



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

## **A Synopsis of Displacement of Local Workers due to the Venezuelan Migration Phenomenon in Curepe.**

The general public seems to be preoccupied with Venezuelan migration to Trinidad and its “negative” impact on the labour market. Cries such as “Venezuelans are taking the jobs of locals” and statements such as “the 14,000-plus Venezuelans registered to live and work in Trinidad and Tobago for one year, will take the jobs of locals” (Kisson 2019) only serve to magnify the popular notion of displacement by Venezuelan migrants. More importantly, these lamentations are nursed by the dearth of information on these migrants and the interplay of xenophobia with race, class and culture perceptions of the Venezuelan migrants. A 2021 study, entitled “Displacement of Local Workers due to the Venezuelan Migration Phenomenon in Curepe” (by this author) employed a qualitative methodology to examine the aforementioned in the service industry, analyse community perception of these immigrants and determine if they are fuelled by xenophobia.

Are the cries of displacement by migrants unique to Trinidad? Migration impacts on every domain of development, however the influence of migration on employment and wages (the economic domain) has in recent times captured international political and academic attention. In this regard the above lamentations are not exclusive to Trinidad, in fact this claim was investigated in France Germany, United Kingdom and the United States of America. This study revealed that immigrants provide opportunities for native workers to upgrade their occupation and specialize in higher skilled jobs. Interestingly, the only workers who were negatively affected were those with similar skills and background as the immigrants.

Are Venezuelans really “taking away” jobs or “displacing local workers”? The elements for displacement must occur simultaneously and must be weighed against the local worker. They include; redundancy at work, unfair treatment, uncondusive work environment and the like. The findings of the 2021 study not only contradicted the popular local notion of the general public but also illustrated that these elements are absent. It must be noted here that locals comprise more than half of the workforce composition. To a certain extent this out rules the idea of displacement of locals via representation. The study highlighted the differences in

tasks and wages between locals and migrants do not make the work environment conducive to displacement of local workers. According to the research, these differences are in fact due to factors such as work ethic, perceptions of attractiveness and level of English literacy and education. Moreover, it revealed that Venezuelan migrants were hired based on the employers' perception of the migrants' personal attributes, economic need and physical features. It is interesting to note that the trend of occupational downgrading is rearing its head among the Venezuelan migrants. Occupational downgrading is the acceptance of low skilled jobs by individuals with higher levels of education and training; and this trend has also been observed in Brazil and Ecuador. Unlike Colombia and certain parts of Latin America, the issue of xenophobia appears to be absent in the community of Curepe. This was revealed by the perception survey conducted in the 2021 study which found that the community of Curepe has in general, positive perceptions of the Venezuelan migrants. The community generally perceives these migrants as diligent, honest, willing to do any job owing to their economic circumstance and victims of unfair treatment by their employers; and a certain degree of empathy is observed by the respondents to the Venezuelan migrant population as they (respondents) sought to justify their ratings.

It is only natural for Trinidad's economy, society and politics to be impacted by Venezuelan migration as Trinidad and Venezuela share a symbiotic migration relationship that is over 3 centuries old. The 2021 study, though relatively small, is important as it acknowledges the dearth of information on the Venezuelan migrants, highlights the need for empirical research on the impacts of Venezuelan migration on Trinidad, illustrates that society is influenced by this paucity of information and most importantly, possesses international relevance as migration, and by extension its impact, contributes to a country's development and plays a key role in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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