

BUILDING A LIFE, BUILDING A NATION.

FACTS AND FACES
OF REGIONAL MIGRATION
AND INTEGRATION
IN CURAÇAO





MINISTRY OF
**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
LABOR & WELFARE**

COLOPHON

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INTRODUCTION

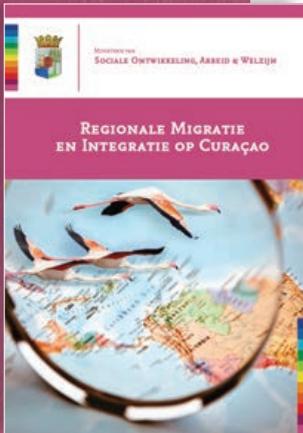
This booklet is part of the OMIC research project (Onderzoek Migratie en Integratie Curaçao) that focuses on regional migration and integration in Curaçao. The Ministry of Social Development, Labor and Welfare initiated this project and this booklet provides insight into the main results of the research.

In this booklet minister Jeanne Marie Francisca gives her view on migration. The main OMIC researchers, Jeanne de Bruijn and Maartje Groot discuss the important findings of their research and statistics regarding migration and integration will be presented throughout the different chapters. The main part of this booklet however, is formed by the personal stories of the people that were the subject of this research: first and second generation immigrants with roots in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Venezuela, Colombia and Haiti.

The ten short portraits tell the stories of their past, present and future and show us how immigrants are inextricably part of Curaçao's society and help to build our nation. Together with the enclosed DVD, these intimate portraits add a personal element to an issue that too often tends to get politicized.

We hope this booklet and DVD will inspire you.

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Regional migration and
integration in Curaçao*

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JEANNE MARIE FRANCISCA

Minister of Social Development, Labor & Welfare



MIGRANTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUR SOCIETY

An interview with Jeanne Marie Francisca,
Minister of Social Development, Labor & Welfare,
about migration and integration in Curaçao.

*This month your ministry will publish an
in-depth report on migration and integration.
Why is this topic so important?*

Well, first of all I must say that I'm very happy with the fact that we have been given the opportunity to study this topic in detail and come up with facts. A lot of policy making is not evidence based. I have made it a priority to make a more solid connection between research, policy and execution, and I am sincerely interested how we are going to follow up this report with policy and execution. This report provides us with food for thought for good discussions. This route to policy making should be taken more often.

Curaçao has always been defined by migration, but so little research has been conducted on the subject. Regional migration in particular has been a dominant factor the last fifteen years, but it's not part of the debate in our society. I just came back from an International Labor Organization convention in Geneva and migration was a dominant topic in all the discussions. It's an

important issue on an international level, but it has local consequences as well, and we, as Curaçao, should be prepared. We should develop our own vision on how to handle migration and how to integrate ethnic minorities into our society. Whether you like it or not, migrants are here to stay.

What are your own personal experiences with migrants?

Looking back on my youth in Curaçao, I remember how migrants all had their own specific place in society. Every group had its own label. We used to talk a lot about 'them', though we hardly talked with them. I think that's a general problem in our society: we tend to generalize and stick with the labels way too long. Look at the Haitians: we used to see them as individuals working in our gardens, strolling down the road with their 'chapis' (hoes). Now they have their own companies!

I think education has a big role to play. A couple of years ago, my son participated in a project about multiculturalism. They had all kinds of songs and poems from all over the region, presented by children and parents from different countries. It made a huge impression on him and me as well. It helped to understand each and spark a conversation. Projects like these should be promoted more often, among different groups in society.

How do you see the role of migrants in the way we build our nation?

They have an important role to play. First of all, more than 40% of our population has a migrant background, be it first or second generation. That's a fact that the

160

number of different nationalities in Curaçao

2.4%

% of regional immigrants receiving 'onderstand' (social benefits)

24%

% of residents born in another country

20.000 – 25.000

estimated number of migrants from Colombia, Venezuela, Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, living in Curaçao



OMIC report has informed us about. Secondly, we as a society, but also the government cannot afford to put a large group of people in a corner and just leave them there. Sure, that may not pose a problem per se, but their inclusion in our country's development will yield much greater rewards. Look at the way second generation migrants are integrating in our society, how motivated they are, and how well they are performing as students. These new 'yu di Kórsou' (Curaçaoans) are an essential part of the workforce. Curaçao needs to grow economically and also socially. Migrants open our eyes; they are bridges to other countries as well.

**'MIGRANTS OPEN OUR EYES;
THEY ARE BRIDGES TO
OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL'**

When we talk about nation building, we are talking about our entire population and its different migrant communities. We need to help these groups, not single them out. Of course I understand the fact that people from the same background stick together. We do that too once we settle down in the Netherlands. There's nothing wrong with that, national pride is a great thing, but it should not prevent us from bonding with other cultures, learning from each other. Our nation, and the way we build it together, could profit greatly from a better understanding and cooperation between the different groups.

‘TOGETHER WE CAN SURELY MAKE A DIFFERENCE’

What is the next step?

I have asked my Policy Director to make an outline of all the actions needed, regarding this topic, based on this OMIC report. I would like to add though, that we also did research on remigration and a diaspora approach the last few months as part of the same migration-theme. We have already spoken with different ministries regarding the OMIC’s outcomes and I hope to present a policy paper and an action plan in the coming months in the Ministers’ Council. Our next step is to distribute the report nationally and set up discussions with NGOs about migration. We want to prevent this from becoming exclusively a ‘government thing’. Lastly, I would like to say that the UNDP project, Kórsou Kapesitá (Capable Curaçao) is on the same track as our ministry and has been very helpful in getting wider recognition for this topic.

Together we can surely make a difference. Including everyone in our society and getting everyone on board, should be the goal of every ‘bon yu di Kòrsou’.

27,101

number of 2nd
generation migrants
in Curaçao

44%

% of the self employed
(people who own their
own company) in
Curaçao, born abroad
(1,073 people)

13.7%

% of the working
population, born in
Colombia, Jamaica,
the Dominican Republic,
Haiti or Venezuela

**‘I WANT MY CHILDREN
TO HAVE A NORMAL LIFE,
NOT HARD LIKE MINE’**



REMA TESHORAH PINNOCK

JAMAICA



REMA TESHORAH PINNOCK

Born in St. Catharine's,
Jamaica in 1975

Immigrated to Curaçao in
2000 with three children,
leaving her eldest son
behind

Single mom of Teshena
(23) Romaine (21),
Anetha (15) and Rinel (8)

Domestic help for a
variety of local and
Dutch families

Motives

When Rema Pinnock, better known as Tesh, dropped out of high school to have her first daughter, she was only 15 years old. Ten years later she travelled to Curaçao, leaving 3 small children behind. Tesh: 'My sister invited me to stay and I stepped on a plane for the very first time. I grabbed the chance to build a new future for myself and my kids. When I come home from work, I always have a smile on my face. I don't want my kids to see my struggle. Every mom wants life to be perfect for her kids and I am proud to make ends meet.'

Presently Tesh lives in Curaçao with three of her four children. Here she feels free. She can support herself and send money back home. Having eleven siblings, she misses family life in Jamaica. Tesh: 'Life in Jamaica is tough, but my mother was always full of joy. She could make you laugh so much, that even though you were tired, you felt strong. I want my children to have a normal life, not hard like mine. Their future is in Curaçao, but I don't want them to forget their roots.'

Experiences

Tesh's first job was in the free zone, where she worked in a store. Many temporary jobs followed and some only earned her ANG 100,- a month. Luckily her sister was always a great support. 'In Curaçao you have good people and bad', says Tesh speaking from experience.' If they know you're illegal, they pick on you. They don't pay you because they know you can't go to the police. Or they only pay you ANG 3,- an hour.

‘FOR IMMIGRANTS, NOTHING COMES FREE’



REMA TESHORAH PINNOCK
JAMAICA

Not everybody is like that fortunately. A childless local lady in my street looks after Anita as if she were her own daughter and many families I clean for, treat me very well. A Dutch lady in Jan Sofat got my daughter a place in a good school and the first language she learnt was Dutch.’

When Tesh met the *yu di Kòrsou* father of her youngest son, things went well for a while and she moved in with her family. Tesh: ‘Every day I would record Papiamentu words I heard with my tape recorder and ask him what they meant.’ But when her new partner would not end his marriage to his first wife, she decided to leave. Tesh: ‘I had to do many jobs. I had to take care of him and everything else as well, while I never saw his money coming in. When I got a place of my own, I could save more money and felt more comfortable.’

‘WITHOUT PAPERS YOU ARE NOTHING’

Contribution

‘Without papers you are nothing’, says Tesh. ‘You cannot marry or buy a piece of land or a house and you cannot start a small business or a shop. Papers bring freedom and once you have them you can move on with your life. There

8.6%

unemployment rate for
Jamaicans in Curaçao

(compared tot 9.9% = Curaçao's
average unemployment rate)

are so many talented Jamaican youngsters in Curaçao who know tiling, painting and carpentry. They have small jobs on building sites, but they are always on the run, afraid to get caught. Everyone wants to be legal and mothers will do anything to give their children a better life. The Curaçao government wants to enforce the 80/20% rule that favors the yu di Kòrsou. I think it should be the other way around. The people without papers do 80% of the work. They can't afford to be sick. We cannot stand in line for 'onderstand' (social welfare). For immigrants, nothing comes free.'

Dreams

Tesh's dreams are modest and focus on finding a good husband and having all her children close by. Tesh: 'My ideal is to work in the morning and take care of my own family in the afternoon. I still feel Jamaican, but I also belong to Curaçao. I always say 'Thank God for the Brooks Tower arrangement'. It enabled me to get a permit so I can build a life. They say if your kids stay in the country for 5 years, they can get a permit as well. Now I'm busy with that. My oldest daughter is not in school at the moment. Once everything is settled, she wants to continue her education. She loves baking and wants to do a pastry course. We talk a lot and I am sure she will succeed.'

1,230

number of 1st generation
Jamaicans in Curaçao

‘IF YOU ASK ME OR MY PARENTS WHAT I AM, WE WILL ALL SAY YU DI KÒRSOU’



FIGORELLA NARCISA

JAMAICA | CURAÇAO

Born in Willemstad (2000)

Daughter of Doreen
Gordon (42), who comes
from Jamaica

First year student at
Sint Ignatius College
(a VSBO school)

Identity

When Fiorella graduated from primary school, she received a special certificate for being the best in languages in her school. Her name means little flower in Spanish, but it's the only language she doesn't speak. Fiorella: 'My father comes from Curaçao and my mother emigrated to Curaçao from Jamaica seventeen years ago. I speak Papiamentu with both my parents and learn English from TV. Dutch is the hardest language, but I learn it at school.'

Fiorella has visited Jamaica and thinks it's beautiful and big. Fiorella: 'You can drive through Jamaica for hours on end. I stayed in Kingston Town which is full of life and at Montego Bay with lots of flowers and waterfalls. Even though she likes Jamaica, Curaçao is definitely her home. Fiorella: 'By law I am a yu di Kòrsou and my passport is Dutch. I have roots in Jamaica, but if you ask me or my parents what I am, we will all say yu di Kòrsou.'

Parents and school

Fiorella's parents met in Buena Vista at a social activity, but divorced when she was young. She is very close to both. Fiorella; 'My father is a real yu di Kòrsou and loves to go to parties with local music and food. My mother is religious and spends a lot of her free time at the Pentecostal church. We like to sit at home and talk and watch TV.'



‘MANY YU DI KÒRSOU SAY JAMAICANS ARE DIRTY AND BAD’

Fiorella started secondary school this year and has mixed feelings about her school. She likes biology and languages, but she hates the frequent fights that occur. Few students know she has Jamaican roots. Fiorella: ‘In our school we have children from many different countries. They don’t mention where they come from, because they are scared. There was another Jamaican girl at my school. She got teased a lot. Many yu di Kòrsou say Jamaicans are dirty and bad.’

Dreams

Besides Curaçao, Jamaica is the only other country Fiorella has seen. In the future she would love to travel the world. Fiorella: ‘I want to go places and understand different cultures. My half brothers live close by, but I might choose to live somewhere else. Fiorella’s mother works as a domestic help for Dutch and Surinamese families. Her father went to the same school she attends. He continued to study ‘Social Work’ at the University of Curaçao (formerly known as UNA). His daughter has set her sights even higher. Fiorella: ‘Since I was small, I dreamed of becoming a midwife and bringing babies into the world. That means I will have to study in the Netherlands and perhaps work there as well. When I grow up, I want a family of my own. It doesn’t matter where my husband comes from, as long as he understands me and is caring and kind.’

1,122

number of Jamaicans
deported from Curaçao
between 2010 and 2012

Most Jamaican
immigrants live in
Kanga and Buena Vista

**‘YOU CANNOT REAP THE
FRUITS OF IMMIGRATION
WITHOUT GIVING BACK’**

ALEJANDRO VAN PUTTEN

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | CURAÇAO



ALEJANDRO VAN PUTTEN

Born on the Samaná peninsula in the Dominican Republic in 1983

Immigrated permanently to Curaçao 11 years ago, after traveling back and forth

Husband of Arianny, still living in the Dominican Republic
Son of Martha Minaya van Putten and Egbert van Putten and brother of Evalina (22)

Internal educational supervisor at Juan Pablo Duarte, an A.G.O. school (arbeidsmarktgericht onderwijs) in Buena Vista, Curaçao

Motives

Alejandro's parents met each other in Curaçao, but he recounts that his father, a *yu di Kòrsou*, loved the Dominican Republic so much, he knew the island better than any Dominican did. Born on the peninsula of Samaná, Alejandro moved to Curaçao with his family when he was three. The family returned to the Dominican Republic when he was nine and settled down permanently in Curaçao when Alejandro was nineteen. The most important reasons to return to Curaçao were his father's poor health, the educational opportunities for Alejandro and his sister, and the fact that his father had retired.

Alejandro: 'My mother was a typist in a bookstore and my father worked for the Government radio communicating with ships and planes. In the Dominican Republic people are outgoing, social and very supportive of each other and our house was always full. My mother found Curaçao too quiet and closed. She disliked the fact that everybody stayed in their house, doing their own thing. Moving from one country to the other and then back again was confusing and hard at times. My sister and I had to change schools and friends and adapt to a new culture, a new language and a new environment.'

Experiences

Alejandro was a bright and curious child, who skipped two grades in primary school and graduated as a school teacher in his home country at the age of nineteen.

‘DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS ARE PROUD OF THEIR CULTURE, BUT ADAPT EASILY’



ALEJANDRO VAN PUTTEN
THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | CURAÇAO

Alejandro: ‘Teaching is a calling I have had from a very young age. I remember I was always busy teaching my friends to read the bible and asking Santa for blackboards and books instead of toys. In Curaçao I continued to do a teaching degree at the University of Curaçao, but studying in the Dutch language was a difficult hurdle for me.’

Working at his school as a teacher and student advisor, Alejandro sees the same problem occur. Alejandro: ‘Many immigrant students attend our school which is actually for children with learning and behavioral difficulties, while they do not really belong here at all. There is nothing wrong with their behavior and intellect, but they don’t speak Papiamentu or Dutch. These children get frustrated and lose their self confidence and drive. Many drop out of school and start working, even if they are under age. We could help these children to succeed with special language programs and tools, but unfortunately these are not available to us.’

Contribution

Alejandro sees himself as a cultural mix. ‘When people hear me talking, they think I am from the Dominican Republic. ‘When they see me, they think I am a yu di Kòrsou. Dominican immigrants are proud of their culture, but adapt easily. We have adopted different local traditions and live, mingle and work well with the yu di Kòrsou.’ Curaçao is a multi-

3.6%

% of people in Curaçao
born in the
Dominican Republic

cultural society, but according to Alejandro immigrants are always viewed as foreigners even if they have lived in Curaçao for decades. This is partly due to their own attitude. Alejandro: 'Many immigrants send all their money back home, dress and eat badly and live in relative poverty, while they are quite rich in their own country. They should invest financially and emotionally in Curaçao as well. You cannot reap the fruits of immigration without giving back and you need to become part of this society too.'

Dreams

Alejandro is glad he can continue his passion for teaching in Curaçao. 'Many people think working at an A.G.O school is difficult, but it motivates me to see our students flourish and grow with the right kind of support. It's a privilege to work at a school that is named after Juan Pablo Duarte, a famous Dominican freedom fighter. We take care to celebrate all the different festivities that are important to our students and embrace their cultural differences.' Alejandro loves his current job, but he has a bigger dream. 'My parents did a lot of charity work for their community and for their church. I would like that too. Many orphaned children in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Venezuela live in extreme poverty. One day, I would like to start a boarding school in one of these countries to give these children the care and education they need.'

5,405

number of people born in
the Dominican Republic
(Census 2011)

3,311

number of 2nd
generation Dominicans
living in Curaçao
(Census 2011)

**'MANY DOMINICAN WOMEN
IMMIGRATE TO CURAÇAO TO
EARN A BETTER INCOME AND
CHANGE THEIR LIVES'**

PAMELA CACERES

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



PAMELA CACERES

Born in Santo Domingo,
The Dominican Republic
in 1992

Daughter of Santa Simon
and Andre Simon (her
stepfather) and sister
of Francisco (16) and
half-brother Sandre (8)

Reunited with her mother
and stepfather Andre
Simon in Curaçao in
2000

First year student
at the University of
Curaçao (UoC), doing
a double degree in
Business & Economics
and Accountancy &
Controlling

Motives

Pamela Caceres has just completed her first year at the University of Curaçao successfully, where she studies Business & Economics and Accountancy & Controlling. The road she traveled as the daughter of a Dominican immigrant was far from easy, but she persevered.

Pamela; ‘Like many Dominican immigrants, my mother fled from a bad marriage to give us a better life. Our culture is very emotional and the figures of murder and domestic violence in my country are high. Many Dominican women immigrate to Curaçao to earn a better income and change their lives.’

When Pamela’s mother left, she did not understand why. At the age of six, she and her baby brother lived with their grandmother and uncles and life was tough. Pamela: ‘I cried every day and became a closed child. As the only girl in the house, I did many household chores after school and cared for my brother as well. It was a lonely time, but I knew my mother was building a new future and would send for us, when she could.’

Experiences

In her own country Pamela’s mother had an administrative job. In Curaçao, she worked as a live-in help for an Arabic family at first, but now she owns a small trading company. Pamela: ‘When I was nearly eight my mother sent for us and we spent our vacation in Curaçao. I was shocked at how hard my mother worked as a domestic help. For one month, we mostly stayed in her room. During the weekends we visited Banda Bou and the zoo. I remember how much we enjoyed the beaches and the giant iguana at Watamula nature park.’

‘I STARTED TO FIGHT BACK AND REBEL. I WOULDN’T ACCEPT ABUSE FROM ANYONE’



PAMELA CACERES
THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Shortly after their first trip, Pamela and her brother were reunited with their mother permanently. Pamela’s first day at school was horrible. Pamela: ‘I sat in class and the teacher only spoke Dutch. The children teased me and hit me because I was different. It felt like a bad dream, that wouldn’t end. There were no extra help or language classes to catch up. My stepfather wanted to help, but he was very strict. Every day he made me learn a page in the dictionary by heart by writing down every single word ten times.’

Looking back, I was so innocent when I started school in Curaçao. Children would say: ‘You’re Dominican, so you’re a bitch and the boys would grab my breasts and behind. I started to fight back and rebel. I wouldn’t accept abuse from anyone.’ My mother was called to school, but I wouldn’t tell her what was happening. Luckily I had a teacher who really believed in me. ‘Remember, she used to say, you are a good student. Don’t let others spoil your educational career.’

Contribution

After primary school, Pamela continued her education at ‘Gouverneur Lauffer VSBO’. As the best student of her school, she was transferred to Peter Stuyvesant College where she started at HAVO level but switched to VWO. Pamela: ‘Now I am doing a double degree at the University of Curaçao.’

76.6%

% of 1st generation
Dominican migrants,
that are women

My stepfather plays a very important role in my life and I am grateful that he helped me succeed.'

Pamela observes an interesting change in attitude in Curaçao. 'Ten years ago we faced a lot of discrimination and Dominican women were often seen as prostitutes and women who didn't deserve respect. Now that attitude has shifted to women from Venezuela and Colombia. Dominican women have married yu di Kòrsou and started families. They work in shops, in trade and in small factories and have gained more acceptance and respect.

'LUCKILY I HAD A TEACHER WHO REALLY BELIEVED IN ME'

Dreams

Pamela has put her past behind her and her church 'U turn to a new life' gives her strength. Pamela: 'My dream is to have a successful business with offices in the Dominican Republic and Curaçao. Curaçao is my home and the Dominican Republic my nation of origin. When I start making a profit, I want to partly invest my money in helping orphaned children in my home country and in Curaçao. I want both nations to prosper and many more generations like myself to experience how great it is to be a Dominican and at the same time a yu di Kòrsou.

3,311

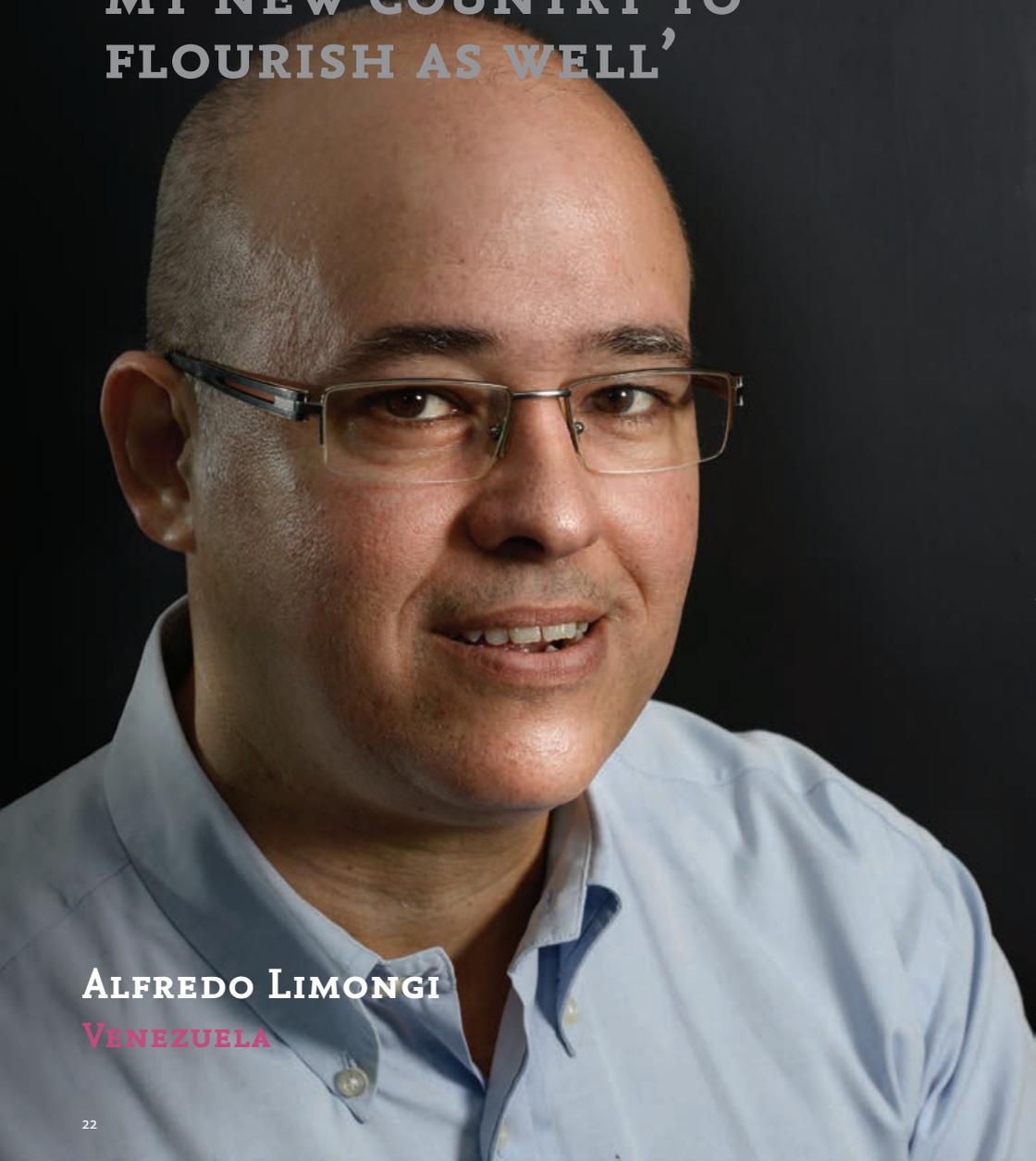
number of 2nd

generation Dominicans

living in Curaçao

(Census 2011)

**'I WILL ALWAYS BE
VENEZUELAN, BUT I WANT
MY NEW COUNTRY TO
FLOURISH AS WELL'**



ALFREDO LIMONGI
VENEZUELA



ALFREDO LIMONGI

Born in Caracas,
Venezuela in 1966

Emigrated to Curaçao
in 2003 with his family
11 years ago

Husband of Verónica
and father of Rigel (20)
and Oriana († 13)

Software engineer at
Forensys, Curaçao

Motives

Alfredo Limongi did not want to leave Venezuela with his family, but when he witnessed kidnappings, shootings and growing violence in his neighborhood, even in his own building, it was time to go. ‘We started sending out CVs’, recounts Alfredo, who has been a software engineer at Forensys ever since he arrived on the island eleven years ago. The first offer came from Curaçao. We didn’t know much about the island, except that it was a peaceful place with a colorful city center and a beautiful bridge.’

Besides safety, (medical) support was an important motive to leave their motherland. Alfredo; ‘My youngest child had special needs. She died this year at the age of thirteen. It was hard to leave all our friends and family behind, but the care and kindness our daughter received in Curaçao from the Pasadia daycare facility and the Fundashon Verriet Institute are things we will never forget.’

Experiences

The Limongi family did not have much of a social life during their first years in Curaçao. Alfredo worked hard at Forensys and his wife stayed at home with their handicapped child. The last years however Alfredo started playing an active role in the community as chairman of VENEXCUR, an organization for Venezuelans in Curaçao. Alfredo; ‘My life used to revolve around work and home. Now that I interact with many more people around me, I understand the people and culture of Curaçao much better and have won more respect.’

Alfredo loves the safety and beauty of the island, but the discrimination his community encounters, can be tough. Alfredo: ‘Venezuelan women are independent, friendly and

‘WE REFUSE TO BE TREATED BADLY BECAUSE OF OUR LATIN ORIGINS’



ALFREDO LIMONGI
VENEZUELA

extrovert. That attitude is often confused with the idea that they are easy to get. Those stereotype ideas can be very insulting, especially to my wife. Lots of friends are helpful but Latin American immigrants don't always receive the same service and attention local citizens get. We are still open and welcoming to everyone, but we refuse to be treated badly because of our Latin origins.'

Alfredo is very proud of his daughters. His oldest daughter learnt to speak four languages and became a leader at her school. With her sound education at Radulphus College, she is now studying Psychology in Canada. Alfredo: 'Venezuela gave her her roots, but Curaçao gave her the diversity in cultures and languages that enriched her spirit and will make her go far.'

Contribution

'I have two mothers', says Alfredo passionately. My old country and my new. I will always be Venezuelan, but I want my new country to flourish as well. We need to integrate. Through VENEXCUR, we are organizing our community to raise awareness of the problems in Venezuela and to work for the benefit of Curaçao as well. This year we assisted in beach clean ups and we want to help local schools and organizations too.

Alfredo sees Curaçao as a melting pot that could be much more productive if it embraced what other cultures and countries could teach. Panama and Canada are his examples of countries that are booming because of their migrant

1,691

number of people in
Curaçao, born in
Venezuela

policies. Alfredo: ‘When I joined Curaçao Road Services, now known as Forensys, it was a small company in the Santa Catharina neighbourhood. A decade later we have tripled in size and are going international. I helped to automate the systems we work with, and developed new software. We created better services for victims of accidents and new jobs for Yu di Kòrsou.’

‘I WANT TO RAISE CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT ALL THE GOOD THINGS WE DO’

Dreams

Like every person, Alfredo has dreams. His biggest dream is to change the way migrants are perceived in Curaçao. Alfredo: ‘My own transition to Curaçao went smoothly eleven years ago, but during the past years it has become increasingly difficult and expensive for immigrants to enter and remain in the country. Permit fees have suddenly and brutally been raised, causing lots of problems for immigrants with few financial means. The media coverage and political speeches have hardened towards us. Economic problems and rising crime rates are easily related to immigrants. I want to raise consciousness about all the good things we do. We need to organize ourselves and voice the concerns that affect our communities. Immigrants have a lot to offer Curaçao. We want to be part of the discussion and part of the solution to Curaçao’s economic and social challenges. As a community we want to show our new country the many ways in which we can contribute.’

25%

% of the students born
in Venezuela that were
recommended to HAVO
secondary education
based on their EFO test
results. This is above the
19% average of Curaçao

**'WE LOVE TO SPEND THE
WEEKENDS AT HOME WITH
THE DOORS WIDE OPEN'**

CARLOS ORTEGA

VENEZUELA



CARLOS ORTEGA

Born in Puerto Cabello,
Venezuela in 1972

Emigrated to Curaçao
in 2000 with his family
14 years ago

Husband of Patricia and
father of Andrea (16),
Paola (14) and Isabella (6)

Owner and managing
partner at
Spin Internet Media

Motives

When Carlos Ortega immigrated to Curaçao the revolution in Venezuela had just begun. Carlos: ‘We didn’t agree with it and we didn’t believe in it. We felt that the life we wanted for our daughters was going to be increasingly difficult. When friends in Curaçao told us they needed a web designer, we came.’ The original plan was to move to Curaçao and then onwards to Australia, but the family stayed. Fourteen years later Carlos is one of the managing partners at Spin, a successful internet media company that employs six professionals.

Carlos: ‘Our house is big and beautiful without security. We love to spend the weekends at home with the doors wide open. That amount of freedom is not possible in Venezuela, where safety is a big issue. We love our life here, but we miss our family. It’s hard to miss all those weddings, christenings, and birthday parties. Venezuela is only thirty minutes away, but plane tickets are so expensive now, that it’s cheaper to fly to Miami.’

Experiences

Carlos loves the diversity of Curaçao. Carlos: ‘It is awesome, all those families at Caracas Bay in the weekends, speaking different languages, doing their own stuff and enjoying life. My best friend is a yu di Kòrsou, whose wife is from Venezuela. The multicultural atmosphere of Curaçao, where people mix and intermarry so easily, is very interesting.’ Carlos enjoys working in Curaçao and used to work twelve hours a day in Caracas. Carlos: ‘When I started working here, I was so surprised; my first boss would tell me to go home at 5:30 am. She even gave me a key if I wanted to work on Saturdays, as a sign of trust.’

‘WHO KNOWS WHERE MY GIRLS MIGHT SPREAD THEIR WINGS. IT COULD BE AMSTERDAM, NEW YORK OR DUBAI’



CARLOS ORTEGA
VENEZUELA

‘At first the language barrier was difficult’, recalls Carlos. ‘If you didn’t pronounce words properly in shops, people couldn’t or wouldn’t help you. I call Curaçao ‘my small village’. Caracas has seven million people; Curaçao 150.000. In the last fourteen years, we have seen it change. There are many more cultural activities like the jazz and film festival, which we enjoy, and many neighborhoods like Otrobanda have been renovated thoroughly. We love the beauty and tranquility of Curaçao and take part in its traditions. Every year we participate in the ‘Ride of the Roses’ and go to Carnival.’

Identity

In Curaçao Carlos has time for a family life and he loves spending time with his daughters. Carlos: ‘My youngest one was born here. We call her our ‘little yu di Kòrsou’. She speaks Papiamentu to her dolls. My oldest daughter has been admitted to Instituto Buena Bista, Curaçao Center for Contemporary Art, (IBB) and wants to study in Holland, where so much art begun. For us Latinos it is wonderful that she can have an international education. Who knows where my girls might spread their wings. It could be Amsterdam, New York or Dubai.’

‘My life is in Curaçao, but one day I hope I can go back to Venezuela and give back to my country. Venezuela and

30%

% of the Venezuelans
in Curaçao from Caracas
(Census 2011)

Curaçao have always had close ties and politics is a delicate matter. We understand that Curaçao cannot interfere with our country, but it would be good if it acknowledges what is happening in Venezuela right now and how hard it is for our people there.'

Dreams

Carlos wants to make Spin a leading company in internet media and contribute to Curaçao with good products and good quality. Carlos: 'The website Curacao.com was designed in America, but we could do that work in Curaçao and generate more income and jobs locally. At the moment my company is working on a website called 'Curacaohistory.com', because we feel it is important to document our island's history for everybody to share.

'If we want yu di Kòrsou to see us with different eyes, we should show them how thankful we are as individuals and as a group. To every migrant I would say: Learn Papiamentu and become part of the culture. Get to know the island and visit all the beautiful spots off the beaten (tourist) track. Years ago there used to be a yearly bazaar at the Governor's palace where all the different migrant groups had their own spot and sold their own stuff. It would be nice to introduce that tradition again to celebrate how multicultural our island has become.'

2,215

number of 2nd
generation Venezuelans
in Curaçao

**‘OUR GOVERNMENT COULD
ACTIVELY STIMULATE THE YU
DI KÒRSOU TO TREAT MIGRANTS
WITH MORE RESPECT’**



JULIETA CARVAJAL PINTO
COLOMBIA



JULIETA CARVAJAL PINTO

Born in Bogotá,
Colombia in 1969

Emigrated to Curaçao
16 years ago

Wife of Leomar and
mother of Alexander (10),
Aaron (7) and Noah (5)

Agricultural engineer,
working as a consultant
and contractor

Motives

As a passionate agricultural engineer, Julieta loves the land and can draw a map of Colombia, her home country, perfectly. Her new country has captured her heart as well. After meeting her Aruban husband in Bogotá and later on in Aruba, the couple married after 10 years and Julieta moved to Curaçao, where her husband works as a public prosecutor. Although she misses her family and the beautiful mountains of Bogotá, she recalls how exciting it was to immigrate. Julieta: 'I left without luggage and without drama and started looking for a job immediately. We had small apartment in the heart of Otrobanda, in de Rifwaterstraat and no car. We went everywhere on foot and loved all those beautiful historic buildings around us and our multicultural neighborhood. In Bogotá we were close with our neighbors and in Otrobanda it was exactly the same.'

Experiences

Building a career in agriculture is not easy, as the sector receives little structural government attention and aid. Luckily Julieta met Alicia van Uytrecht, a local agricultural professional who became a colleague and close friend. Julieta: 'In Colombia the agricultural sector is important, productive and highly modernized. In Curaçao unfortunately there is little emphasis on producing fresh, healthy food. Julieta's career in Curaçao has been very diverse. She works as a consultant, engineer and as a teacher as well, giving agricultural courses to interested adults and starting up greenhouse projects in local schools.

Through her work, Julieta sees a lot of the country side and meets people from different ethnic communities. Julieta: 'Sometimes I am shocked at how badly migrants are treated.'

‘OUR AIM IS TO CONTRIBUTE TO CURAÇAO AND GAP THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT LOCAL AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES’



JULIETA CARVAJAL PINTO
COLOMBIA

Many Haitians and Colombians work long hours in gardens and fields. Often they receive little pay, work under harsh conditions and have few chances to grow professionally.’

Julieta has many years of working experience, a university degree from Bogotá and a post doctorate degree from the agricultural University of Wageningen in Holland. Even so, recognition for her work and expertise does not always come easily. Julieta: ‘The culture in Curaçao can be quite macho and Colombian women don’t always get the respect they deserve. I worked very hard to prove myself and after sixteen years, I finally feel my professional opinions are taken seriously.’

Contribution

According to Julieta, most migrants are grateful for their life in Curaçao and the education, healthcare and social benefits that their families receive. Many migrants however face discrimination in their daily lives. Julieta: ‘When you talk Papiamentu with a Spanish accent, people look down on you. Most Latin migrants are decent, hardworking and respectful of others. We do the work that the yu di Kòrsou doesn’t want to do, start our own businesses and even generate new jobs for the local economy.’

Julieta has Colombian roots, but feels adopted by her new country. Julieta: ‘Thirteen years ago we started a volunteer group of Colombians, stimulated by de Colombian consulate. Now we have formally become ‘Fundashon Lazos di

4,537

number of people
in Curaçao
born in Colombia

Integracion Cultural' (Cultural Integration Foundation) and are open to everyone. Our aim is to contribute to Curaçao and gap the bridge between the different local and migrant communities. We help schools and adults with Dutch, Papiamentu and English courses and provide immigrants with information about jobs, education, social support, government requirements and important cultural traditions and festivities. Besides that, we organize many different recreational activities, like vacation plans for kids and healthy outdoor activities.'

Dreams

Being an agricultural engineer, Julieta would like the government to develop a clear and structured vision on local agriculture. Julieta: 'We have at least twenty five kinds of vegetables and fruit that we could produce locally and I want to raise attention to this fact.' Julieta also wants her foundation to grow in order to do more community work and support migrants in need of help and advice. Strong values, high ethical standards and a sound education are the ingredients of a good future and Julieta feels the government could play a much larger role in accomplishing these things. Julieta: 'Our government could actively stimulate the yu di Kòrsou to treat migrants with more respect. It could develop campaigns to show how much we contribute and how grateful we are. Our island has a truly multicultural community, but if you look at billboards and marketing campaigns, they rarely show the migrant faces of Curaçao.'

2,987

number of women
in Curaçao born in
Colombia

**‘UNDERSTANDING BOTH
WORLDS MAKES US VERY
CAPABLE OF CONTRIBUTING
TO CURAÇAO’**



EVARISTO GERARD
COLOMBIA | CURAÇAO



EVARISTO GERARD

Born in Curaçao in 1974

Son of Evaristo Gerard senior (†) from Curaçao and Gloria Gerard-Hernandez, from Barranquilla, Colombia

Fiancé of Donata Gijntje

Cost estimator at the Curaçaoese Wegenbouw Maatschappij (CWM)

Love

‘My Colombian mother came here for love’, says Evaristo Gerard, with a twinkle in his eye. ‘When my father went for a medical check-up to Colombia, he met my mother in the doctor’s office. After a few more medical visits and many more personal requests, she finally agreed to marry him. My mother comes from a strict and humble family and enjoyed the independence of her new life. She wanted to spread her wings to Curaçao. The first few years she returned to Colombia three months a year to visit her family and we would join her during our school vacation. After my father retired, it became too expensive to go and I remember how hard it was to miss the funerals of both our grandparents.’

Knowing Curaçao and Colombia enables Evaristo to compare. ‘Curaçao has a multicultural society, a good educational system and consistent utility services. Colombia is a different story, though cities like Bogotá, Medellín and Cartagena are flourishing nowadays. The first years of my life we mingled a lot with the Colombian community in Curaçao. From high school onwards, I spent more time with local friends, but every time there is a Colombian party, we say to each other: Lets go.’

Identity

Evaristo: ‘Physically I am closer to my family in Curaçao, who live in the same neighborhood. Emotionally my Colombian family feels closer.’ As a child his multicultural identity could feel quite confusing, but growing up Everesto’s identity became clear. Evaristo: ‘I am a world citizen, half Colombian and half yu di Kòrsou. I traveled to almost every continent of the world and this has shaped me in a positive way. Most second generation immigrants are young professionals with

‘UNFORTUNATELY THE AVERAGE YU DI KÒRSOU IS NOT VERY IMMIGRANT MINDED’



EVARISTO GERARD
COLOMBIA | CURAÇAO

valuable working experience like me. We are doing well in all sectors of society and we have seen our parents strive hard for a better life. We belong to Curaçao, but we have the drive and determination of our immigrant parents as well. Understanding both worlds makes us very capable of contributing to Curaçao.’

Contribution

According to Evaristo, most Colombians in Curaçao look for a better life and a better future. Many are overqualified for the jobs they take on and most of them strive hard to be successful in life. Evaristo: ‘Unfortunately the average yu di Kòrsou is not very immigrant minded. Many locals see immigrants as a threat, as people who steal their jobs. I work in infrastructure and see how immigrant progress in our society every day. They start with small jobs, working for others and you see them passing by on foot. A few years later you see them driving a small truck and after a decade many have their own company.’

Evaristo feels that migrants bring a lot of color to the community, with their own cuisine, cultural traditions and festivities. ‘They don’t need to fight for acceptance. They just need to relate to locals on all levels of their personal and professional lives. Immigrant communities should open themselves up to the culture they want to enter and we, yu di Kòrsou, should respect their culture too.’

3%

% of Curaçao's
population, born
in Colombia

4.4%

% of the working population
in Curaçao born in Colombia

Dreams

Evaristo is very proud to be the current National President of JCI Dutch Caribbean, which is part of the Junior International Chamber worldwide. JCI wants to be the leading global network for young active citizens and provide young people, between the ages 18 and 40, with ample opportunities for positive change. It also wants to unite all sectors of society to create sustainable impact. Evaristo's ambition is to become an outspoken leader. Evaristo: 'Too many youngsters in Curaçao lack ambition, willingness to work and a sense of responsibility. As active citizens, we should create the right framework for them and enough role models for them to follow.'

'WE NEED TO WORK TOWARDS UNITY AND TRUST'

According to Evaristo, Curaçao should actively stimulate all her ethnic groups to bond. 'With stronger bonds between communities, we will have a greater impact as a nation and more economic and social development on the whole. We need to work towards unity and trust, values we have lost in the past few years. Our government should focus on sound regulations and control systems for our economy and stimulate entrepreneurial skills. It should provide training facilities and more places where young people can meet, because that will give us the opportunity to build our nation from the bottom up.'

‘STARTING LIFE IN A NEW
COUNTRY IS ALWAYS TOUGH’

YVEROSE ALEXANDRE JOSEPH

HAITI



**YVEROSE ALEXANDRE
JOSEPH**

Born in Petjon-Ville,
Haiti (1969)

Emigrated to Curaçao
seventeen years ago
(in 1997)

Wife of Paul Joseph
and mother of
Rosenimschy (13) and
Zachary (4)

Works as a cleaner
at Total Services

Motives

At twenty five Yverose Joseph had a successful beauty parlor in Haiti and received her clientele at home. She didn't have to leave her country, but when her mother died, she decided to try her luck in Curaçao. At that time her brother was already there and friends had told her that she could make a lot more money doing hair in Curaçao. Yverose: 'Everyone who leaves his country is in search of a better life.'

Looking back after sixteen years, she does not regret her choice. Yverose: 'Our life here is stable and secure. My husband has a good job in security, I work for a cleaning company and our children go to a good school. In Haiti life is difficult. You can only earn a good income in the trade sector, but when you are successful, you run the risk of falling victim to political corruption and criminal gangs.'

Experiences

Starting life in a new country is always tough and Yverose recalls feeling a bit ashamed of her first job. Yverose: 'I was twenty five and had my own beauty parlor in Haiti. Cleaning offices and homes was not my biggest dream. Now I have found a good balance in life. 'During the day I earn a good living at Total Services, a professional cleaning company, and after work, I do the hair of clients who come to my home.' Yverose speaks French, (Haitian) Creole and Papiamentu fluently and a little bit of Dutch and explains that Haitians in general don't have many problems learning Papiamentu because it is quite similar to our own language

‘I FEEL WE SHOULD MIX WITH YU DI KÒRSOU’



YVEROSE ALEXANDRE JOSEPH
HAITI

‘Creole’. Yverose: ‘Dutch is more difficult though it shares quite a few words with French. I took Dutch language classes in Curaçao to help my children. When I look through my daughter’s home work, I have my dictionary in my lap.’

Yverose has an active life with many friends from Haiti and Curaçao. She feels immigrants should make a real effort to fit in. Yverose: ‘If you don’t pay attention to your appearance and clothes and don’t speak the language either, you will get negative reactions as an immigrant. Many Haitians stick together in their own churches and community, but I feel we should mix with yu di Kòrsou, learn to speak Papiamentu and understand the cultural habits of Curaçao.’

Identity

Yverose and her husband are quite content with their life in Curaçao. They love the beauty, Curaçao’s different landscapes and its cleanliness. During the weekends they enjoy taking their children to the beaches of Marie Pampoen and Parasasa beach near the World Trade Center. Yverose: ‘If you had asked me where I would be ten years from now, before I had children, I would have said in a different country. But our children’s lives and education are here. I love Curaçao, but even if you change your nationality, the blood running through your veins stays Haitian. Rose was born in Haiti and Zachery was born here. I don’t want anything to stand

50%

% of gardeners in Curaçao, born in Haiti, Colombia, Venezuela, Jamaica or the Dominican Republic

**‘WE WILL DO EVERYTHING
IN OUR POWER TO MAKE BOTH
OUR CHILDREN SUCCEED’**

in the way of their lives in Curaçao, but I want them to be proud of their Haitian roots.’

Dreams

Yverose has a very clear focus, where her dreams are concerned. Yverose: ‘I would like to have a beautiful house, a good job and lots of time to do the hair of my own clientele, but our children’s future is the most important thing. We want to stimulate them to do well in school, to advance in society and do better than we have done.’ Yverose unfortunately couldn’t finish her secondary education but she will make sure that her daughter will not share her fate. ‘My daughter has her own cook and a taxi driver who brings her to school every day, that being me’, she laughs. ‘We take care that everything she needs for school is paid for. Rose will have to decide her career path herself, but as parents, we will do everything in our power to make both our children succeed.’

**Less than
\$3 per day**

The average income
in Haiti

‘IF YOU CUT OPEN OUR SKIN, YOU WILL SEE THE SAME BLOOD’



ELIPHA DIEUDONNEE
(PETJIL) HAITI

Born in Jacmel,
Haiti (1961)

Emigrated to Curaçao
eleven years ago

Farm help at Finca
Cuzcatlán, Fundashon
Soltuna

Motives

When Elipha Dieudonnee, better known as Petjil, speaks about Haiti his face lights up. Petjil: ‘Haiti is a fertile land with many kinds of fruit and vegetables. The mangos and avocados are delicious and in my country, everything grows. In Haiti my family has a farm and I work my own land. Here I work for others, seven days a week.’

For the past eleven years, Petjil has worked on the farmland of Soltuna, a co-op that leases farmland to six local families and he has managed to save and send money back home. Although he misses his family, he loves the beauty of the island and the neatness and bright colors of Punda, where many beautiful women pass by.

Experiences

When Petjil arrived, friends helped him to find work and he lived with them at first. For the past years he has lived a tranquil life in a small house by himself. Every Sunday Petjil goes to church, except during harvest time, when he is needed on the land. On the whole, Petjil feels the people of Curaçao have been helpful and kind. Petjil: ‘They gave me work, money and clothes and a small boy in my neighborhood taught me to speak Papiamentu as well.’



20%
of Haiti's GDP

Remittances sent to Haiti
from abroad
(ranked 6th worldwide)

For Petjil, the yu di Kòrsou and Haitians are the same. Petjil: 'If you cut open our skin, you will see the same blood. There are lots of people from Haiti here, building their lives. If you work hard you have few problems in Curaçao. When problems do occur, it's usually because a Haitian and a yu di Kòrsou like the same women.'

Dreams

In Curaçao Petjil works for Edsel (Papi) van Uytrecht, who has been good to him. Petjil: 'Papi pays me well. He trusts me and gives me the opportunity to work for others, when there is not enough work on his land. He taught me a lot about farming in Curaçao and working with machines, because in Haiti we farm our land by hand. In the past Petjil lived in constant fear of the police lurking around, but his boss helped him to get legalized. Petjil: 'Now my life is good and calm. I can visit my family in Haiti without problems and return. At first that was not possible.'

Petjil loves the land and grows different crops such as pimento, bonchi (beans), kòm kòmber (cucumber), promèntòn (green pepper), and aubergines (eggplant). His work includes planting, harvesting, watering, fertilizing and doing small repairs. At the age of 53, his work is physical and hard. Even so he is grateful, because working in Curaçao has enabled him to build a five room house on his farm in Haiti. Petjil: 'My dream is to go back to Haiti and own a small shop. There I can sit and rest when I am old.'

8

number of churches
in Curaçao with Creole
services (Haiti's native
language)

1,861

number of 1st generation
Haitians in Curaçao

JEANNE DE BRUIJN

Professor and Doctor in Sociology



Jeanne de Bruijn is a professor with a PhD in Sociology at the University in Wageningen. Currently she is a research fellow in the Governance Studies Department at VU University in Amsterdam and professor in Sociology at the Roosevelt University College in Middelburg, The Netherlands. She has been involved in many international research projects and committees and is part of the International Sociological Association's Council on Gender Studies.

MIGRANTS IN CURAÇAO, BURDEN OR BLESSING?

Shortly before Curaçao gained its autonomous status on 10-10-10, the “*Sociaal Kenniscentrum*” (Social Knowledge Center) initiated a research project on migration and integration in Curaçao. Four years later the final report presents resounding conclusions and recommendations. Researchers Jeanne de Bruijn and Maartje Groot discuss their findings and answer the nagging question: ‘Are migrants in Curaçao a burden or a blessing?’

What is special about this research?

De Bruijn: ‘There hasn’t been any research done on this specific group of migrants in a recent context. The past ten to fifteen years we’ve noticed a worldwide increase in regional migration. This is also the case in Curaçao. Our research focused on migrants from Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela, because for these past couple of years they form the biggest migrant groups in Curaçao.’ Groot: ‘The research should be considered a baseline study. Hardly any data or information on these migrant groups was known before this study was done, except from more historically oriented research like ‘*Union den Diversidat*’ (United in Diversity) initiated by the *Kas di Kultura* and research by individual researchers such as Rose Mary Allen.

What is the aim of the research?

De Bruijn: 'In becoming an independent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the SEI (Social Economic Initiative) aimed at giving Curaçao a head start by - among other projects - collecting data on its new regional migrants. The goal was to gain more insight into their contribution to our society, our labor force, our educational system, our health care and our judiciary system.' Groot: 'The research was also a means to identify possible problems and ascertain whether migrants put extra pressure on society. It is the only way to find out if policy has to be developed that addresses the issue of migration. Without knowledge, it's impossible to develop effective migrant(ion) policy.'

What struck you most?

Groot: 'I was touched by the extreme drive of migrants to build a new life.' De Bruijn: 'I was moved by the fear that migrants often live in. They are always cautious to not be stopped or picked up. So they avoid public transportation, because you never know when the police are going to do one of their inspections. Additionally they are often afraid to go to parties. Migrants are a vulnerable group.'

How do migrants view Curaçao and what brings them here?

De Bruijn: 'The motives differ per country of origin. Colombians consider Curaçao a safe country with opportunities for development and Venezuelans look for political stability. Curaçao is seen as an extension of Europe providing Haitians and Jamaicans in particular

Maartje Groot holds a MSc. degree in Political Science from the University of Amsterdam. She is currently a social researcher, residing in Curaçao since 2009. Maartje was involved in several research projects regarding migrants in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and worked as a 'Migrant Youth at Risk' project leader for the Dutch government. In Curaçao she has conducted research and projects on (re)migration, youth, community development and voting behavior.

MAARTJE GROOT
MSc. in Political Science



IT IS A MISCONCEPTION THAT ONLY LOWER EDUCATED PEOPLE MIGRATE



with more possibilities for development, especially for their children. All migrants hope to advance socio-economically. Even if migrants were certified nurses in their home countries, here in Curaçao they can earn more money working as a cleaning lady or as a care giver for elderly people at home. It is a misconception

that only lower educated people migrate. Many of them do not earn enough to facilitate migration. In Haiti for example, families choose to send the family member that has the greatest chance to migrate successfully.’ Groot: ‘Aside from the positive expectations that migrants have about Curaçao, they will also have negative experiences; discrimination being the most significant one. In the street they will be called names and taunted, at school the kids will be bullied and on the job they will often get the least appealing tasks to do.’

What are important findings of the research?

De Bruijn: ‘Before the research there were some presumptions, for example that migrants would be a burden to Curaçao. This is not in line with the facts presented in this report. The research shows that migrants hardly access government services, scarcely apply for welfare and are mainly here to work. Their involvement in crime, with the exception of the Jamaicans, is less than average. This clearly contradicts the presumption that crime and criminality would be higher among these groups.’ Groot: ‘The research findings don’t imply that there are no hurdles. For example, there is a large concentration of migrant children in particular schools, which causes some strain on these schools. There are no extra resources available.

This is at the expense of both the development of migrant children and local students from Curaçao.

What does this research conclude?

Groot: 'The most significant conclusion of this research is that Curaçao can no longer close its eyes to migration. Data from the last census show that 42.2% of Curaçao's population consists of migrants. That is almost half of our population. In addition, in this period of demographic regression and economic development, Curaçao simply can't do without migrants. With these facts, we as a country should develop a vision. Migration and migrant policy are indispensable if Curaçao wants to establish a strong and stable society and prosper economically.'

42.2%

% of residents with roots
in other countries (1st or
2nd generation migrants)

1,073

number of self employed
persons born abroad

63%

% of domestic helps
in Curaçao, born in
Colombia, Venezuela,
Haiti, Jamaica and
the Dominican Republic

CURAÇAO SIMPLY CAN'T DO WITHOUT MIGRANTS



RESEARCH SUMMARY

REGIONAL MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN CURAÇAO

Research Goals

During the past four years, extensive research has been conducted regarding the situation of regional migrants in Curaçao. This research was aimed at collecting new information and understanding the impact of migration on the island and its institutions. Curaçao's population diversity stems from its past and continues in the present. In recent decades, thousands of regional immigrants came to the island. In search of a better future and reunification with their families, they built new lives in a new country.

This study examines recent migration (over the past 15 years) from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Colombia and Venezuela to Curaçao. The facts speak for themselves; 14,724 (first generation) migrants in Curaçao were born in one of the above mentioned countries. 8,479 migrants were born in Curaçao with one or both parents born in the above mentioned countries (second generation). In total, 42% of Curaçao's population has a migrant background.

Research Areas

This study covers five main research areas namely: labor, education, health, social cohesion & integration and justice. It presents demographics and shows the effects of the presence of regional migrants in Curaçao.

Start of the SEI Project

APRIL 2010

First meeting Advisory Committee

MAY 2010

Data collection: 65 interviews, migrant survey and statistical analysis

MAY 2010 - NOVEMBER 2013

Presentation preliminary research findings at the international CSA conference (Curaçao)

MARCH 2011

Presentation preliminary research findings at the international SIDS conference (Curaçao)

JUNE 2011

Presentation first results for the Ministry of SOAW

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2011

Panel discussions with health care and migrant organizations

OCTOBER 2011

Attitude Study of the perceptions and attitudes towards migrants

FEBRUARY 2012 - JULY 2012

TIME LINE
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Presentation preliminary findings
Attitude Study at the annual
international ISA conference
(Buenos Aires)

AUGUST 2012

Advisory committee follow up
brainstorming session for policy
development ministry of SOAW

OKTOBER 2012

Round table discussions with
stakeholders on different
migration themes

DECEMBER 2012

Conference on the position
of undocumented children
in Curaçao

JUNE 2013

Start Remigration Research

AUGUST 2013

Start international cooperation
& knowledge exchange with
U.S. and regional countries on
migration issues

JANUARY 2014

Presentation and panel
discussion Remigration
Research

MARCH 2014

Finalization Report
Migration and Integration
in Curaçao

MAY 2014

Public presentation OMIC
project, booklet and DVD

JUNE 2014

Potential migrants look for a better life and many migrants work hard to accomplish this. Jobs available for migrants in Curaçao particularly concern low-skilled work for which local workers are not easily found.

These low skilled jobs include housekeeping in hotels, domestic help, gardeners and supermarket employees. The level of social welfare, education and healthcare in Curaçao, especially for underprivileged migrants from Colombia, Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, transcends what they are used to. Migrant children have access to education and, if they are bright enough, the opportunity to move on to higher education in Curaçao or in the Netherlands, provided they have followed the process of naturalization. For many, this would not be possible in their home country.

Their drive to work, makes relatively few migrants dependent on social benefits. Only 2% of the welfare recipients in Curaçao were born in one of the aforementioned migration countries. Curaçao's healthcare system has not experienced an extra burden due to legal migrants. Immigrants and local citizens without insurance however, cause major financial problems for Curaçao's hospital and health care professionals.

Regional migrants do not place an extra burden on social benefits and services in Curaçao. In addition, crime rates within these migrant communities are lower than average, except for the Jamaicans. In general, migration to Curaçao has the same characteristics as elsewhere in the world. During the last decades, migrant communities have grown and become more transnationally oriented, mainly because of improved flight connections and access to internet, which make it easier to keep in touch with family in the country of origin.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Research Concerns

Despite their hard work and contribution to the island, tolerance and respect towards migrants is sometimes lacking. To increase social cohesion and nation building capacity, it is important that the diversity and contribution of migrants is valued in a positive manner.

Non-permanent working permits need to be renewed and employers have a dominant position when the permit expires. This makes foreign workers vulnerable. There are reports of modern slavery, exploitation, sexual abuse and excessive working hours. Since late 2013, Curaçao has appointed a National Coordinator to deal with human trafficking issues which will hopefully help to counteract abuses and exploitation.

The rules regarding the right to ‘family life’ are strictly applied in Curaçao. Family reunification is only allowed during the first year after migration and requires a certain income. This is not in alignment with the European Convention on Human Rights. It leads to injustice because not every migrant has sufficient income in the first year after arrival and may need more time to achieve this. By paying taxes, migrants contribute to local facilities such as education and health care and it is important to respect their human rights and allow family members to reunite.

Schools and teachers play a crucial role in the integration and development of immigrant children. In Curaçao, immigrant children are concentrated in certain schools. These schools face more demands without attaining additional resources.



RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Each school has its own approach to enable immigrant children to fully participate in the regular classes. It is important to support these schools with additional manpower and financial resources. The position of undocumented children in education is a big concern. These children attend school, but cannot receive a diploma in Curaçao, while this is made possible in other countries.

This report supports the efforts of the SOAW Ministry and other ministries in their continued policy development as policies should be based on data and facts instead of sentiments. This body of research concludes that many regional migrants in Curaçao make important contributions to the island's development. Even though migrants remain connected to their country of origin, many do not want to leave the island and envision their future and that of their children in Curaçao.

- 1 Comply with the European Human Rights (ECHR) and UN Children's Rights international treaties (regarding family reunification, children, etc.).
- 2 Determine desired population development scenarios as demographic trends show a decrease in population (growth) in Curaçao.
- 3 Determine the human capacity needed and how it can contribute to the country's development.
- 4 Pay more attention to the rights and obligations of employers and prosecute employers of undocumented workers.
- 5 Build up knowledge on migration and migrants in order to monitor developments properly and respond adequately to developments in the labor market.
- 6 Ensure that schools with many migrant students are proportionally supported and increase staff and resources wherever necessary to ensure that every child in Curaçao can develop its full potential.
- 7 Pay more attention to the position of undocumented children and enable them to receive a diploma in Curaçao.
- 8 Stimulate the exchange of knowledge and best practices between schools on how to reach migrants and deal with children from different backgrounds in the classroom.
- 9 Stimulate schools to share knowledge and develop evidence based programmes that will have positive influences on the quality of education in Curaçao.
- 10 Hold political discussions based on statistical data and facts instead of sentiments and use the knowledge and networks of migrant organisations and NGOs to improve policy development.

AIMS AND TASKS OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, LABOR & WELFARE



The Ministry of Social Development, Labor & Welfare (SOAW) aims to facilitate a society where every citizen can perform to the best of his abilities. It does this by improving the (living) conditions of families and communities and by strengthening the labor force. The ministry consists of three sectors, namely: Labor, Family & Youth and Social Development. Besides their main office in Punda, the ministry has six offices spread around the island; the so-called ‘Kas di Bario’.

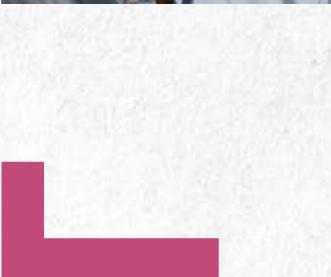
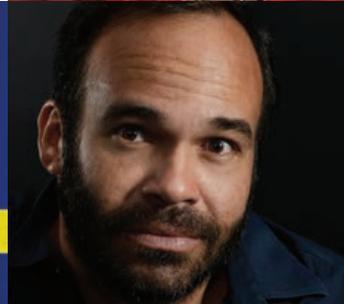
The ministry employs approximately 180 civil servants and is actively involved in job creation, providing assistance to those in need of social support and helping families with complex problems. It also supports projects for target groups with specific needs, such as the elderly, the unemployed and the youth. In addition, the ministry conducts inspections of labor conditions and develops and implements policies for all its different sectors.

The OMIC research project was initiated to contribute to policy development regarding the immigration and integration of regional immigrants in Curaçao. The research results can be obtained at SOAW’s main office or received digitally by e-mail upon request.

The Ministry can be contacted at their main office in Punda at the following address:

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BUILDING A LIFE, BUILDING A NATION.



THE DVD THAT BRINGS THE RESEARCH REPORT ON MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION TO LIFE

The OMIC report researches migration and integration in Curaçao. To bring this report to life, the Ministry of Social Development, Labor & Welfare (SOAW) commissioned film maker Jermain Lo to make a short film, visualizing some of the research findings and the world of immigrants in Curaçao.

Together with director Elisa Koek, cameraman Octavio Curiel and editor Stevan Llewelyn, Lo highlights the positive attitude and productivity of immigrants in Curaçao while at the same time addressing some of the problems they face. The film portrays various immigrants from Venezuela, Haiti and Colombia at work and in their homes and questions a director of a local school with many immigrant children on how these children fare. The multilingual film is subtitled in English and aims to dispel common myths and raise awareness about the facts and faces behind regional migration to Curaçao.

Jermain Lo, a *yu di Kòrsou*, is a much sought after film maker. He works both in Curaçao and in Holland and depicts different social and human interest issues in his work. Lo has worked for Radio Netherlands Worldwide (Radio Wereld Omroep) and for local television stations in Curaçao. In the past, his team has produced short films on the subjects of undocumented immigrant children in Curaçao and the re-migration of *yu di Kòrsou* to Curaçao for the Ministry of SOAW, which were well received.



MINISTRY OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, LABOR & WELFARE

JUNE 2014

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**WE BELONG TO CURAÇAO, BUT WE
HAVE THE DRIVE AND DETERMINATION
OF OUR IMMIGRANT PARENTS AS WELL.**

**UNDERSTANDING BOTH WORLDS
MAKES US VERY CAPABLE OF
CONTRIBUTING TO CURAÇAO.**”

*Evaristo Gerard,
second generation immigrant in Curaçao*

