

2019 END-OF-YEAR REPORT CARIBBEAN SUB-REGION

1. Overview

The worsening political, socio-economic and human rights situation in Venezuela continued to lead to the outflow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants into the southern Caribbean. Venezuelans are escaping violence, insecurity and persecution as well as lack of food, medicine and essential rights and services. As of December 2019, the number of Venezuelans in the Caribbean was estimated to have reached a total of 113,500, with 17,000 in Aruba, 16,500 in Curaçao, 34,000 in the Dominican Republic, 22,000 in Guyana, and 24,000 in Trinidad and Tobago. The influx of Venezuelans into the Caribbean has had a disproportionate impact on reception resources and public services of host countries, taking into consideration their limited size and absorption capacity and the significant portion of Venezuelans in their national populations reaching per capita host rates of 15 per cent and above in some countries. By the end of 2020, partners estimate that over 190,000 people will be in need of assistance in the Caribbean, including both Venezuelans and host communities.

Concerns about the growing number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the Caribbean have led to several cases of non-admission, detention, deportations without adequate protection screenings, and the implementation of measures to tighten entry controls such as the temporary closure of borders with Venezuela and introduction of visa requirements¹, resulting in limited access to territory and increased exposure to protection risks, especially risks at sea². As of June 2019, Trinidad and Tobago introduced a visa scheme for Venezuelans, who previously did not need a visa for travel for up to 90 days. In the Dominican Republic, the visa requirement took effect in December 2019, requiring Venezuelans to apply for a visa at the Dominican Embassy in Caracas prior to travel to the country. Aruba and Curaçao have also announced that Venezuelans would require a visa to enter their territories as of April 2020. These visa restrictions for Venezuelans who are seeking safety in the Caribbean are likely to lead to an increase in the number of irregular arrivals, exposing Venezuelans to more protection risks, including risks at sea, human trafficking and smuggling. In addition, Venezuelans with an irregular status have limited access to basic services and become more vulnerable to different forms of exploitation and abuse, including child protection risks.

On the other hand, due to ongoing advocacy and relationship building measures, some positive developments have taken place with regard to the registration of Venezuelans in the region. The government of **Trinidad and Tobago** conducted a [two-week registration exercise](#) in June 2019 to register Venezuelans present in the country, including those who entered irregularly or overstayed. This registration provided a registration card that regularized the status of

¹ With the exception of Guyana, which has been welcoming Venezuelans.

² At least 80 persons lost their lives at sea while trying to reach the Caribbean in 2019 in three incidents that were reported.

Venezuelans in the country, granted permission to work for up to one year, and access to basic services. A total of 16,523 adults and 2,421 children were registered during the exercise; to date, an estimated 9,000 individuals have received their registration card which, upon expiry, is to be extended for another six months as announced by the Government.



Figure 1: Venezuelans with their Household Registration Certificates in Guyana

In **Guyana**, the government, with the support of a partner and through the use of the Population Registration and Identity Management Ecosystem (PRIMES)³, rolled out [biometric registration](#) of Venezuelans as of October 2019, granting Household Registration Certificates to Venezuelans upon their entry into Guyana, which includes a provision against forced return and a three-month renewable stay permit. At the end of 2019, 1,827 individuals have been biometrically registered, of which 51% were children and 25% were women; registration activities will continue in 2020 with a plan to increase the capacity in order to register more individuals. Guyana is the first country in the region to have implemented this type of registration and serves as a good example of provision of access to territory and basic rights for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Additionally, the **Dominican Republic** and **Guyana** were the first southern Caribbean countries to sign the Quito IV Declaration and Roadmap in 2019, reinforcing cooperation between countries of transit and destination for Venezuelans and identifying actions to be taken to protect vulnerable refugees and migrants. Positive advances in terms of coordination were also made in the Dominican Republic throughout the year. The R4V Refugee and Migrant Working Group became increasingly operational, enabling members to better coordinate the response. In this framework, partners developed joint assessments, strengthened local GBV prevention and response systems, and reinforced mechanisms to communicate with communities. In **Aruba** and **Curaçao**, partners have increasingly provided humanitarian assistance and services to Venezuelans, while continuing dialogue with the governments on areas related to international protection.

2. Needs Analysis

A significant number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the Caribbean are estimated to be in an irregular situation as a result of **shrinking regular pathways** and **increased**

³ PRIMES is a global platform for registration and identity management tools and applications developed by one of the platform partners.

requirements for entry coupled with **limited access to asylum** given the absence or nascent stages of the national asylum systems and lack of domestic asylum legislation in the Caribbean. With the rising number of arrivals, growing needs are linked to access to territory, access to asylum and regular status including alternative legal pathways to stay. In this regard, Guyana has responded to the steady influx of Venezuelans by regularizing their status through a continuous biometric registration system which has been implemented with the support of a partner in Region 1. In turn, the government of Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken a two-week registration exercise that issued registration cards for Venezuelans, but this exercise had a limited reach given the limited period for registration. In consultation with governments, **registration procedures will need to continue to be reinforced and expanded** across the Caribbean to facilitate identification, access to rights such as legal stay, and referral of persons in need of protection. Without these systems in place, tailoring specialized services for vulnerable persons will be particularly challenging.

In the Caribbean, refugees and migrants from Venezuela are exposed to **significant protection risks**. Growing entry restrictions across the sub-region have increased the number of people taking irregular routes, being exposed to risks at sea, human trafficking and smuggling, with women and children being particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Access to immigration detention facilities to monitor the detention conditions and the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, remains limited in the region.

Human trafficking and **gender-based violence** against Venezuelans remains a serious concern, as well as negative coping mechanisms, including child labour and survival sex for many women and girls. Trafficking networks in the Caribbean pre-existed the Venezuela situation, and the worsening situation in Venezuela coupled with growing vulnerabilities of Venezuelans due to gender-based violence, poverty, unemployment, and other factors, have led to increasing reports of human trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation and violence. This situation is compounded by the fact that there is an overall need to strengthen legal and social services available to prevent and address gender-based violence and to counter human trafficking across the sub-region, requiring close collaboration between national governments and other actors.

Challenges related to access to **humanitarian assistance and basic services** have been exacerbated due to the limited size and absorption capacity of Caribbean countries. In many instances, refugees and migrants from Venezuela have the right to access public primary healthcare and formal education, however, many Venezuelans face challenges in accessing these services as a result of language, administrative and financial barriers as well as their lack of legal status and consequent fear of being reported to immigration authorities. In addition, undocumented children and youth do not have access to diplomas certifying their studies at the end of the school year, and more restrictions exist with regard to access to tertiary education. Access to specialized medical services is similarly limited, such as treatment for chronic conditions, sexual and reproductive health services, life-saving drugs, anti-retroviral human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) treatment, psychosocial support, and vaccinations.

Receiving communities are also under increased strain and show signs of **emerging discrimination and xenophobia** due to the lack of understanding about the reasons behind the displacement of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The lack of legal status coupled with the language barrier in the non-Spanish speaking Caribbean countries also has a strong negative effect on the socio-economic and cultural inclusion of Venezuelans.

Access to **safe and dignified work and livelihood opportunities** remains a challenge as most Venezuelans in the Caribbean do not have the right to work in receiving countries⁴. Venezuelans also face challenges in having their academic and professional qualifications recognized, validated and accredited in host countries, which hinders them from continuing with their academic studies and securing employment that matches their qualifications. Most Venezuelans resort to working in the informal sector, where they are exposed to discrimination, abuse and exploitation.

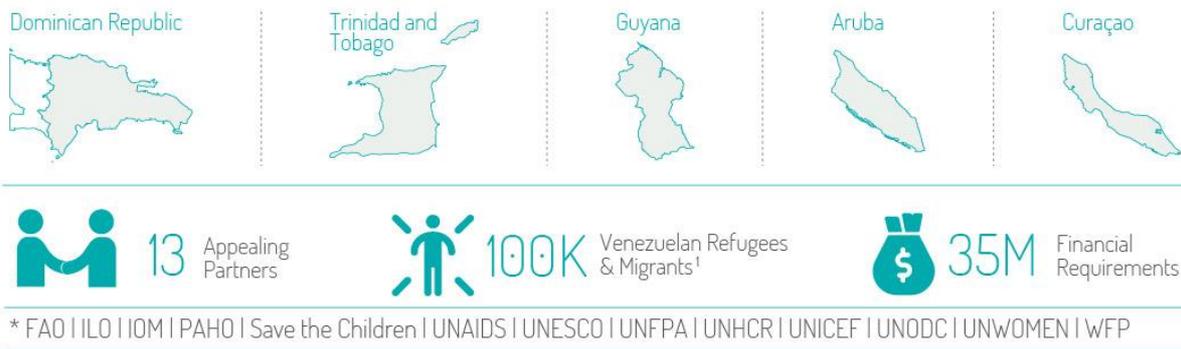
The **capacity and resources of host governments** to absorb and guarantee adequate access to basic services and rights, such as health care and education, for new arrivals and host communities are overstretched. Improved coordination and communication with government officials and with partners needs continuous enhancement to ensure that interventions are complementary to the governments' responses and in line with international protection standards. Increased awareness on the rights of refugees and migrants is also needed.

⁴ With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, where Venezuelans who registered during the government-led registration exercise in June 2019 are allowed to work for the duration of the Minister's permits issued to them for a period up to one year upon renewal.

3. Response for Venezuelans

As a response to the unprecedented movement of refugees and migrants into the Caribbean, 13 appealing partners have come together in 2019 to coordinate interventions under the umbrella of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP). Partners scaled-up direct emergency and protection response, as well as support for socio-economic and cultural inclusion mechanisms, in order to complement the governments’ efforts and to ensure communities continue to receive refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

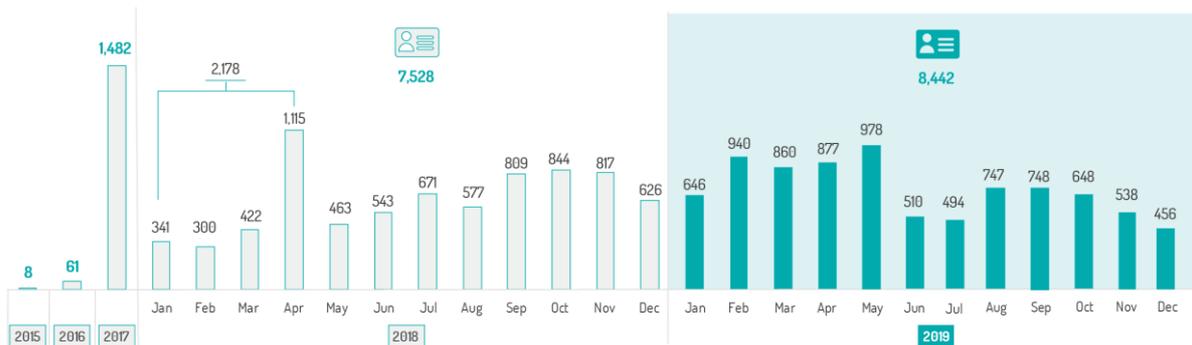
Key Figures Summary



Over **113,500** Venezuelans arrived in the Caribbean sub-region

17,521 Venezuelan asylum-seekers registered by a partner in the Caribbean sub-region since 2015⁵

No. of Registered Venezuelan asylum-seekers (2015-Dec 2019)



⁵ The chart shows the monthly registration of new Venezuelan asylum-seekers in the Caribbean sub-region from 2015 to 31 May 2019. Figures by month are not cumulative.

Area of Intervention 1: Emergency Response

6,174 assessed for direct emergency assistance	2,092 received food
3,611 received NFIs	4,454 received emergency health care
835 provided with temporary accommodation	3,350 received cash grants

Increasing numbers of Venezuelans are arriving in the Caribbean with fewer resources and limited abilities to meet their basic needs, as the crisis extends into the fourth year. They are in immediate need of food, shelter, medicine, non-food items (NFIs) and other basic services, depending on their profile and previous location in Venezuela, as well as on their individual experiences in traveling to the Caribbean, and the services available in the host country. Partners implemented over 14,300 direct emergency assistance interventions throughout the region to cover the basic needs of Venezuelans and host communities in 2019.

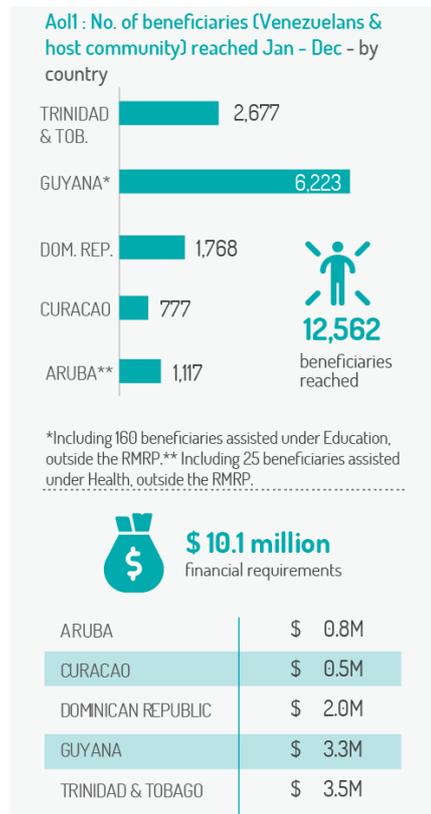
Food assistance was provided to 2,092 Venezuelans and over 3,803 people received non-food items such as personal hygiene kits, baby kits and habitat kits in **Aruba, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago**. Different forms of temporary accommodation and emergency shelter (i.e. rental subsidy/allowance) were provided to 835 Venezuelans in the region with a focus on persons with specific needs



Figure 2: NFI distribution in Trinidad & Tobago

and priority groups, such as victims of trafficking, single women, survivors of gender-based violence and persons with disabilities. Multi-purpose cash assistance grants were provided to more than 3,350 households to enable some of the most vulnerable refugees and migrants to fulfil some of their needs in a dignified way and mitigate the impact of their displacement to the extent possible.

Partners also continued to provide information about services and supported host governments in providing access to emergency health care, particularly specialized care and vaccinations, reaching more than 4,454 individuals during the year. In **Curaçao**, a community-based medical clinic was opened with the support of partners in July 2019, providing basic health care and specialized health services in more than



1,500 consultations for undocumented refugees and migrants who are not able to access the national health insurance. Services included basic health care, reproductive health consultations, prenatal and maternity care, contraceptives, as well as HIV and diabetes care.

Provision of healthcare services also remained a priority in the **Dominican Republic**. While Venezuelans are generally able to access primary care through the public system, they face barriers accessing specialized medical care due to lack of documentation and resources to access health insurance. Partners jointly worked to address some of these needs through community mobilization, including medical fairs and brigades, that provided free medical services to both Venezuelans and members of the host community.

Similarly, in **Guyana**, partners worked with government authorities to vaccinate Venezuelans and returning Guyanese arriving in Guyana for yellow fever, tetanus, diphtheria, measles, mumps, and rubella. An inter-agency medical outreach was also conducted in Region 1 (along the Venezuela-Guyana border), during which over 630 Venezuelans and members of the host community received medical services, including 130 dentist consultations. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, partners organized medical clinics in Port of Spain and rural areas of the country to allow refugees and migrants to access primary medical care, and undertook nutritional screening of children under the age of 5 along with the promotion of healthy infant and young child feeding practices among caregivers and parents.

To address the critical lack of information on in-depth multi-sectoral needs, partners conducted needs assessments in the areas of gender-based violence, early childhood development, market and livelihoods, English as a second language, and general protection and humanitarian needs. The results assisted to inform the response of government counterparts, civil society partners, and international agencies. Despite budgetary constraints, partners were able to provide direct emergency assistance to 8,321 Venezuelans and 4,241 vulnerable members of host communities during the year. This type of assistance represented 21% of the total assistance provided by partners in the Caribbean in 2019.

Area of Intervention 2: Protection

8,297 counselled on access to protection	1,310 provided with legal assistance
2,592 accessed psychosocial support	6,679 benefited from accompanied visits to Government services
1,460 status determination procedures conducted	822 accessed GBV prevention and response services in safe spaces

Since the beginning of the year, more than 22,200 of the most vulnerable refugees and migrants from Venezuela⁶ benefited from coordinated protection activities as a result of the

⁶ This total of beneficiaries does not include beneficiaries from the host community.

efforts of 7 appealing agencies and 18 implementing partners. Activities ranged from advocacy for alternative legal pathways, alternatives to detention, and access to asylum, to community-based interventions and support to individual cases. Partners in the Caribbean continued to work together with government authorities to guarantee and facilitate documentation, access to the asylum system, and provision of information on rights and services for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Partners provided counselling and legal assistance to over 9,000 Venezuelans in **Aruba**, **Guyana** and the **Dominican Republic**, including information on asylum processes, residency matters, registration and other ways for Venezuelans to regularize their stay in their respective host countries. In **Guyana**, counselling was also provided to returning Guyanese and their descendants, and partners accompanied over 3,514 individuals to government institutions to facilitate access to documentation and basic services. In **Curaçao**, partners trained five lawyers and eight volunteers from a local Dutch NGO on international protection and assistance programs for refugees and migrants.

Aol 2: No. of beneficiaries (Venezuelans & host community) reached as of Jan -Dec - by country

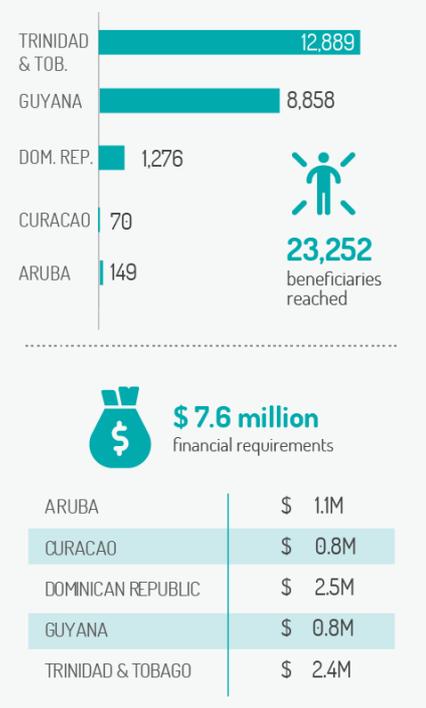


Figure 3: An awareness session about Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in Trinidad & Tobago

Among the protection risks faced by persons arriving from Venezuela, GBV and human trafficking remained among the most prevalent. To ensure that child protection cases, elderly persons, human trafficking and GBV survivors and others have access to specialized assistance, partners established mechanisms to identify cases with specific protection needs and safely referred 479 persons to relevant services albeit the limitation and shortage in service providers and partners. In **Trinidad and Tobago**,

partners cooperated with national authorities to ensure assistance and protection to 157 victims of trafficking, including emergency shelter, medical care and food assistance to meet their most urgent needs. As part of the international campaign, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, several activities took place in the region. In **Aruba**, partners organized a creative arts workshop for survivors of GBV, a dialogue on domestic violence for refugee, migrant and Aruban women, and a sensitization workshop for service providers. In the **Dominican Republic**, partners supported a community-led medical brigade in Puerto Plata, which focused on the provision of sexual and reproductive health services for both Venezuelans and members of the host community. A Public Education and Information Fair was organized in **Trinidad and Tobago** to provide information on GBV and to make available information on support services to assist women, men, girls and boys who have experienced different forms

of violence. With regard to child protection, child-friendly spaces were set up for refugee and migrant children to have a safe space with psychosocial support and access to learning, socialization and play, reaching 2,355 boys and girls during the year throughout the Caribbean sub region.

A partner also strengthened Refugee Status Determination⁷ (RSD) procedures in **Trinidad and Tobago** to ensure a more effective response to the increasing numbers of asylum claims being received. RSD teams conducted missions to Tobago and rural areas of Trinidad in order to increase outreach to Venezuelans residing outside of urban clusters. Over 1,700 asylum claims were processed in 2019 with 1,600 persons recognized as refugees. Resettlement activities were also scaled up in Trinidad and Tobago, while cases in need of accelerated procedure based on specific or resettlement needs were prioritized.

Community-based protection was improved by establishing communication with communities and strengthening community structures and engaging Venezuelans in finding solutions to their situation. In the **Dominican Republic**, several community events were held bringing together some 1,276 individuals (896 Venezuelans; 380 members of the host community) for informational sessions, as well as leisure activities, such as film screenings and sports events. Partners also undertook participatory assessments with Venezuelans in coordination with local authorities to assess any developments about their situation to adjust operations to better respond to their needs. As a result of such initiatives, and pursuant to an inter-agency rapid GBV assessment, partners in Guyana supported the government in developing GBV referral pathways to enhance coordination among service providers in priority areas of the country.

Area of Intervention 3: Socio-Economic Inclusion

7,921 persons from host communities participated in activities on prevention of xenophobia	63 started or strengthened their businesses
69 benefited from vocational training activities	290 benefited from language training activities

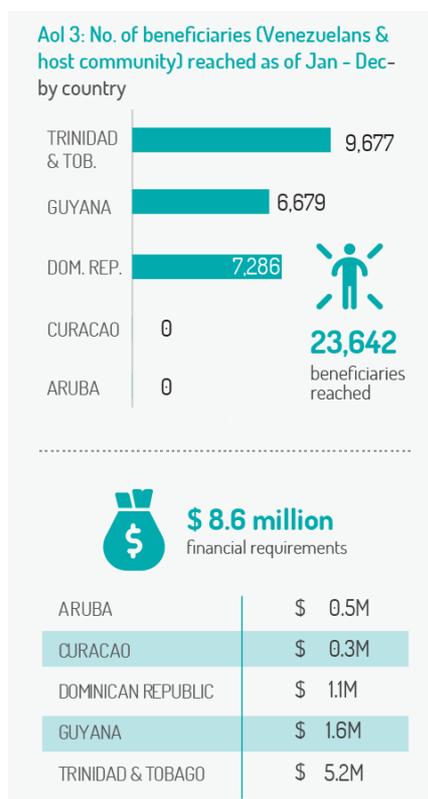
Given the ongoing need for Venezuelans to become self-reliant and contribute to their host communities, partners worked throughout the year to generate opportunities for socio-economic and cultural integration of refugees and migrants. Due to barriers in accessing livelihoods and formal employment in many Caribbean countries, including language barriers, Venezuelans experience severe economic vulnerabilities and risks of exploitation. Dialogue was maintained across the Caribbean to advocate for legal status and access to basic services and rights, including access to education and formal employment for Venezuelans.

⁷ Refugee Status Determination, or RSD, is the legal or administrative process by which governments or UNHCR determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional or national law.

Integration activities included vocational training and entrepreneurship support, reaching some 69 people during the year, from both Venezuelans and host communities. In **Guyana**, partners piloted a small-scale grants programme for vulnerable women aimed at supporting their integration and economic inclusion. The initiative provided training on the development of small business start-ups and provided grants to 18 women, increasing their self-reliance and independence. In the **Dominican Republic**, a multi-faceted assessment was conducted to provide concrete data on how the local market can capitalize on the diverse professional skills and experiences of Venezuelans, understand challenges and opportunities for their integration into the local labour market, and recommend solutions.



Figure 4: Presentation of results of the Labor Market Assessment in the Dominican Republic



Although access to formal education has been extended to most Venezuelans in the Caribbean, various barriers continued to prevent refugees and migrants from accessing national education systems, such as lack of documentation, limited capacities of local school systems, as well as language, administrative, and financial barriers. To overcome these challenges, various programmes have been implemented based on the local context, benefitting 3,029 Venezuelan children and youth. These included the rehabilitation of public schools, establishment of English as a Second Language classes, teacher trainings, advocacy to overcome documentary or financial obstacles, and the provision of temporary learning spaces.

To improve access to education of Venezuelan children and youth in **Trinidad and Tobago**, in coordination with the Caribbean Council of Examination, partners have established the first accredited online education programme in the Caribbean called *Equal Place* (Espacios de Equidad in Spanish), offering children access to accredited web-based education through NoteMasters (in English) and Dawere (in Spanish). Equal Place is a blended program which consists of an e-learning platform made available to children and complemented with regular face-to-face sessions with teachers at child-friendly spaces and other locations. The program commenced during the 2019-2020 school year with 1,018 asylum-seekers, refugees and other children of concern between the ages of 5-17. As a further component of the learning process aimed towards the integration of Venezuelan children and others of concern in host communities, ESL teaching is included in all educational interventions conducted by a partner in Trinidad and Tobago.



Figure 5: ESL classes in Guyana

In **Guyana**, partners continued to work with the government to address the education needs of Venezuelans, returning Guyanese and Warao-speaking children in Region 1 (bordering Venezuela). A partner conducted an education needs assessment in Region 1 in March-April and built the capacity of 10 local teachers on ESL in August. By end-2019, 174 Venezuelan and returning Guyanese children took part in ESL after-school classes in Mabaruma subdistrict (Region 1), and 185 out-of-school children participated in a partner's community-based ESL classes as a way of fostering social cohesion and promoting integration of refugee and migrant children into the national education system.

Extensive efforts were also undertaken to increase public awareness on the plight of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, combat the rise of xenophobia and discrimination, and facilitate their cultural integration. Over 7,920 persons from host communities across the Caribbean participated in activities on prevention of xenophobia. These included a training for media personnel to increase humane reporting about the situation of Venezuelans in **Aruba**, and the organization of social cohesion events, including the Guyana-Venezuela day and graduation ceremonies for community-based ESL classes, in **Guyana**.



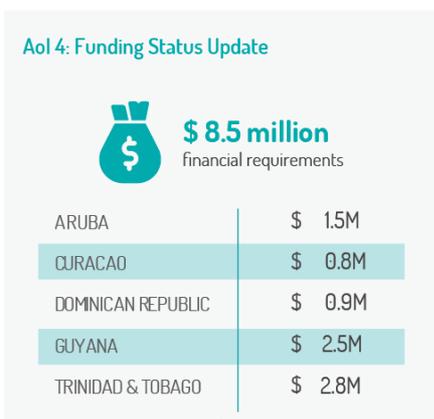
Figure 6: Celebration of Venezuela-Guyana Day in Georgetown, Guyana

In the **Dominican Republic**, awareness raising activities about the situation of Venezuelans were implemented, notably at the World Refugee Day, through four university events in partnership with the National Migration Institute (Instituto Nacional de Migración, INM for its acronym in Spanish) and the National Office for Refugees (Oficina Nacional para los Refugiados, ONR for its acronym in Spanish); one cine forum with ONR's participation; awareness sessions on the protection and rights of Venezuelans through an online radio programme (*globalizate radio*); one urban art activity in partnership with Arte 2030, a collective of artists supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and three community-based, social cohesion activities in different provinces.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, "Lifted", a film commissioned by a partner aimed to promote solidarity by exploring the lives of a Venezuelan refugee family as they are introduced to the Trinidadian cultural practice of stilt-walking, was screened to audiences at more than 14 festivals worldwide. Additionally, media training, inclusive of the national Police Service Corporate Communications Unit, resulted in increased publicity and more nuanced refugee stories. Partners also engaged in public advocacy and facilitated the participation of students in Model UNs in Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname.

Area of Intervention 4: Strengthening the Capacity of Host Governments

493 Government officials trained	17 Government entities ⁸ working on migration and asylum strengthened
10 media actors trained	127 police, prosecutors, judges and magistrates trained



Partners supported national authorities across the Caribbean with human resources, infrastructure and technical assistance to facilitate access to basic rights and the delivery of essential services to Venezuelans, while strengthening host governments' capacities to identify individuals in need of international protection.

Conducting trainings on the principles of international protection of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, identification and referral of persons with specific needs, and other key issues related to the Venezuelan situation was a key focus, resulting in the training of 471 individuals.

Participants included government officials such as immigration officers, police, adjudicators for refugee status and health officials. Partners also provided trainings to key non-governmental stakeholders working in the framework of the Venezuela situation in the sub-region, including lawyers, media, social workers and civil society actors.

In the **Dominican Republic**, partners facilitated several workshops on refugee status determination (RSD), comparative jurisprudence, and international refugee law for judges and clerks from the Administrative Court, officials from the ONR and Public Defender's Office and other government representatives. Trainings were also organized for 16 lawyers and two civil society and academia actors from **Aruba** and **Curaçao** on the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights proceedings related to asylum matters.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, partners provided legal and technical support to the Ministry of Labour and the Cabinet-appointed Inter-Ministerial Committee in the drafting of the government's labour migration policy to ensure better protection for migrant workers and optimize the benefits of organized labour migration. Partners worked closely with host governments to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to strengthen the role of authorities in responding to issues relating to trafficking in persons, child protection, GBV, as well as registration and documentation. Exchange of best practices in these areas was also promoted, thus building the capacity of host governments to address specific situations arising from mixed movements.

To facilitate the exchange of good practices between countries, partners also supported the participation of Caribbean governments in a variety of regional trainings and workshops. A "Regional Course on International Refugee Law and Statelessness" was organized in Costa Rica

⁸ "Government entities" include various Ministries, Departments, and Committees that are engaged in the response to Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the concerned Caribbean countries.

and attended by 19 officials from various Caribbean countries, including **Aruba**, **Curaçao**, the **Dominican Republic**, **Guyana**, and **Trinidad and Tobago**. With the support of partners, the governments of the **Dominican Republic** and **Guyana** participated in a “Regional Workshop on Civil Registration, Statelessness and Refugee Status Determination” in Chile, and the **Dominican Republic** attended the “First Regional Meeting of Public Defenders and Ombudsmen Offices” in Ecuador, which focused on legal aid and refugee status determination in the context of large-scale mixed movements.

The governments of **Aruba**, the **Dominican Republic**, and **Trinidad and Tobago** participated in the third roundtable of the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI), a program that aims to strengthen or develop comprehensive national asylum systems. At the QAI roundtable, partners reiterated their support to governments for the development and strengthening of their asylum systems and to provide resources and capacity to conduct “fair and fast” refugee status determination (RSD) in the context of the Venezuela situation, alongside migratory solutions.

Throughout the year, Caribbean countries participated in several regional workshops, meetings and webinars held in the framework of the [Caribbean Migration Consultations](#) (CMC), which culminated in December 2019 with the “CMC Preparatory Meeting for a Regional Approach to Migration and International Protection” held in Kingston, Jamaica with the support of R4V partners. The CMC, a State-led process that was launched in 2016, provides a forum for all Caribbean governments to collaborate and share information and good practices on matters of migration and international protection, and this meeting was convened to achieve concrete steps for the formalization of the forum’s structure and roadmap for the coming years. With over 20 Caribbean countries and territories present – including **Aruba**, **Curaçao**, the **Dominican Republic**, **Guyana** and **Trinidad and Tobago** – the CMC meeting provided a presentation by the R4V Regional Platform on its work in the Caribbean and discussions between participating countries on their national responses to increasing arrivals of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. To guide the activities of the CMC in the coming years, participants prepared a draft matrix for a Regional Plan of Action which identifies the priority areas of focus for the CMC with a view to achieving a rights-based regional approach to migration and international protection issues in the Caribbean, and represents Caribbean countries’ identified needs, proposed action points, and indicators for measuring progress. Within this framework, Caribbean countries will collectively address themes including but not limited to human-trafficking, refugee protection, statelessness, migration policies and adherence to international standards, and migration and health. In addition to the Regional Plan of Action, participating countries developed a thematic Plan of Action to Address Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change in the Caribbean, as well as the CMC Guiding Principles and CMC Operating Modalities, key documents to be adopted by the CMC in 2020 with a view to formalizing the structure, direction, and core principles of this unique regional platform.

Additionally, partners supported Caribbean countries’ engagement in other global and regional forums that served as key opportunities to raise the visibility of the response to Venezuelans in the Caribbean and intensify solidarity with countries hosting increasing numbers of refugees and migrants. The **Dominican Republic** and **Guyana** were the first Caribbean countries to sign the [Quito IV Declaration and Roadmap](#) in July 2019, reinforcing cooperation between countries of transit and destination for Venezuelans and identifying actions to be taken to protect vulnerable refugees and migrants. **Guyana** also signed the [Quito V Declaration](#) in November 2019.

Caribbean countries also participated in the [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF) as well as in a series of preparatory meetings leading up to the forum⁹. The **Dominican Republic** has shared [five pledges](#) made towards improving the situation of refugees and host communities, including ensuring access to education, especially for refugee women; improving border security and management; improving data and analysis on refugees; improving support and access to justice for refugees and asylum-seekers who are survivors of GBV; and improving access to translation and interpretation for refugees who do not speak Spanish. Other events attended by Caribbean countries include a CMC webinar to expand engagement, and the [High-Level Segment on Statelessness](#)¹⁰ (HLS). Of particular note were the [four pledges](#) submitted by **Guyana** during the HLS related to simplifying and improving access to birth registration and national documentation and increasing awareness of statelessness within the country¹¹. Caribbean participation in these regional and global forums facilitated the exchange of good practices and capacity-building for responding to mixed movements of refugees and migrants and resulted in a variety of stakeholders from around the world sharing achievements, challenges and pledges on issues related to migration and international protection.

4. Coordination

During the year, the Caribbean sub-region inter-agency platform coordinated the efforts of 14 appealing partners in **Aruba, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago**. National Platforms/Refugee and Migrant Working Groups (RMWGs) have been set up in each country to facilitate strategic planning and coordination between UN agencies, civil society actors and various governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the response to the Venezuela situation, in complementarity to and reinforcing the governmental response.

Monthly RMWGs meetings were convened during the year in all five countries for partners to discuss the current status of the response, improve coordination and find ways to address existing operational challenges, funding shortages, monitoring and accountability, as well as opportunities and ways forward. In addition, during workshops organized to develop the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for 2020, partners jointly identified the needs, risks, challenges and priority interventions necessary to respond to the increasing humanitarian needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the Caribbean.

In **Guyana**, the National Platform closely coordinated with the government-led multi-agency national committee for the Venezuelan response, which brought together several public institutions, ministries and UN agencies to coordinate the response to the Venezuela situation. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, an education and protection coordination working groups were set up as part of the National Platform to work on matters related to education and develop standard operating procedures and improve case management related to child protection, GBV, persons with specific needs and victims of trafficking, respectively. Partners also established protection,

⁹ The GRF was attended by representatives from Aruba and the Dominican Republic.

¹⁰ The HLS was attended by Guyana and the Dominican Republic.

¹¹ With the outflow of Venezuelans in the region, there are risks related to access to nationality, difficulties in obtaining documentation that proves or confirms Venezuelan/Guyanese nationality, and subsequent risks of statelessness, and partners are working together with Caribbean governments to mitigate these risks.

health, integration, and communication working groups in the **Dominican Republic**, GBV and mental health and psychosocial support working groups in **Curaçao**, and a case management working group in **Aruba**.



Figure 7: R4V partners' planning workshop in Curaçao

Additionally, the **R4V Sub-Regional Platform** worked on strengthening coordination throughout the southern Caribbean and together with RMRP partners, carried out missions; held briefing sessions with donors, embassies and government counterparts; produced inter-agency information products; and continued to build the capacity of organizations working within the response for Venezuelans in the sub-region. The **R4V Sub-Regional Platform**

organized 15 workshops throughout the region in 2019 focusing on protection challenges and solutions, contingency planning, reporting and coordination as well as RMRP planning and evaluation. These trainings were key to improve the capacity and collaboration of partners, as well as to render the results of the platform's work more visible for donors and external actors. Moreover, communication, guidance and support to national R4V coordinators improved through monthly core team meetings, regular email communications, and the set-up of a shared library.

5. Challenges and Unmet Needs

Significant achievements have been reached in responding to the needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, as well as in enhancing regional coordination and collaboration in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, the scope of the response has been limited due to several constraints. In 2019, only 24% of the RMRP budgetary requirements were reached in the Caribbean, leaving a funding gap of 76%. This has significantly impacted the ability of partners to deliver on the planned response, in addition to other structural and operational challenges, including poor infrastructure in some countries, and limited humanitarian and protection space.

Most southern Caribbean countries have insufficient human and financial resources, including lack and scarcity of partners and community-based organizations required for an adequate response to the Venezuela situation, while being faced with a humanitarian crisis of such magnitude. This situation along with the increasing numbers of new arrivals have also stretched the capacities of partners in the Caribbean to respond to the needs of Venezuelans, which have led to the prioritization of beneficiaries through a needs-based approach in order to provide assistance to the most vulnerable.

Some of the most critical unmet needs of Venezuelans in the Caribbean include access to legal status and documentation; access to basic services, including education and health care; shelter support; multi-purpose cash grants and basic relief items; psychosocial assistance; livelihoods and income-generating support. Strengthened GBV and human trafficking prevention and response services also remain a key priority which requires additional resources

as the risks of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation of Venezuelans have been stressed by Venezuelan communities across the region.

6. The Way Forward

As the Venezuela crisis extends into the fourth year and increasing numbers of refugees and migrants from Venezuela require direct protection and assistance interventions in the Caribbean, partners acknowledge the significant impact of the response on the lives of Venezuelans and host communities, but also recognize the need to continue their commitment to expanding and maintaining a coordinated and comprehensive approach to respond to the needs of Venezuelans in complementarity with and reinforcing the host governments' response.

In 2020, partners will scale up the response and mobilize international support under the umbrella of the [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan](#). A total of 71,000 refugees and migrants from Venezuela and 51,000 host communities' members are planned to be reached through the coordinated actions of 22 appealing partners in 2020. The response in the Caribbean will focus on three main areas of intervention:

- Provide and improve safe and dignified access to essential goods and critical services in synergy with sustainable development assistance.
- Enhance the prevention and mitigation of protection risks and respond to protection needs through supporting the protective environment in affected countries.
- Increase resilience and integration opportunities.

This will be achieved through advocacy, capacity building, provision of direct assistance and community-based interventions. Activities under the RMRP will require USD 45.6 million to cover the needs of the targeted population in the sectors of protection, integration, health, food security, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and NFIs. In this framework, partners call on the international community for support to continue to contribute to meeting the overarching humanitarian, protection and socioeconomic integration needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.