or migrant.” Also, the same participant expressed that “protection should focus on avoiding more people getting ill, for example providing mental health treatments, and also formal [regulated] work could reduce labor accidents.”

2.3.1 Health in the context of COVID-19

Regarding access to health, interviewees agreed (across all participant groups) that problems with access to health services also existed for nationals, not only for refugees and migrants, after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region. In some countries (Aruba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic) local solidarity groups and community networks (usually WhatsApp groups) are still working as communication channels and health services locators. As an interviewee (Aruba) said, “We just go to the hospital if there was no other choice, but we really prefer to stay at home. How would we pay later for the service?” Also, quarantine facilities were unavailable for most families. “We picked a room or gave our sick family member a corner of a room and did not let him move from there. For all of us to be sick was a non-affordable luxury.”

11 This data includes more countries than the ones in the Caribbean Subregion.

12 Reported for Aruba, Curaçao, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic.

Risks in health during the pandemic are heightened by assistance they receive through informal health consultations and over-the-counter pills and health products networks that are the only means for many of them. Interviewed refugees and migrants agreed that most have problems not only paying for services, but in accessing good quality healthcare. “Health services in Venezuela used to be of better quality. [Refugees and migrants] see that here services are of poorer quality, at least those to which they have access, so they prefer to seek attention elsewhere.” Another migrant said, “now we can see a doctor through an online video call, the problem is to get the prescribed drugs, but you can find somebody that helps you.” As before the pandemic, health attention continues to be more focused on emergency assistance or disease treatment than on preventive medicine.

Challenges were also identified for refugee and migrant health practitioners that wanted to help and work as service providers in their host communities, particularly for Venezuelan doctors and medical staff from the refugee and migrant community. “When they are able to work in the new country it is awesome because they can even prescribe medicine, but usually they are limited”. It is perceived by some interviewees (refugees and migrants) that at least they function as a reference point for many and build better patient-health professional confidence.

As community solidarity has been a common response when somebody becomes sick, especially after the pandemic, some interviewees (CSO, refugees and migrants) identified a sort of “donor-fatigue” between the members of their own communities. “We are always asking the same people for money or to come to buy products to get some money to pay for somebody’s medical attention. That is why we need to search for more efficient ways. Instead of paying 50,000 [local currency – Dominican Republic] for just one person, let us invest the same amount and get service for many.” An effective initiative has been implemented in the Dominican Republic, where the Venezuelan community created a collective health insurance for refugees and migrants to afford their health expenses (see recommendations section).

2.4 PROTECTIONS NEEDS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Children and adolescents are part of the community of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in all five countries. Some of them arrived with their parents, others with families and friends. The youngest ones were born in their host country. This group diversity can lead to different contexts

of vulnerability. Access to health and education is different in each country although all of them, at least by law, recognize the right of every child to education. Interviewees from all participant groups considered that the evolution and life development of young people must be observed carefully because their motivations and expectations are different from adults as they grow up. An interviewee said, “those who arrived here with 12-14 years old, they are not afraid of anything [referring to starting a new life]. They are different from us, older migrants. Venezuela is not such an important subject for them, they are thinking about making a life, not in recovering one that has been lost. They are not afraid.”

Regarding regularization and access to education, according to interviewees (CSO, refugee and migrant) refugee and migrant children have a right to education, but they cannot obtain certain certificates or diplomas because of their lack of regular status. This situation creates a barrier to continue their studies after high school on higher education programs. In some cases, the same interviewees explained, this situation starts even from primary levels. Where possible, they must pay for school higher costs than a resident or are unable to attend school at all because of lack of certificate validation of previous study. “Except for the Dominican Republic and Guyana, where refugee and migrant children have open access to basic education, the access to primary and secondary education remains a priority area of intervention in Aruba, Curaçao, and Trinidad & Tobago” (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V 2021d). As an interviewee (CSO) said, “the offerings and gaps in these three countries are different”. Interviewees from the CSO participant group in these countries said although children can go to school, they face more challenges than their non-refugee and migrant peers. For example, a recurrent challenge is the language of instruction, which is other than Spanish, excluding the Dominican Republic. An interviewee (CSO) said “R4V partners and governments have provided support in second language classes for teachers and students and Trinidad and Tobago offers *Equal Place* [an online program to access accredited secondary education]. It is in Spanish and covers the Venezuelan syllabus and curriculum”, although other interviewees expressed that it has not been always sufficient since its temporary. Initiatives to address this need were identified for example in Aruba and Trinidad and Tobago. When this need is not covered properly, interviewees (refugee and migrants and CSO) expressed that the result is usually low academic achievement in schools which has led Venezuelan refugees and migrants’ children to drop out or face discrimination (for example, bullying or nationality-based discrimination) by staff and other students in the same schools. In Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, schools are only in English. In Aruba and Curaçao, it is not

easy to find education in Spanish. Interviewed refugee and migrant parents expressed that this situation has resulted in xenophobic behavior at school.

Another crucial challenge in this area (identified by refugees, migrants, and CSO) is to get school certificates and end of course documentation (accreditation), due to lack of a regular status in the country. This situation was also associated with a lack of motivation for adolescents to continue studying because they realized it would not be possible to continue to higher education, even if they have good grades because of lack of documentation or money to pay college fees for foreigners.

Also, some interviewees (local CSO staff, refugees, and migrants) identified different levels of xenophobia in schools in all countries. “Where Spanish is not the main language [the situation] can be worse”, one said. In Aruba, an interviewee said “Also, when you find a teacher or staff that does not like migrants, you will see how their behavior changes”. Other refugees and migrants shared this perception. Although they also said that this phenomenon is not generalized, they are hearing about it more often. Previous research has also focused on the protection needs for children to access education. Maharaj-Landaeta (2019) studied the educational experiences of teachers who work with Venezuelan children in Trinidad and Tobago. The study identifies the following problem: there is no national legislation allowing them to attend schools. Even if exceptions are made to accept them into the physical classrooms, then there is still no legislation giving them the right to a student permit, the right to do national exams or to get certification. Teachers [...] describe them as ‘The invisible children lost inside a web of red tape, bureaucracy, xenophobia and intolerance’” (Maharaj-Landaeta 2019, 273). As part of the protection needs, school dropouts and access to education needs more attention, especially with schools’ closure and online activities after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another concern identified is children and adolescents who are left in the care of relatives, friends or unaccompanied after parents’ deportation or detention. After restrictions on regular migration and visa requirements, detention, and deportations have increased particularly in Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, and Curacao, which, as some interviewees (refugees, migrants, and CSO) said, have left some children without adult care or legal guardian¹³, increasing their vulnerability considerably.

Another risk identified particularly in Aruba and Curaçao is the issue of documentation at birth of children of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. These two countries do not have *Jus Solis* laws, or birthright citizenship, which means that they do not have access to citizenship documents to newborns of refugees and migrants. This situation is leaving children at risk of statelessness.

2.5 FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Limited information was gathered on this subject through fieldwork, but over 70% of interviewed refugees and migrants expressed their desire to reunite with their families. As most refugees and migrants interviewed expressed, it is not usual to have this expectation at the beginning. Then a family member or couple leaves Venezuela “in most cases they think it is just for a short time”. While the stay in host communities continues to extend, some refugees and migrants search for ways to bring their families to reunite with them in the host country. It is easier if the person has proper documentation, an interviewee said (CSO), but if not, then people pay for the irregular pathways. “People always find a way to bring their children or their parents once they achieve a certain quality of life”, said an interviewee, “but it can be risky too. Elderly people need more medical attention. If they live without regular documentation status, medical access will be challenging for them.” These challenges do not stop refugees and migrants from migrating when their objective is to reunite with family, interviewees agreed, posing this also as a challenge for protection actors. Except when it is possible to travel by airplane, refugees and migrants prefer to take their chances through other, often irregular, routes. “Not everything is good here, but it is better to be together”, an interviewee said.

Refugees and migrants interviewed explained that it is common practice for people in the five countries to pay for the journey of those in Venezuela. The only exception identified is when they consider the Caribbean country as a transit destination and are waiting for a relative to pay their way to the United States¹⁴. They consider that usually people that travel in irregular ways are at a major risk but also think it is worth it.

¹³ This situation has been examined by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2020, 9) in a Trinidad and Tobago’s case regarding six migrant children. The Commission requested Trinidad and Tobago to adopt the necessary measures to guarantee the rights to life and personal integrity, in particular by refraining from deporting or expelling them until the domestic authorities have duly assessed, in accordance with applicable international standards, the alleged risks faced.

¹⁴ Two different informants of two different countries noticed that they have heard of refugees and migrants travelling first from Venezuela to one of the countries in the Caribbean subregion, and later to the United States. It is usually done by flying to Colombia or Panama, then to Mexico, and finally cross the land border.

2.6 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNICATION

Where interviewed refugees and migrants identified negative feelings towards them in the host communities, social exclusion and miscommunication were highlighted as serious concerns by several of them. In places where language is perceived more as a barrier than a bridge, this becomes even more challenging. Interviewees from all participant groups agreed that language barriers can lead to xenophobia and discrimination. “We don’t think there are a lot of criminal incidents against Venezuelans, but there are some that [are not reported to police]”, said an interviewee (CSO). When social inclusion initiatives have been introduced, some communities “are more open and normally people are nicer, but you will find ones that are not [kind to refugees and migrants].”

In non-Spanish speaking countries, pejorative words were pointed out as a sign of increasing discrimination. Some residents call Venezuelan refugees and migrants “the Spanish”, “illegals” or “veneco” used pejoratively. “Advancing in social inclusion, it is critical to prepare a smooth environment for cultural exchange and refugee and migrant acceptance”, an interviewee (CSO) said. Although it was found that often local communities have been generally open to refugees and migrants, according to over 80% of the interviewees, there are always certain moments where you perceive “that people are not so friendly all the time.” Some interviewees (CSO, International Organizations, Government, Refugees and Migrants participant groups) said that xenophobic behaviors, racism, and discrimination are not rare in all countries, and that they are of a major concern for refugee and migrant vulnerability in Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, and Curaçao; of medium concern in Guyana (except for border regions), and of lower concern in the Dominican Republic. Interviewees identified xenophobia usually with a competitive environment for resources, few free slots on the labor market, and on gender-based behaviors.

On the formal labor market this challenge was identified everywhere by interviewees. In some cases, it was even perceived that Venezuelan technicians and professionals are better prepared than national ones. “In the Dominican Republic, xenophobia in work environments has been recorded where there are also Haitians” (CSO). Venezuelan refugees and migrants are entering a previous context of irregular migration labor market. “There is an older story about xenophobia and discrimination between Dominican nationals and Haitian migrants. It is not new, and it is not going away. That is a big issue for the island they shared. Venezuelans are a new element on the board.”

There are also several positive perceptions about their work. It was stated in all countries that Venezuelan refugee and migrant workers are preferred due to their distinct mindset. They have the “migrant mentality”. They need the job more and are available to doing more things, and faster, than their national counterparts.

Regarding citizen security there are also opposing perceptions that trigger xenophobia. “It is not difficult to find people that say migrants are lazy [...] that they quarrel [...] that they make things difficult for the government”. But others also say that “people with a clean criminal record must be allowed to work.”

Special mention must be done on xenophobic episodes experienced by refugee and migrant women. It was expressed that women from host countries would not allow a young Venezuelan woman to work in her home or business. “If I take her to my house, she will steal my husband,” an interviewee said. This attitude is also perceived in public spaces: “You go to a supermarket and take a look at all cashiers to figure out which of them will treat you better, if it is a local woman [who Venezuelan refugee and migrant women perceive discriminates them more], you try to avoid it.” There were also episodes identified, where some local men had tried to sexually abuse or take advantage of women’s refugee or migrant status. Further findings on gender-based violence are included in later sections.

Xenophobia towards children in some schools has been reported too, according to CSO interviewees. Especially in non-Spanish speaking countries. There is a clear co-relation between discriminatory behavior and refugees and migrants who do not speak the local language.

As an indicator of discrimination or xenophobia, some words that are used to make negative reference to Venezuelan refugees and migrants were recorded:

- In Guyana, the term “Spanish”.
- In Aruba and Curaçao, “illegals” or “Spanish speakers”.
- In the Dominican Republic, the overuse of the usually friendly word “chamo” and the imported Colombian term of “veneco”.

Further observation could be done to understand the evolution of these words use and the situations where they are associated to understand the increase or decrease of discrimination against refugees and migrants.

2.6.1 Elderly People

Almost all interviewees agreed that elderly people are frequently invisible in the migration process. Some of them travelled alone, others migrated after their children settled as part of their desire for family reunification, access to health services or to help their adult children take care of grandsons and granddaughters while their parents are working. As an interviewee (refugee and migrant participant group) expressed “it is not easy for an old person to adapt to a new country, they usually stay for some months and then go back home. They must share a house with their adult children and grandchildren, it is not easy. When a fight arises between their [son or daughter] and spouse/partner, they do not know what to do. They have nowhere else to go.”

Due to COVID-19 lockdowns and fear of detention and deportation, interviewees stated that elderly refugees and migrants have remained home, usually in crowded spaces or without the material needs to take care of their health. Some interviewees (refugee and migrant) said that access to medication has been easier than in Venezuela for certain chronic diseases.

2.6.2 Indigenous Peoples

Venezuelan refugees and migrants that self-identify to an indigenous group have presence in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. Interviewees (CSO, government, and refugee and migrant) said that particularly indigenous peoples identified as *Waraos* and *Arawak* have moved to these two countries to search for places to grow crops and sell their products. “*Waraos* are nomads, they go from one place to another. Some of them do not go to cities, they search for lands to grow crops”, an interviewee said (CSO). Other indigenous groups move around as well, they said. In addition, insecurity in the Eastern region of Venezuela was pointed out as a motivation for their migration. As an interviewee (CSO) said, “They trade for beans, sugar, cooking oil, they are searching for safe places to grow crops”.

Interviewees (CSO, government, and refugee and migrant) said that Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago host communities were often supportive of indigenous refugees and migrants. Most of them work on agriculture and are not in competition with other economic sectors sought by non-indigenous refugees and migrants from Venezuela that look for work in urban areas. Regarding protection needs, it is not possible to generalize for all indigenous groups and should be determined in a case-by-case basis. As an example, an interviewee (CSO) said “in Trinidad and Tobago many entered and settled in

Icacos, they set up a small village and built shacks. They had no WASH [Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene] facilities. R4V partners indicated that they needed WASH and basic lifesaving resources. There have been attempts to introduce elements of schooling to the children of this population. The indigenous groups often have their own language (so not even Spanish classes would be useful for them). [It is necessary to] talk about protection issues, lack of food, WASH, and shelter. Furthermore, some cases of indigenous children being smuggled into the country were identified.”

Other studies show this phenomenon is not new. The Human Rights Council of the United Nations (2019, 6) expressed that there are traditional or seasonal migration patterns linked to fishing, hunting, and gathering activities that were there long before the consolidation of current national states. Nowadays, the situation has changed and difficulties for them have been reported. As the report said, and as an interviewee in the Venezuela-Guyana border validated, there is little data about these groups but “we perceived that this is new for them, they go wherever they find good conditions for their activities.”

A contrasting perspective from some interviewees in Trinidad and Tobago was that their ancestors had been in this territory before, so it was their right to ask for land and stay. Also, other indigenous groups in the Guyanese side of the border welcomed the *Waraos* and gave them land to grow their crops, although –they said– not always in good conditions for agriculture.

Interviewees from CSO and government participant groups agreed that common protection needs for indigenous refugees and migrants are access to health, assistance for public services access, access to farmland, and cultural exchange (especially in the countryside). Also, they expressed that it is difficult to find officials and social workers that have knowledge of their culture and who speak their language.

There are more studies regarding the protection situation of Venezuelan indigenous groups in other countries in the region such as Colombia and Brazil (International Organization for Migration- Brazil 2019b), but still more research needs to be done regarding their situation in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

2.7 ACCESS TO WORK

Access to the formal labor market is linked in all countries to documentation and regular status. It is considered a key

priority among all participant groups. As a respondent said (CSO) “When people do not have access to formal and regular work, they will be in the gray market with huge vulnerability”. At the same time, lack of access to the labor market forces refugees and migrants to accept any job they could get. “Employers may pay them half wage, no security, no conditions, they do not even have the guarantee that they will get their money after they are done with their tasks”.

Some interviewees (CSO) in all countries also coincide that in the long term it is better for all societies to address this need since ignoring it creates more challenges. “If a migrant has no work permit, then he will be on the gray market. He will need help constantly. The government will have to pay for services, and it will receive no taxes.” (CSO perspective) Also some interviewees agree that “if people have better jobs, they will get better wages and fix their lives quickly. Some of them will not stay in the Caribbean for long. Sometimes they stay more than they want because they do not have any other option and are trapped.”

Where access to formal work is possible, interviewees also agreed that refugees and migrants from Venezuela face other obstacles with their documentation, especially the recognition of study titles and degrees. “Authorities do not recognize any document apart from passports, they are just locking doors to us. [In the case of skill certification] you need to get an *Apostille* in Venezuela and go through a specific process. It is difficult to accept you as a professional.”

COVID-19 impacts on the labor market are also an increasing risk for discrimination against refugees and migrants. For example, “in Curaçao, after the oil refinery closed, public perception changed. We were all searching for the same jobs”, an interviewee (CSO) said. Also, some interviewees perceived that solidarity with refugees and migrants decreased. “It went from –he is my cousin, my dad– to the selfish world of trying to protect ourselves,” since there was competition over the same resources.

2.8 VIOLENCE, ABUSE, AND EXPLOITATION

Violence, abuse, or exploitation, including human trafficking, targeted at Venezuelan refugees and migrants are a concern shared by all interviewees. People from all participant groups pointed out that it is a complex challenge because of the vulnerability of refugees and migrants, the irregular status of most of them, the lack of agents and officers in all border points, the involvement of organized criminal networks, and corruption.

Protection needs for refugees and migrants linked to manifestations of violence, abuse, and exploitation were grouped in this section. Before decision-making, each country and context situation must be considered. The available information is not similar for the five countries, since for example, there are more studies and articles related to this situation of Venezuelans in Trinidad and Tobago than in the other countries. The fieldwork conducted for this study only retrieved general information, a more in-depth analysis is not covered in this report.

2.8.1 Human Trafficking

Cases of Venezuelan victims of trafficking for labor or sexual exploitation have been identified in the sub-region by CSOs and governments. The context in each country is different. Trinidad and Tobago stories are featured in the news frequently. In Guyana, interviewees said these cases are common, but have not gained much media attention. In Aruba, an interviewee referred to these in terms of labor exploitation, “[We have them.] We get more male victims [...] we just register nationality to have some data. One third is female, two thirds are male. More labor than sexual exploitation” (CSO interviewee). This challenge has been well identified in the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2021. “The identification of victims of trafficking (VoT) amongst Venezuelan refugees and migrants by national institutions is estimated to be in the dozens every year across Caribbean countries. Given the clandestine nature of the crime, this figure hardly reflects the magnitude of the issue [...]” (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V 2021, 193). In Trinidad and Tobago, interviewees reported that human trafficking of Venezuelans is a recognized challenge.

Human trafficking has long been identified in the Caribbean region. An interviewee (government) expressed that in the last decades “we saw different cases, even slavery in people from India locked in houses. With Venezuelan [refugees and] migrants we identify on labor and sexual exploitation.” There is a shared perception that people fall in networks of human trafficking without noticing because of naivety and lack of knowledge of their rights.

In 2019, Venezuelans accounted for almost 70% of all identified and assisted victims of human trafficking in these five countries; refugees and migrants are at risk of being trafficked to or through Caribbean countries (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela R4V, 2020a). The number of trafficking cases was increasing already before (Caribbean Migration

Consultations CMC Counter-Trafficking Network, 2019). As some interviewees (government, refugees, and migrants) explained, human trafficking networks turned to online recruitment strategies as part of fraudulent schemes (basically through social media) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are reports of a worrisome number of teenage girls possibly affected by trafficking and vulnerable to exacerbated forms of sexual exploitation after the confinement measures. This is because the demand for prostitution does not cease even if night clubs, brothels, and red-light districts are curtailed or closed, so consumption is satisfied in hidden places, making it harder to protect women and to identify victims and traffickers. Some women are left with no alternative but to endure forced prostitution in exchange for food and accommodation. They often live where they work. When losing their jobs, they also lose their housing. These are some of the challenges identified to counter trafficking in persons in the Caribbean according to R4V Human Trafficking and Smuggling Regional Sub-sector (2020):

1. Lack of resources to combat human trafficking.
2. Low perception and awareness of human trafficking (People simply do not believe that it is happening in their country.)
3. Poor information and data-gathering systems (Governments and CSO).
4. Wide gaps in immigration and border controls that can be exploited by traffickers.
5. Lack of adequate intelligence on organized criminal networks.
6. International drug trafficking, money laundering and prostitution with viable supply and demand
7. High demand for sexual services among local population.
8. Lack of an established identification system. (Governments)
9. Low conviction rate of human traffickers.
10. Victims are not willing to testify against their alleged traffickers.
11. Porous, unsecured borders in the region.
12. Successful marketing of “hope” for a better life to some of these victims.
13. Inadequate police training and education on the subject in the region.
14. Complicit and corrupt public officials, including police officers, immigration officers, law-enforcement officers, and other government officials.

Identifying victims is one of the main challenges faced by counter-trafficking agencies in the Caribbean. Investigations and prosecutions of the perpetrators, as well as coordination and prevention mechanisms, have been equally delayed or been impeded by the pandemic crisis. In addition, undocumented refugees and migrants may avoid making official police reports for fear of detention or deportation. Protection and assistance for victims, as well as the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators, can be affected by the closure of public institutions and support organizations, or situations where employees work from home because of the COVID-19 crisis. The counter-trafficking institutional structure in Caribbean countries tends to respond to authorities that fight transnational crime and is not fully prepared to provide specialized care services to protect and assist victims. Language barriers persist for the victim’s communications with authorities.

According to international guidelines, assistance to victims should include help accessing safe housing, medical care (including psychological care), and help interpreting national law and with legal proceedings (OHCHR data in International Organization for Migration and U.S. Department of State 2020, 66). Refugees and migrants are often denied access to national healthcare systems, which are even more important during a health crisis. 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 cultural, gender and child-friendly approach. As an interviewee (CSO) said “although several partners and UN agencies provide support in this regard, in some cases the authorities do not liaise with these agencies although they have some forms of collaboration.”

In recent years, most countries have taken significant steps to fight trafficking in persons, adopting legal frameworks and establishing national institutions that identify and assist survivors, as well as specialized police forces and law enforcement units that investigate and prosecute trafficking

crimes. Aruba¹⁵, Curaçao¹⁶, and the Dominican Republic¹⁷ are Tier 2 Watchlist; Trinidad and Tobago¹⁸, Tier 2; and Guyana¹⁹ Tier 1 (United States Department of State 2021). Budgets were allocated to the prevention and protection of victims, with dedicated and trained staff. This was validated both by interviewees from four of the five governments as well as by the document review.

Governments set up a Counter-Trafficking Network in 2016 as part of the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC), a consultative forum of governments and international organizations, to exchange information and best practices on migration and human trafficking issues. The regional counter-trafficking network is focused on protection and assistance needs, as well as investigation and prosecution. It includes key partners, such as CARICOM. Regional cooperation within the existing frameworks of the CARICOM and CMC still needs to be enhanced through increased confidential data, information sharing agreements, and joint investigation processes.

Refugees and migrants attempting to travel irregularly to Trinidad and Tobago have been known to fall into the hands of human trafficking rings while at sea, including using force, according to an investigation by the Venezuelan NGO *Fundaredes*. Refugees and migrants on the island are increasingly vulnerable to being recruited or even kidnapped by human traffickers. In Trinidad and Tobago, all officially identified victims of trafficking were Venezuelans in 2018, and 33 victims were Venezuelan out of a total of 34 victims in 2019 (US Department of State 2019 and 2020, in R4V 2020a and Insight Crime 2021).

Trafficking cases for sexual exploitation involve mainly young Venezuelan women between the ages of 15 and 21 (Cone and Teff 2019). The vulnerable situation of unaccompanied and separated children is also a concerning trend and requires greater coordination among agencies such as the Counter-Trafficking Unit, the Children’s Authority, and other relevant stakeholders, to respond with a multi-sectoral approach. On occasion, women are found working in the sex industry, mainly to send money back home. In 2019, 17,136²⁰ women from five regions in Venezuela went missing. Hundreds of them ended up in Trinidad and Tobago (Pierre, in De Silva, 2020).

2.8.2 Human Smuggling

Unprecedented travel and mobility restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 can increase reliance on smugglers and illicit groups. Refugees and migrants are expected to predominantly enter Caribbean territories by boat in areas that are near Venezuela. There is also a higher use of irregular and dangerous routes and inadequate means of transportation as the only means to access Caribbean countries after borders are closed. Venezuelans continue to risk their lives through dangerous boat journeys, resulting in the loss of at least 116 lives in incidents reported by the press in 2019 and 2020 while others have gone missing. There are criminal groups operating on the high seas that intercept boats to kidnap refugees and migrants and demand ransom (Fundaredes 2020). Additionally, smugglers may charge even higher fees for their services because of the increased vulnerability of migrants after border closures. The relation with smuggling networks leaves people vulnerable to abuses such as extortion.

15 “Authorities reported the influx of Venezuelan migrants and refugees continued to impact Aruba’s efforts to combat trafficking; however, Venezuelans were also particularly vulnerable to trafficking, and authorities did not identify any victims and did not investigate trafficking crimes against them. In addition, officials conflated trafficking in persons with migrant smuggling, hindering the effectiveness of prosecution, prevention, and protection efforts. Therefore, Aruba was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List.” (United States Department of State 2020, 80)

16 “The Government of Curaçao does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included prosecuting and convicting more traffickers, including a complicit official. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. Authorities identified fewer victims and, in practice, continued to condition victims’ access to services on cooperation with law enforcement in the case against their traffickers. The government deported potential victims, including Venezuelans, who did not immediately choose to cooperate with law enforcement or did not self-identify as victims, and did so without consideration of possible abuse in the country of origin. Officials conflated trafficking in persons with smuggling, hindering the effectiveness of prosecution, prevention, and protection efforts. Therefore, Curaçao remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the second consecutive year.” (United States Department of State 2020, 177)

17 “The government did not report on the outcome of investigations into cases of official complicity in trafficking, and there was concern about the validity of numbers of identified victims, given allegations of complicity within the trafficking prosecutors’ office. Authorities did not have a dedicated victim assistance budget or full-time victim shelter, did not effectively screen or refer all vulnerable individuals for trafficking indicators, and immigration protections for trafficking victims were not available. The government convicted fewer traffickers than previous years and issued inadequate sentences to some convicted traffickers. Therefore, the Dominican Republic was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List.” (United States Department of State 2020, 188)

18 “The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore, Trinidad and Tobago remained on Tier 2. These efforts included screening and identifying more victims, investigating traffickers, including three potentially complicit officials, prosecuting eight suspected traffickers, and increasing anti-trafficking training for its officials. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government had yet to secure a conviction under its 2011 anti-trafficking law, funding for victim assistance was reduced, and the laws did not provide immigration relief for victims or allow educational opportunities for vulnerable refugee children.” (United States Department of State 2020, 493)

19 “The Government of Guyana fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period; therefore, Guyana remained on Tier 1. The government demonstrated serious and sustained efforts by completing a draft amendment of the Combating Trafficking of Persons Act, sentencing a convicted trafficker to a total of 15 years imprisonment, drafting a national action plan to eliminate child labor, completing standard operating procedures for investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases, and opening its first trafficking shelter outside of the capital area. Although the government meets the minimum standards, it investigated and prosecuted fewer suspected traffickers, identified fewer victims of trafficking, and did not provide adequate screening or shelter for child and male victims. There are insufficient labor inspectors and their training in human trafficking is inadequate.” (United States Department of State 2020, 236)

20 The statistics were compiled based on the records of boat operators who bring the women to Trinidad and Tobago and interviews with relatives of missing persons, victims, traffickers, and data from the National Institute of Statistics in Venezuela.

As an interviewed refugee said “people put their lives into smugglers' hands. Some of them are armed and deal with other illegal activities. They can do anything they want with them. Sometimes they just leave you on the sea and ask you to swim all the way to the coast, or they will not stop people from doing bad things to you.” Also, other interviewees said that in the case of Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago there are smugglers that may help you travel to both countries. “You can try to go to Trinidad, but if they catch you and send you back, then the same smugglers can help you get to Guyana,” said another interviewee (refugee and migrant).

Trinidad and Tobago's situation on human smuggling related to Venezuelan migration has gained particular attention due to an increase in cases and modus operandi. Many Venezuelan refugees and migrants make repeated trips to Trinidad and Tobago even if they are deported. The most common mode of travel used to arrive to Trinidad and Tobago is by sea.²¹ Shipwrecks have proliferated in recent years. In 2016, the ACP-EU identified 135 illegal ports of entry. The geography of Trinidad and Tobago with its porous coastal borders makes it possible to carry out illicit activities, including migrant smuggling and movement of contraband (ACP-EU 2016). “Detailed scrutiny of the actual transit routes utilized by the migrants revealed that 55 per cent began their journey in Delta Amacuro and 74 per cent of all the respondents confirmed that their mode of transport to Trinidad was via boat” (International Organization for Migration 2020b, 6)

During interviews, it was not unusual to hear references to criminal activities including in the context of smuggling. As these are usually hidden and unregistered, and as it is hard for people to speak freely about them, it is difficult to separate rumors from facts, as well as fictitious information from reality. The research aim was not to make legal determinations regarding specific situations, but rather to document the perceptions and experiences of participants relevant to refugee and migrant protection. Health, citizen security, and human rights violation risks linked to human smuggling are sometimes documented in journals and social media. Facebook groups speak about the stories of refugees and migrants that have suffered human rights violations by criminal groups.

2.8.3 Labor Exploitation

The risks of labor exploitation (including domestic work, fishing, and construction industry) and abuse are increasing. Refugees and migrants working in construction and

manufacturing industries may face even greater exploitation risks due to the need to lower production costs given economic difficulties after the COVID-19 crisis, as well as due to fewer regular controls by the authorities. On a recent survey in Trinidad and Tobago (International Organization for Migration 2020b, 9), “it was discovered that 47 per cent of the respondents were aware of someone in their migrant community who worked without receiving the agreed upon payment and approximately 62 per cent of these incidents were reportedly in the construction sector”. Recruitment tactics of trafficking networks usually involve fellow nationals, sometimes former victims themselves who, in exchange for a fee, contact vulnerable individuals in the country of origin. Online recruitment by transnational criminal networks using digital media has increased significantly during the pandemic. Studies have shown that recruitment is frequently executed through employment advertisements in newspapers and on internet sites for positions such as cashiers, waitresses, domestic workers, and manual laborers. Such employment schemes usually appear attractive to foreign nationals, as they offer appealing salaries and cover the costs of transportation, accommodation, and training (International Organization for Migration and US Department of State 2020, 60). Those offers are especially appealing to people living in extreme poverty or who cannot access regular employment due to lack of documentation.

As it was the case in previous sections, there are more studies about Trinidad and Tobago on this subject than the rest of the countries of the sub-region. Women domestic workers, cleaners, construction workers, caretakers, tourism and hotel workers, taxi drivers, street vendors, bar, and restaurant workers, as well as those engaged in sex work, are among the most vulnerable to labor or sexual exploitation and abuse (Human Trafficking and Smuggling Regional Sub-Sector 2020). A survey in 2019 revealed that 21% of Venezuelans refugees and migrants interviewed in countries such as Guyana, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago had experienced either forced labor, unpaid work or were held against their will since they left Venezuela (International Organization for Migration 2019).

2.8.4 Gender-Based Violence (Household and Community)

Interviewees (CSO and refugees and migrants' participant groups) that were more familiarized with gender-based violence (GBV) cases said that risks of it are increasing,

21 In December 2020, to quote one example, during a tragic incident, more than 30 Venezuelans died, after a boat carrying migrants towards Trinidad and Tobago sank.

especially after the lockdown conditions for the prevention of COVID-19. This increase in risks is not being met by increased services. On the contrary, they concluded that although not all cases are reported, it often happens where more services and facilities are needed in crowded households and communities, with decreasing livelihood conditions, stressful environments, and high levels of vulnerability. This means more exposure to gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual exploitation.

Also, interviewees (refugee and migrant women) agreed that in countries like Aruba and Curaçao, it is difficult for them to get a job because of local perceptions over women. For example, one interviewee said, “local women think we will steal their husbands, some even treat us badly when we are in the supermarket”. To earn some money, they work in places like Curacao’s “Snk” (drink and betting establishments) where they are paid a fee for every drink they sell. They expressed that these places and types of work put them more at risk of gender-based violence. “You tolerate more things, or you behave in ways you will never do back home, you need the money, and your clients need to be happy. Some of them are very nice but others are not”, said another interviewee. Shelter and safe places to stay for survivors of gender-based violence are often limited. Interviewees from all participant groups mentioned that there are not always places available where survivors can stay. Usually, survivors search for places with family and close relatives, but often these sites can be traced by their aggressors. The impact of the violence from aggressors can also extend to the survivor’s family, especially children, making it crucial to find mechanisms to protect the survivor’s relatives that may be at risk.

According to their documentation and migratory status, their access to work and their family needs, relationships change. “Money is a big issue. Poverty sometimes seems to generate violence. When a woman asks for money to send back home to her family, it can cause problems in intimate partner relationships.”

Gender impacts the migration process. The life of a refugee or migrant woman is different from that of a man. Expectations linked to sexual orientation and gender identity influence their access to work and social relationships. Although interviewees (refugee and migrants) expressed that “there is more help for women than for men”, there are also more

risks. Respondents state that women who arrive alone usually are looking for money to send back home. For example, in Curaçao, “you can make good money. Other members of my family are in Ecuador, they work 16 hours and just make 10 USD. Here you can earn more.” But also, respondents consider it is harder to get an informal job in a house or shop. “Some people think you are after men, especially local women”, an interviewee said. “You get all sorts of propositions and men do not like to be rejected by a foreign woman. If he is in love with you and you aren’t, he will treat you worse.”

COVID-19 impacts generated changes in this context as well. Some interviewees (Government, CSO) observed gender-based violence survivors eventually separated from their offenders, but also others felt even more dependent. “There is stress when you know you have to send money to Venezuela and you do not even have the amount to pay for the month’s rent”, said an interviewee. Access to mental health services for family was considered a key asset by several interviewees (all participant groups) to decrease risks of gender-based violence.

2.8.5 Risks related to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation

Other risks linked to violence, abuse, and exploitation identified were:

- Permanent and temporary residents becoming victims of human rights violations, forced displacement, or robbery at refugee and migrant communities, as well as local communities, situated in the border region of Venezuela and Guyana. As it was referred to by some interviewees and could be observed on their reactions and decision-making processes, armed groups, usually named “sindicatos”²² (according to the interviewees), are part of the smuggling system between both countries. As one of them said, “they arrive by boat and are heavily armed. Police is not so close, usually they don’t mess with us if we don’t mess with them, but people here are afraid.”
- Risks of being forced to do illegal activities, like drug smuggling, robbery, kidnapping by armed people or criminals during the journey or at the arrival to their destination. As an interviewee said, “they are moving you, they have the weapons, you do whatever they say”.

²² The word “sindicato” refers in this context to “criminal bands that [in their beginning] extortiate workers of a determined sector to get them work” (Transparencia Venezuela 2020, 12) or which power increased through governmental corruption. When other industries lost investment and were not as profitable for them as before, they expanded their activities and now are in control of certain areas in Eastern Venezuela and travelling routes. Local authorities, refugees, and migrants interviewed in the Guyana-Venezuela border used this name to refer to local armed criminal groups. Sindicatos’ members use weapons as a resource for intimidation. In some areas they have been able to impose their rule over municipal and regional police forces and bring national security forces to establish negotiations with them instead of armed confrontations. (Romero and Ruiz 2018, 111-116).

- Newspaper articles and journalistic investigations show that crime is constantly negatively inflicted on the refugee and migrant flows from Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago. According to the perceptions of certain refugees and migrants who have been detained, deported or in conflict with immigration authorities, in occasions it “looks like they are all the same, they just want something from you, money, to work for free...” or also “they know how to threaten you so that you stop claiming your rights. They promise you some wages, they give you less or even nothing. Police come; they collude with them.”
- Risks in the context of smuggling, as interviewees (CSO, government) said that usually smugglers are associated, as described previously.
- Risks posed by human trafficking networks, as interviewees (CSO, government) said that traffickers are usually associated to travelling networks, as described in previous section.
- Risks of detention and deportation, as well as human rights violations by police or coast guard of destination country. Refugees and migrants interviewed who have entered their destination country by illegal routes agreed that one of their biggest fears during their journey was to be intercepted by police or coast guard. Some interviewees (refugees and migrants, CSO) explained that they have experienced negative situations and possible human rights violations. Another interviewee said “this is the moment when you know something changed. You leave your country, and you begin to fear the police. If you see them, you hide, you avoid them. You need to teach your children to be afraid of police officers.”

2.9 PROTECTION SITUATION ON MIGRATION ROUTES

Interviewees (from all participant groups) agreed that the most common routes used by refugees and migrants are the following:

- Land (includes river travel): Guyana.
- Sea: Aruba, Curaçao, Trinidad and Tobago
- Air: Aruba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic

Several of these were already in use as legal routes to travel between countries, initially making it more accessible for many refugees and migrants to travel from Venezuela with their passports and get a short stay tourist permit in some locations. Water and land routes to all countries, except the Dominican Republic, have existed but were not as frequently used. As such, when it became difficult to enter the new destination country on legal routes as some of the countries introduced visa requirements, refugees, migrants, and smugglers found new irregular sea and river pathways to travel.

This situation increased the risks for refugees and migrants and new protection needs emerged. Some risks related to migration routes identified through the interviews are the following:

- Risks of drowning and death, especially on sea routes to Aruba, Curaçao, and Trinidad and Tobago. As an interviewee (government) said “Some of those ships go fast, but not all are well maintained. If police are around or there is a problem, they do not leave you on the coast, you have to swim the last leg.”

- Risks of extortion/kidnapping/interception/recruitment in route and human rights violations by illegal armed groups. While using land routes, some refugees and migrants explained that a major risk during the journey to this country is to be intercepted by armed groups on the road or at the country’s border zone.

Other challenges during irregular migration journeys included basic survival. Specific information was found for the case of travelling to Guyana, where 80% of Venezuelan migrant respondents expressed concern about food insecurity during their journeys and 71% experienced financial problems while traveling. Another common problem reported was finding a place to sleep. 46% of respondents traveled with family and 53% said they had traveled with groups of non-relatives. More than 80% of respondents reported having economic dependents. 95% of respondents said they had crossed while carrying a national ID card from their home country, not a passport (Chaves-González and Echeverría-Estrada, 2020, 9-11).

Protection risks associated with the journey to Curaçao increased with the reduced number of commercial flights in 2019. This decrease made it very difficult to access the country.²³ The non-governmental organization VENEX estimated in 2019 that one to three boats arrived every week, bringing 30-50 Venezuelans per trip. Venezuelan refugees and migrants interviewed in this country agreed that they are in constant fear of the authorities. Most said they left

23 VENEX information in Heintze, Hillhorst and Dijkzeul, 2019.

their houses only to work or buy groceries and medicine because they fear detention. Parents said they rarely took their children outside because they do not have authorization to work, their only option is to work in the informal sector (Leghtas and Thea 2019, validated in an interview). They survive as traders or seasonal workers in the construction or service sector. (Heintze, Hilhorst and Dijkzeul 2019).

As interviewees explained (refugees and migrants, CSO), “some people even travel [back and forth from Venezuela] for a week or twice per month. This is not new; it had been happening even before the current situation.”

2.10 CURRENT INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS PROTECTION NEEDS

As protection needs for Venezuelan refugees and migrants have increased (as stated by all interviewees), there are also several initiatives to respond to these needs while the number of CSOs, public and private programs have increased recently.

Stakeholders and actors that have participated in response to these protection needs in the Caribbean are from the following participant groups:

- National governments
- Regional and local governments
- International Organizations
- Civil Society Organizations (religious congregations including Catholic, Evangelical, Protestant, Presbyterian, Muslim, Humanitarian Organizations such as the Red Cross Movement, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Non-Profits Organizations).
- Civil society actors, activists, and leaders
- Local communities in the destination country (Neighborhood groups, informal charity work, Venezuelan diaspora)
- Local communities in Venezuela
- Venezuelan authorities (through consular staff)
- Refugees and migrants from other nationalities

2.10.1 General Protection Needs

These protection needs and response initiatives were identified during interviews.

It is not a complete list as it reflects the perceptions of the specific universe of informants.

Protection/Need	Subcategory	Description	Countries where required	Current Programs / Initiatives / Policies	Remarks
Documentation and regularization	Access to Venezuelan documentation	Destination countries require refugees and migrant's identification documents from their home country, and it can be a barrier to access services.	All	None identified.	Interviewees perceive that this is competence of the Venezuelan authorities, but refugees and migrants mentioned that it will be important for CSOs and IOs to participate as observers on this process.
	Access to documentation from host country	Access to Venezuelan Documentation in their host country	All	Asylum Recognition, Regularization or "Normalization" initiatives where expired Venezuelan documentation or none is accepted	This need was identified by refugees and migrants of all countries because they considered difficult (and sometimes more expensive than normal price) to get their passport or national ID.
	Risks of detention and deportation	For refugees and migrants without a regular migration status	All	CSO legal assistance and mental health and psychosocial support programs	According to some interviewees (CSOs, refugees and migrants) these risks are triggers for mental health affectations.
	Risks of detention and deportation (young adults that become of legal age)	When children become of age, they fear individual deportation because of their undocumented situation.	All (Identified as a major risk in Aruba)	Regularization or Normalization Initiatives (Dominican Republic, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago)	When children turn to adults, according to law, they are in the same irregular situation as their parents.
Access to Basic Needs	Shelter	Need triggers other vulnerability factors. (Gender-based violence particularly mentioned.) Risks of eviction by landlords when family is unable to earn enough money. (Need increased after COVID-19)	All	Government or CSO shelters where available.	Special need in countries with limited shelter facilities.
	Food	Need triggers other vulnerability factors. Needs increased after COVID-19	All	Food Vouchers (Government and Red Cross Aruba, Curaçao, CSOs: all countries)	
Health	Emergency Health Access	Access to health services for emergency treatment	All	Governments	
	Non-Emergency Health Access	Limited or lack of access to health treatments for non-emergencies is a shared risk in all countries.	Case by Case Basis in all five countries	CSO/Government programs (Curaçao), refugees and migrants' social networks, Health Insurance Plans provided by CSOs (Dominican Republic)	
	COVID-19 Vaccination	Protection against COVID-19	All	National Vaccination Programs include all refugees and migrants	
	Access to Health Education and Reproductive Rights	Access to reproductive health information, contraceptives, and family planification programs	All	CSOs (Aruba, Curaçao Dominican Republic, Guyana)	
	Access to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services	Stress relief and psychological therapy	All	CSOs	Interviewees from all participant groups mentioned that this need must be specifically addressed because of the vulnerability of refugees and migrants
Education	Education for Children and Adolescents	Access to school systems	Aruba	Guaranteed by law in all countries	The major challenge is to get certificates and diplomas
	Education in Spanish	Education in a new language can be a challenge for children and young adults	Aruba, Curaçao, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago	Government (Aruba)	Some interviewees (CSO and government) indicated that instruction in their home country language increases student's achievement.
	Higher Education and Access to University	Education in English	All		
	Capacity Building for Adults		All	CSOs	
Family Reunification	Access to legal and safe procedures for family reunification	On home or destination country (according to refugee or migrant desire)	All		Linked to access to home country documentation
Communication	Information about the risks of migration and vulnerability factors		All	CSOs /Governments, refugees, and migrants	



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3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The needs reported by the interviewees are useful in identifying gaps and recommendations about the current activities or lack of these to address them. Some of them were expressed by interviewees from all participatory groups directly when there was an opportunity to ask them specifically about suggestions and improvements that all actors should carry out to achieve complete refugee and migrant protection. Others were identified through observation and matching the data obtained to look for needs that were not being addressed.

Although there was a general level of consensus over priority needs, the responses to address these are several and from different levels of intervention. Actors and stakeholders from all participant groups agreed that there are no unique solutions to attend to all the needs stated in the previous sections. Each country's authorities, CSOs, institutions, international organizations, residents and citizens, and refugee and migrant communities carry out activities, programs, and initiatives to address them according to their specific context and capacities.

Some interviewees (CSO, refugees and migrants) explained that basic needs may be fulfilled in several ways, but there is no permanent solution while access to documentation, work or study permits, is unattended. As an interviewee (CSO) said "regularization and access to documentation should be available under existing law, this is also about recognizing the most vulnerable who qualify for additional protection (such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, asylum-seekers) and ensuring that the formalization of that status leads to real assistance

and protection pathways: documentation, inability to be detained or deported, assistance services, like shelter and health, among others".

Another interviewee (CSO) said that "this is the first necessary step, [it] enables them access to other public and private services, as well as labor and social rights" while another Venezuelan interviewee stated that "once you have a legal status, then you stop being afraid of police, you can search for a proper job and ask for lawful conditions". Another interviewee from the same participant group added "it is then that you stop asking for charity and help, and you get the tools to make a proper living. In many cases, we come just for a short time to solve an economical problem back home, but as undocumented people we get stuck with new issues and are just searching for ways to survive". Some interviewees (CSOs, authorities, refugees, and migrants) agreed that priority needs are not just solved with recommendations and a public program. Universal access to a regular stay and a work permit also requires integration, public acceptance, and political will.

Several interviewees (from all participant groups) share the perspective that refugee and migrant regularization or normalization programs are not always popular. They have political costs and “some governments prefer not to take any decision. It is better that way, but undocumented people remain in permanent vulnerability”.

To better deliver a full picture of these recommendations and how they can be structured through international cooperation and national response initiatives, these were organized according to the actors to whom they are focused.

Civil Society Organizations and International Organizations

- In line with data protection policies, share data between organizations on assistance to beneficiaries and avoid duplication of assistance provided by international organizations and CSO.
- Improve cooperation between different international organizations and CSOs to ensure a coherent and effective response for refugee and migrant protection.
- Respect refugee and migrants’ individual decision-making processes and help them achieve their goals, including if they want to return to Venezuela.
- Publish online information about the destination country so that refugees and migrants can get familiar with the context in host countries. Enhance exchange among persons to learn about the experience of other refugees and migrants and make safer decisions.
- When making decisions about shelters options and housing, always involve the person or group in the decision. Sometimes family members or affected persons may find better places.
- Improve housing capacities to provide temporary shelter for at least three months for refugees and migrants in need.
- Enhance alternative care options for unaccompanied children, such as foster homes.
- Implement vocational training programs.
- Enhance *peer to peer* English and Papiamentu language learning initiatives.
- Implement afterschool counseling programs.
- Use of social media networks, for example, WhatsApp groups, for community exchange.
- Search for alternative ways to collect funds for community initiatives.
- Use of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) when possible, including solidarity charity systems.
- If no health system is available for refugees and migrants, explore the alternative to initiate a collective health insurance plan with refugees and migrants. This will facilitate access to private health insurances through group agreements between CSOs and insurance companies.
- Advocate for universal health access and public health services.
- Work with the Venezuelan consulates where possible, organize community activities with them. Explore options for CSOs to help as facilitators between refugees and migrants to obtain documentation from Venezuela.
- Start social media communication campaigns for the promotion of refugee and migrants’ stories and needs for the Venezuelan audience (in Venezuela) so that they can make informed decisions about migration.
- Build *WhatsApp* groups or hotlines for quick and efficient response to refugees and migrants’ inquiries.

Governments

- Promote capacity building with government staff about the situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, their expectations and their culture.
- Where possible, conduct decision-making process on case-by-case basis. Sometimes all refugees and migrants are perceived as the same and experiences of migration are not considered to adequately determine vulnerabilities and needs.
- Involve refugees and migrants in the decision-making process about their shelter options.
- Develop a comprehensive migration and refugee policy system that can include regularization pathways, work permits, basic humanitarian assistance, among other services, to guarantee protection to refugees and migrants and pave the way to their integration.
- Provide trainings on migration and human rights to police, immigration officers, and asylum authorities. Promote a better comprehension of protection needs and human rights among government officials.
- Enhance Spanish language learning programs where possible. Cultural exchange initiatives for social inclusion

could be helpful. Where possible, organize intercultural study programs to promote cultural understanding

- Match labor market needs with refugee and migrants' skills. Open vacancies on specific economic activities that need workers.
- Search for alternative ways to validate professional skills for refugees and migrants with university degrees but without proper documentation.
- Make sure to have bilingual staff in public offices that deliver basic services.
- Promote human rights defense and capacity building in the national legal framework. Invite local legal defense institutions and teams to reach refugees and migrants.
- To mitigate gender-based violence and its negative consequences, promote mental health and psychosocial support more widely available and facilitate access to livelihoods.
- To early detect discrimination and xenophobia, facilitate social cohesion interventions in workplaces and communities where refugees and migrants, from different nationalities, meet.

3.1 PROGRAM DESIGN THROUGH A CONFLICT PREVENTION APPROACH: DO NO HARM

For the implementation of the above recommendations, interviewees indicated that their experience with different initiatives from CSOs, government institutions and community organizations have provided lessons for the improvement of the current actions to protect refugees and migrants. These lessons-learned are organized through the three main aspects of the Do No Harm Intervention Approach (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2004): a) elements that connect and divide communities, b) resources transference and capacity building and c) implicit ethical messages of their actions, to be considered in protection programs:

a) Elements that connect and divides communities:

- Make sure that what you are offering is also available for other refugee and migrant communities and local inhabitants. Some episodes of xenophobic behavior against Venezuelans refugees and migrants have been on unequal access to humanitarian services or because of the implementation of an exclusive regularization program not open to other nationalities.

- Analyze the support networks that already exist. Do not underestimate the local response, considering that these groups have worked in the communities for quite some time.
- Integration and inclusion should always be at the forefront. Ask the question before program implementation, "are we integrating people or are we working with them as a separate group?"
- Take advantage of local CSO experience and influence. Although humanitarian organizations are not engaged in local politics, local organizations may have long standing experience and knowledge to promote protection of refugees and migrants.
- Promote human rights defense and capacity building in all national legal frameworks. Some interviewees considered that sometimes institutions advocate for human rights defense but without installing long-term capacity.

b) Resources Transference and Capacity Building in beneficiaries:

- Promote group design of a program's beneficiary criteria with partners so that the target population is reached, and resources are used efficiently.
- All humanitarian help must include mental health support. It is important for long-term impact in refugees and migrants wellbeing.
- Prepare for quick re-adaptation of assistance programs. If a protection plan has problems, responses to refugees and migrants' needs must be provided quickly, as it can jeopardize covering their basic needs and access livelihoods.
- Create awareness of all the cash and vouchers assistance programs, its conditions, and purposes.

Implicit Ethical Messages of Humanitarian Work:

- Clearly explain the purpose of humanitarian work and the roles of the organizations.
- Understand and clarify refugees and migrants' expectations towards programs and assistance.
- Send a unity message that every institution and organizations are working together towards a common goal.

3.2 FINAL REMARKS: TOWARDS A NEW CARIBBEAN MIGRATION CONTEXT

The long-term transformation of the Caribbean migration dynamics must continue to be observed. If these patterns of refugee and migrant movement continue in time, social relations in the region will change. This could constitute a new element of power struggles in the Caribbean societies and a multinational future. Specific legal frameworks will be necessary that include clear rules for asylum seekers and residence permits. There are also capacities and skilled workforce that come with refugees and migrants that need a legal causeway to engage properly in these countries that would enhance development.

Another aspect that should be considered is that some refugees and migrants interviewed do not intend to stay for a long period in smaller island countries like Aruba or Curaçao. They said that if they could work formally, they would save money to be able to travel to bigger countries where they perceived more work offers and development opportunities are available, like the United States. Depending on how long the Venezuelan refugee and migrant situation prolongs, on how the legal frameworks of all five countries adapt to these situations and on the degree of integration achieved in the near future, it would be possible to define how permanent will these migration changes be for the region and their long-term implications for the host countries.

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5. INTERVIEWEES, FOCUS GROUPS, AND FIELD ACTIVITIES

NUM	INTERVIEW OR FOCUS GROUP DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANT GROUP	COUNTRY	WOMEN	MEN
1	Focus Group (Key concerns: Labor Exploitation and LGBTIQ+ Community Needs)	2	Refugees and Migrants	Aruba	2	
2	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: NGO Development and Funding, Access to Basic Needs, Access to Health)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Aruba		1
3	In-Depth Interview (Gender Based Violence Survivor)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Aruba	1	
4	Focus Group (Key concerns: Detention and Deportation and LGBTIQ+ Community Needs)	2	Refugees and Migrants	Aruba	2	
5	Focus Group (Key concerns: Family Reunification, Child Protection and Education Access)	3	Refugees and Migrants	Aruba	2	1
6	Focus Group (Key concerns: Living with HIV as refugee and migrant, Access to Health, Documentation)	7	Civil Society Organizations	Aruba	3	4
7	Focus Group (Key concerns: Family Reunification and Access to Education)	2	Refugees and Migrants	Aruba	1	1
8	Focus Group (Key concerns: Refugees and Migrants with Disabilities, Access to Health)	2	Refugees and Migrants	Aruba	2	
9	In-Depth Interview (Key concern: Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Aruba		1
10	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Detention and Deportation, Access to Justice, Documentation)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Aruba		1
11	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Gender-Based Violence, Victims of Human Trafficking)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Aruba	1	
12	Focus Group (Key concern: Child Protection)	2	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Aruba	1	1
13	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Justice, Detention and Deportation)	1	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Aruba	1	
14	Focus Group (Key concerns: Human Trafficking and Smuggling, Child Protection)	2	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Aruba	2	

NUM	INTERVIEW OR FOCUS GROUP DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANT GROUP	COUNTRY	WOMEN	MEN
15	Focus Group (Key concerns: Refugees and Migrants' Protection Needs)	2	Civil Society Organizations	Aruba	1	1
16	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, NGO Development and Funding)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Aruba	1	
17	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Justice, Detention and Deportation)	1	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Curaçao		1
18	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Justice, Human Trafficking and Smuggling)	1	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Curaçao		1
19	Focus Group (Key concerns: Sexual and Labor Exploitation, Access to Work)	2	Refugees and Migrants	Curaçao	2	
20	In-Depth Interview (Key concern: Health)	1	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Curaçao	1	
21	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs and Access to Justice)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Curaçao		1
22	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs and LGBTQ+ Community Needs)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Curaçao	1	
23	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs and Elderly Population Needs)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Curaçao		1
24	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Access to Health, Children with Disabilities)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Curaçao	1	
25	Focus Group (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, Documentation)	2	Civil Society Organizations	Curaçao	2	
26	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Gender-Based Violence, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Curaçao	1	
27	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Access to Documentation, NGO Development)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Curaçao		1
28	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Documentation, Refugees, Asylum Seekers)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Curaçao	1	
29	Focus Group (Key concern: Key Protection Needs)	7	Civil Society Organizations	Dominican Republic	4	3
30	Focus Group (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Access to Health, Access to Documentation)	2	Civil Society Organizations	Dominican Republic	1	1
31	Focus Group (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Access to Health, Access to Documentation)	3	Civil Society Organizations	Dominican Republic	2	1
32	Focus Group (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Access to Documentation, Family Reunification)	2	Refugees and Migrants	Dominican Republic	1	1
33	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Dominican Republic	1	
34	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Work, Documentation)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Dominican Republic	1	
35	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Documentation, Social Integration)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Dominican Republic		1
36	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Work, Social Integration)	7	Refugees and Migrants	Dominican Republic	3	4

NUM	INTERVIEW OR FOCUS GROUP DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANT GROUP	COUNTRY	WOMEN	MEN
37	Survey Activity (Key Concerns Identification)	4	Refugees and Migrants	Dominican Republic	3	1
38	Survey Activity (Key Concerns Identification)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Dominican Republic	1	
39	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Documentation and Access to Health)	1	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Guyana		1
40	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Indigenous Peoples)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Guyana		1
41	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, Social Integration)	1	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Guyana		1
42	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, Social Integration)	1	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Guyana	1	
43	Focus Group (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, Documentation, Social Integration)	8	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	4	4
44	Focus Group (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, Documentation, Social Integration)	7	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	4	3
45	Focus Group (Key concerns: Key Protection Needs, Access to Health)	3	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	1	2
46	Focus Group (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, Family Reunification)	2	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	2	
47	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Detention and Deportation, Access to Education, Documentation)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	1	
48	Focus Group (Key concerns: Access to Work)	4	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	1	3
49	In-Depth Interview (Key concern: Gender Based Violence and Access to Work)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	1	
50	Focus Group (Key concern: Key Protection Needs)	7	Civil Society Organizations	Guyana	4	3
51	Focus Group (Key concern: Key Protection Needs)	2	Civil Society Organizations	Guyana	1	1
52	Focus Group (Key concern: Refugee Status, Asylum Seekers, Access to Documentation)	2	Civil Society Organizations	Guyana	1	1
53	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Work, Social Integration)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana		1
54	In-Depth Interview (Key concerns: Access to Work, Gender-Based Violence)	1	Refugees and Migrants	Guyana	1	
55	Focus Group (Protection Needs Identification)	6	Governments (Local, Regional and National)	Trinidad and Tobago	5	1
56	Focus Group (Key concerns: Social Integration, Access to Work, Discrimination, Labor Exploitation)	1	Civil Society Organizations	Trinidad and Tobago	1	
57	Focus Group (Key Concerns Identification)	3	Civil Society Organizations	Trinidad and Tobago	2	1
58	Focus Group (Key Concerns Identification, Documentation)	10	Civil Society Organizations	Trinidad and Tobago	6	4
59	Focus Group (Key concerns: Access to Basic Needs, Access to Health, Documentation)	5	Refugees and Migrants	Trinidad and Tobago	3	2
TOTAL:		142			85	57

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH TOOLS, AND QUESTIONNAIRES

The study was developed through two major stages: 1) Information gathering (document review and key informant interviews²⁴) and 2) Information Analysis (document review's conclusions, stakeholder analysis, and a brief exercise of ethnographic observation). The following methodologies were used for each stage:

A) INFORMATION GATHERING

The information gathering framework is a basic stakeholder map that incorporated perceptions of R4V partners, governments (national and local), international organizations, CSOs, refugees, migrants, and local inhabitants in all five countries. A “stakeholder analysis is a process that enables analysts to identify how various parties are likely to be affected” (Babiuch and Farhar 1994, 3) or impacted by certain social phenomena, this methodology also helps identify key concerns for each participant. By using the interviewees’ perceptions as a basic input, the scope of analysis did not go beyond what the interviewees themselves allowed. An age, gender, and diversity (AGD) criteria were always preferred when selecting participants. If interviewees can see their perspectives accurately represented on the stakeholders’ map, then the final product gains legitimacy and shows the diversity of stakeholders achieved. To have different perspectives, even if some of them are in conflict, improves the quality of the information and allows social research to be conducted through a Do No Harm perspective.

The data from interviews is complemented with available documents and ethnographic notes from the field research. Additionally, several documents such as research studies, academic papers and media reports centered on the protection situation regarding Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Aruba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago were reviewed to collect information and support the analysis.

B) INFORMATION ANALYSIS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

Ethnography is usually associated with the understanding of cultural beliefs and practices of individuals and groups. A focused complementary ethnographic approach, between April and June 2021, was designed for this research to be able to better answer questions regarding Venezuelan refugees and migrant’s protection situation. It is difficult to dissociate a refugee or migrant from the community where he or she is living. As outsiders observers, researchers need to observe

²⁴ Individuals were selected based on the experience of the local IOM teams trying to reach refugees and migrants from different age and gender groups as possible.

how each individual and group finds its way in a new land, with other rules, and other people. Here observation is a key method. It complements our findings and enables us to situate in context with the information retrieved from the interviewees. Therefore, ethnographic tools are an asset since through these it is possible to:

1. Identify perceptual differences of the different informants (i.e., contexts vs protection needs)
2. Provide a series of basic questions common to all stakeholders. (i.e., concerns shared by refugees, migrants, government officials, CSOs, etc.)
3. Provide specific questions according to the activities and perceptions of each stakeholder. (i.e., Who is more vulnerable?)

It is important for the reader to consider that even when a statement constructed through observation and stakeholder analysis becomes a conclusion, it only represents the interviewee or the researcher's perception.

C) INFORMATION ANALYSIS

To avoid direct association with the research participants, the data presented is linked to the participant group to which the former belongs. Without direct relations, confidentiality is secured, but all perceptions are tagged. It is important for the reader to know how each participant group perceives the risks and needs.

First, a stakeholder analysis was drawn based on the fieldwork experience and on the model proposed by Susskind and Thomas-Larmer (1999). It helped building a first narrative axis for information organization and presentation that was chosen according to the main protection needs identified. Finally, the analysis was carried out by associating data from the interviews and document review. When possible, explanation was accompanied by semi-literal quotations of interviewees.

Questionnaires

Interviews were carried out through a specific outline that considered the particularities of each country, participatory group, stakeholder category, job position, and previously researched protection needs. The following questions helped as a basic structure that could be reduced, increased, or modified, on a case-by-case basis. The main protection fields to research were livelihood, access to documentation, health and education, violence, and family reunification.

Also, information about human trafficking and smuggling was systematize where available.

For CSO and government staff:

1. What programs or practices have been carried out so far for the protection of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country?
2. What actions do you consider have been the most positive in addressing the situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Guyana?
3. From your perspective, what are the main challenges facing Venezuelan refugees and migrants upon arrival and during their establishment in the country?
4. What do you consider to be the main challenges for the State for the attention to the needs of refugees and migrants?
5. What would you say to officials from other countries in the region who have also received refugees and migrants?
6. What good practice or public policy have worked that you would suggest other countries to replicate?
7. From your experience with refugees and migrants, where should we focus our protection activities?
8. Have you noticed specific problems experienced by women, children and youth, people with disabilities, senior adults, LGBTIQ + community?
9. Have you noticed specific problems experienced by refugees and migrants belonging to indigenous or Afro-descendant groups?

For Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (in Spanish):

1. ¿De qué forma sientes que tu vida ha cambiado desde que saliste de Venezuela?
2. ¿Qué te ha gustado o de qué estás orgulloso de los cambios en tu vida desde que saliste de Venezuela y de tu vida en un país nuevo?
3. ¿Cuáles consideras que son las tres principales problemáticas que has enfrentado o enfrentas todavía al hacer tu vida en este país?
4. Cuéntame de alguna experiencia que hayas vivido en la que personas en este país te hayan ayudado cuando lo has necesitado.
5. Durante el viaje desde Venezuela y el tiempo viviendo aquí, ¿quiénes son las personas que más te han apoyado para solucionar problemas y para hacer tu vida en este país? ¿Cómo las conociste? ¿Qué tipo de ayuda te proporcionaron?

6. ¿Quiénes más podrían involucrarse para ayudar a resolver los problemas que viven tanto tú como las demás venezolanas y venezolanos en este país?
7. Cuando has tenido un problema por ser migrante, ¿qué cosas son las que más te han preocupado?
8. Cuándo te sientes mal o te enfermas, ¿cómo le haces para recibir atención?
9. Cuando has tenido un problema o conflicto con otras personas aquí, ¿qué has hecho para resolverlo? ¿En quiénes te has apoyado?
10. Si tienes más familia o amigos de Venezuela aquí, ¿qué tipo de cosas hacen juntos?
11. ¿Cómo le hacen para que los hijos de venezolanos vayan a la escuela?
12. ¿Cómo le están haciendo para cuidar a las niñas, niños y adolescentes cuando los padres están trabajando?
13. Cuando ha habido algún problema con tu familia o conocidos en Venezuela, ¿cómo le has hecho para apoyarlos?
14. ¿Has tenido problemas para que te entiendan o darte a entender en este país? ¿Cuáles han sido?
15. ¿Cómo te ha afectado la pandemia del covid-19 en tu vida en este país?
16. ¿Qué les dirías a otras personas que están en Venezuela y están por venir para acá? ¿Qué les recomendarías? ¿En qué se deberían de fijar?
17. Como mujer/niña, niño, adolescente (NNAJ)/adulto mayor/LGBTIQ+, ¿sientes que has tenido otras dificultades respecto a otras personas migrantes?
18. Como mujer/NNAJ/adulto mayor/LGBTIQ+, ¿cuándo te has sentido más vulnerable?

19. ¿Qué tipo de actividades te tocan realizar a ti como mujer/NNAJ/adulto mayor/LGBTIQ+ que consideras que otras personas no realizan?
20. ¿Qué cosas no te dejan hacer?
21. Como parte de un grupo originario/indígena o afrodescendiente, ¿consideras que has tenidos otras dificultades respecto a las demás personas migrantes?
22. Como parte de un grupo originario/indígena o afrodescendiente, ¿cuándo te has sentido más vulnerable?

These questions worked as input for the following remote activities:

- Online survey (For all members of R4V platform and for informants not possible to reach or schedule for interview.)
- Videoconference or phone call interview (For key stakeholders of all participatory groups/countries).
- Focus group interviews (For CSO staff, refugees, and migrants)
- Social media surveys (For reaching out refugees and migrants)

Fieldwork activities

- Face to face interviews (For key stakeholders of all sectors/ countries, refugees, and migrants).
- Focus group interviews (written survey, group dynamic, discussion generation activities) .
- Ethnographic observation (Short observation of refugees and migrants’ livelihoods and places of work)
- Other focus Groups activities used the following scheme as a discussion starter:

¿Cuáles de estos derechos consideras que se te han brindado?

DERECHO A:		
1) Respeto a la nacionalidad	2) Solicitar asilo	3) Alojamiento digno
4) Libertad de tránsito	5) Solicitar el reconocimiento de la condición de refugiado	6) No ser incomunicado
7) Seguridad jurídica y al debido proceso	8) Protección de la unidad familiar	9) Intérprete o traductor
10) Asistencia consular	11) Dignidad humana	12) No ser detenidos en las inmediaciones o dentro de albergues
13) No discriminación	14) No ser criminalizado	15) Alimentación
16) Información	17) Salud	18) Educación



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