



Situation

- Increased COVID-19 cases in the sub-region led to tightened restrictions on movement and activities. During April, there was a 12% increase in positive cases with 13 deaths in Aruba. Curaçao saw a 38% rise in infections with 71 deaths, reflecting a 186% upsurge. Trinidad and Tobago experienced a 34% rise in cases with 24 deaths and by 20 April the highly transmissible Brazilian variant had been [confirmed](#) in the country. Guyana experienced a 28% rise in infections and 63 deaths while the Dominican Republic reported a 5% rise in cases with 5% more deaths, compared to March.
- Aruban** schools reopened in April, with stricter measures in place. Curfews remained in place and vaccination capacity expanded to reach 3,000 people daily. Some refugees and migrants (R&Ms) in an irregular status reported to R4V partners that they were not participating in wide vaccine efforts offered by the Government of Aruba (*GoA*) for fear of side effects of the vaccines. The [Health Department recognized the strained economic situation due to COVID-19 has affected the mental health of many families](#) struggling to pay bills. Additionally, two incidents of irregular entries and [detentions](#) of Venezuelans by the Coast Guard were reported, prompting the Coastguard and Justice Department to focus on border security [cooperation](#) efforts. Repeat entrants were among the detainees. Furthermore, the previously modified and suspended [visa process](#) was re-established for persons to enter the island and [DIMAS](#) was processing [the backlog](#). Finally, the [annual naturalization test](#) is to be held in August 2021.
- The Government of **Curaçao** (*GoC*) issued a nation-wide lock-down until 30 April in response to increased COVID-19 infections. Movement restrictions and full-stop of public life further exacerbated R&Ms' risk of food insecurity and homelessness, as they had limited livelihood options to pay rent and meet other basic needs. The vaccination program remained ongoing, reaching the highest rate of persons vaccinated per capita worldwide. The GoC issued an extension of the immunization campaign and an exemption of its previous policy of detention and prosecution of persons in the country irregularly, in order to promote vaccination among R&Ms in an irregular status. Also, the Red Cross provided a final top-up of e-vouchers as they planned the handover of the food distribution program to the *GoC*.
- The **Dominican Republic** continued under a state of emergency with extended curfews. Regardless, schools reopened for in-person classes with hygiene protocols in place. Plans for the regularization process of Venezuelans were anticipated amidst pandemic restrictions with partners' support from partners. R4V partners also launched a [Mapping of Key Actors in the Prevention and Protection of Victims of Trafficking \(VoTs\) in the DR](#). The map determined assigned roles for development initiatives, and is based on the institutions that work on human trafficking and where they carry out their work.
- Guyana** confirmed they would receive enough COVID-19 vaccines to [immunize the entire adult population](#), including all [R&Ms](#). With severe impact over the livelihoods of Venezuelans, requests for support from R4V partners increased considerably. With the participation of government and R4V officials, the American Chamber of Commerce hosted a [webinar](#) to address the impact of labour migration on the Guyanese economy. Additionally, the University of Guyana joined forces with R4V partners to create a peace garden at its campus in [commemoration](#) of the *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, job losses impacted R&Ms, prompting doubled requests for food assistance from R4V partners and longer application processing times despite the new computerized systems for pre-screening. On 3 April the authorities indicated that [178 Venezuelans](#) had been repatriated. By the end of April, the Minister of Health [identified a Venezuelan national as the first case of the so-called Brazilian variant](#) of COVID-19 in Trinidad, stirring underlying tensions between locals and Venezuelans. Nonetheless, several Government Officials called on the general public to refrain from [scapegoating Venezuelans](#) for rise in infections. On 23 April, a Trinidad-bound boat sailed from Delta Amacuro state, and [capsized](#) close to Güiria in Sucre. Of the estimated 30 persons onboard, at least three Venezuelans died, seven were rescued, and over 15 people are missing or unaccounted for. Subsequently, UNHCR and IOM released a [joint statement](#) underscoring the need for safe pathways to prevent further loss of life.

Response



HEALTH

In **Aruba**, one R4V partner supported registration at its office to increase vaccinations among R&Ms for vaccination programs resulted in a special arrangement with one R4V partner opening their office to provide registration assistance. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, clinic and telehealth services were delivered by one R4V partner, as well as counselling sessions and mental health support to GBV survivors. In **Curacao**, as strict measures to fight the pandemic were in place, one R4V partner scaled up their normal operations again and opened their clinic two Saturdays for additional testing and emergency consultations.



EDUCATION

In **Aruba**, one R4V partner resumed a “**Back to School Campaign**” to make financial support available to Venezuelan children from vulnerable households, assisting in school enrollment, registration fees, insurance, and uniforms. In **Guyana**, R4V partners provided **special educational support** to Venezuelan children, including through after-school activities and English language classes, the latter also being offered to Venezuelan adults.



SHELTER

In the **DR**, partners arranged **rent placements** for Venezuelans in need of accommodation for over a month. R4V partners also provided grants to R&Ms for the payment of rental debts of R&Ms at risk of homelessness and to avoid evictions, in the face of worsening pandemic effects. In **Guyana**, one R4V partner also continued administering **short-term rent subsidies** for R&M families that were unable to pay rent. In **Trinidad and Tobago** temporary accommodation assistance was provided to vulnerable Venezuelans, VoTs and R&Ms of other nationalities.



INTEGRATION

R4V partners in the **DR** donated computers and printers to the Boca Chica Mayor's Office within the framework of the Inclusive Cities project, with the aim of shaping durable solutions to address the impact of Venezuelan displacement in the country. Also, in Boca Chica, the Mayor's Office and an R4V partner established free **information kiosks** within their facilities to provide information on the Venezuelan migration normalization process (Resolution 119-2021). In **Trinidad and Tobago**, R&Ms benefitted from cash support to help meet survival-level needs. In **Guyana**, at-risk families also benefitted from cash support for the same purposes.



DR normalization process, April 2021
@IOM



PROTECTION

In the **DR**, R4V partners gave **legal assistance** to individuals, including advice and accompaniment in legal issues such as the **regularization plan**, migratory, labour and criminal law, amongst others. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, cash assistance was provided to GBV survivors, and a verification field mission was carried out in Rio Claro on 1 April to renew expired documentation for persons living in rural areas, and to make protection referrals. In **Aruba**, 1,200 *know your rights* leaflets were distributed during COVID-19 **vaccination registration** activities on 30 April. Local organizations launched an equal rights **campaign** for working women, recognizing gaps and promoting financial independence as a guard against GBV. In **Guyana**, R4V partners facilitated **birth registration** outreach initiatives in isolated border locations for R&M and host community children.

People Reached*

SECTOR	ARUBA	CURAÇAO	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	GUYANA	TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	TOTAL
 EDUCATION	31			170	942	1143
 FOOD SECURITY	43			39	741	823
 HEALTH	60	998	16	53	174	1301
 INTEGRATION					31	31
 MULTIPURPOSE CBI	160	10	90	52	5	317
 PROTECTION	257	21	4843	246	1065	6432
 SHELTER		72	3	25	84	184
 WASH				14		14

Operational Overview*

	ARUBA	CURAÇAO	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	GUYANA	TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
PARTNERS	HIAS, IOM, UNHCR, Centro Medico Familiar, UN Women	Famia Plania, IOM, UNHCR, Unitat di Barrio, Salut Pa Tur, UN Women	FUNCOVERD, Globalizate Radio, IOM, UNHCR, FEV, HAI, Dominican Institute for Integrated Development	Blossoms Inc, HIAS, IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, GSWC, Ministry of Education, Guyana Water Inc., PADF, UN Women, FUPAD, Voices Guyana	FPATT, IOM, Living Water Community, Rape Crisis Society, UNHCR, UN Women, TTV Solidarity Network
SECTORS					

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Catalina Acevedo, Caribbean Sub-Regional Coordination Officer, IOM, cacevedo@iom.int.

Miriam Aertker, Senior Field Coordinator, UNHCR, aertker@unhcr.org.

R4V- Response for Venezuela: <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform/location/7493>

FINANCIAL TRACKING SYSTEM: [HTTPS://FTS.UNOCHA.ORG/APPEALS/1021/SUMMARY](https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1021/summary)

* Based on current month activities

FEATURED STORY

Regularization in the Dominican Republic Opens Doors for Family Business

For this creative family, the normalization plan means they will finally be able to register Chocochamos, a thriving business of artisan chocolate desserts.

Vanessa, 41, and her husband Carlos, 48, have just finished their online application to extend their stay in the Dominican Republic - the first step in the normalization plan for Venezuelan refugees and migrants announced by the government in January this year. For them and their eight-year-old son, this means renewed hope that they will be able to rebuild their lives in this Caribbean nation.

“We believe that the Dominican Republic has allowed us to realize some of our dreams, and we will keep reaching for that beautiful horizon that every family wants to have,” said Carlos. “We will one day be able to give back to this beautiful land.”



Chocochamos initiative by Venezuelans in the DR, April 2021. ©IOM

The family had a long and rocky journey to safety. Forced out of Venezuela due to hyperinflation, power cuts, and shortages of food and medicine, they set off for the Dominican Republic in the hopes of rebuilding their life with Maximus, their young son who was five at the time. Soon after reaching the Dominican Republic, Carlos suffered an accident that left him bedridden for a year. “We needed to do something. We had bills to pay. So, I went back to some old family recipes from back home,” said Vanessa. At first, she only sold cupcakes and cookies in the street. In time, they grew their business to artisan desserts, sold in shops and supermarkets under the brand Chocochamos.

They now operate a busy kitchen in the city of San Cristobal, a quaint colonial municipality along the coast, 26 kilometers from Santo Domingo. “This was where all the magic happened. I was able to perfect our recipes for the taste of the Dominicans,” said Vanessa, describing the super-moist chocolate cake with a rich, bitter, melt-in-your-mouth chocolate cream that became a hit among locals. The smell of spices, sugar and chocolate create a very warm and inviting aroma for miles. Their sweet baked goods became a cornerstone of artisan desserts in the city.

“It wasn’t always like this,” they recalled. They had come to the Dominican Republic with little savings in hand, but the willingness to work hard and rebuild their lives. “Chocochamos helps us cover household expenses, but we want to grow, we imagine one day owning a cafe where people can eat our desserts and enjoy time in a pleasant place,” dreams Carlos.

Though COVID-19 put a halt in their business for four months, they remained hopeful and kept looking forward, and were able to sustain themselves with seed capital and other contributions from R4V partners during lockdowns. Like this family, over 5 million Venezuelans have left their country in search of safety and a better life; 114,050 of them are estimated to be in the Dominican Republic, yet a lack of regular status hinders their chances at rebuilding their lives for many.

On 19 January 2021, the Dominican Government approved a resolution that allows access to the migratory category of non-residents for Venezuelans who regularly entered the country between January 2014 and March 2020. For Vanessa and Carlos, this means they can have the opportunity to open a bank account and formalize their company. “Honestly, I think that this is the only thing that Venezuelans lack here, to truly consider this country our second home.”

Information hubs on migration, managed by Venezuelan community-based organizations, are available in seven main locations to ensure that applicants have access to reliable information and legal guidance. Authorities hope to reach some 100,000 Venezuelans through the normalization process.