



Migration Profile

CAPE VERDE

A. Executive Summary

The Republic of Cape Verde is an archipelago and island country of West Africa located in the Atlantic Ocean.ⁱ It proclaimed its independence from Portugal on July 5, 1975 and became a multiparty democracy in 1990.ⁱⁱ

Cape Verde has always been considered an emigrant country,ⁱⁱⁱ and in 2020 the main destinations were Portugal, the USA, France, the Netherlands, and Angola.^{iv} Emigration has been significant because of the acquisition of professional skills and remittances^v that in 2020 represented 12,7% of the GDP.^{vi}

Immigration is also present, mainly from Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, and Portugal, due to the historical, cultural and economic ties with these countries.^{vii} As for refugees, in 2020 e 2021 neither refugees nor asylum seekers were registered in the country.^{viii} Cape Verde has been affected by climate disasters, especially floods, that in 2020 forced 750 people to relocate within the country.^{ix}

Cape Verdean economy is quite limited due to lack of natural and mineral resources and a significant structural trade deficit because of its import of food and fuel.^x Its economy is mostly sustained by the service sector, representing approximately 72% of GDP, especially tourism generating 21% of GDP.^{xi} During the pandemic, Cape Verdean economy suffered significant losses, because of travel restrictions and activity limitations in the main sectors of the economy.^{xii} In 2021 Cape Verde's GDP amounted to US\$ 1,936,174,040^{xiii}, experiencing a 7% annual growth rate, after the sharp decrease attested in the previous year (-14.8%).^{xiv} Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) decreased from 4.5% of the GDP in 2019 to 2.9% in 2020^{xv}. The inflation rate in 2021 was 1.9%, which has increased compared to the 0.6% of the previous year.^{xvi}

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Cape Verde is a small African country with 561,901 inhabitants (2021)^{xvii} and covers an area of 4,033 sq. km.^{2xviii} It includes ten islands and five islets and is divided into nine 'concelhos'.^{xix} The 'Windward' (northern) islands are Santo Antão, San Vicente, Santa Lucía, Sao Nicolau, Sal, and Boavista, while the 'Leeward' (southern) islands are Maio, Santiago, Fogo, and

Brava.^{xx} Santiago is the largest (990 sq. km) and most populated city, while Santa Lucía is the smallest (35 sq. km) and the only other inhabited town.^{xxi}

In the capital city, Praia (Santiago Island), live 142,009 people.^{xxii} Regarding ethnic distribution, there is a mix of Africans, Portuguese and Europeans. Creoles or Mulattos (coming from intermarriages between formerly enslaved people and the European settlers) represent 71% of the whole population, Africans 28%, while Portuguese and other Europeans 1%.^{xxiii} Although Portuguese is the official language, creole is also widely used by Cape Verdeans (despite dialect differences).^{xxiv} Concerning religion, more than 90% of the population is Catholic, but there are also Protestants, Adventists, Mormons, and a growing minority of Muslims.^{xxv}

II. International and Internal Migration

In 2020, Cape Verde registered 15,788 international migrants (and 49.92% of them were women). Regarding their main countries of origin, 33.75% of the immigrant population was from Guinea Bissau, 11.45% from Sao Tome and Principe, 9.89% from Senegal, and 7.75% from Portugal.^{xxvi}

Cape Verde has historically been an emigrant nation sending people into mainland African countries.^{xxvii} Recently, this trend has been reversing since Cape Verde has become a common destination because of its geographical location in the region, at the crossroads of three continents, as well as its relative political stability.^{xxviii}

The first diaspora of Bissau-Guineans living in Cape Verde worked for Portuguese merchants and was identified as the 'manjaco' ethnic group.^{xxix} These immigrants settled in Cape Verde, found full-time jobs, and brought their family up, generation after generation. As of today, the insular state still attracts Bissau-Guineans looking for better opportunities. They are mostly motivated because of a common cultural and linguistic heritage, as well as geographical proximity.^{xxx}

However, in recent years Bissau-Guinean migrants have been facing many difficulties due to immigration restrictions, lack of stable jobs, as well as racial discrimination and hostility.^{xxxi} Therefore since 2012, the Government has been working on inclusive policies to eradicate violence and discrimination at the education, employment, and community levels.^{xxxii}

Starting from 1992, the Government has also opened its economy, creating better conditions for foreign investors, in addition to bilateral agreements lowering entry restrictions to migrants arriving from Portugal, Mozambique, Angola, East Timor, and Spain.^{xxxiii}

Since then, many Cape Verdeans who had moved in the past decades to the USA and Europe, have now been returning to and investing in Cape Verde,^{xxxiv} buying land and building their home on their native island. Santiago and San Vicente Islands have become the most common destinations for those emigrants coming from European countries.^{xxxv}

The Cape Verdean diaspora and immigrant population arriving from the West African area, mainly from Senegal, have a lower purchasing power and usually move to Santiago Island

looking for job opportunities.^{xxxvi} There is no available data regarding their most common entry points, even though the main airport is located in Praia.

Internal mobility is limited since the Cape Verdean islands have fair aerial and maritime connections.^{xxxvii} Cars and motorbikes are hard to find on the island due to local people's very limited purchasing capacity, but also because of the sedentary nature of their personal and professional activities.^{xxxviii}

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

In 2020, Cape Verde registered 187,558 emigrants (33.7% of its total population), and 54.7% of them were women.^{xxxix} ^{xl} The top destination countries were Portugal (36.4%), the USA (19.2%), France (13.6%), the Netherlands (6.5%), and Angola (4.9%).^{xli} Because of its lack of natural resources, Cape Verde heavily depends on tourism and its diaspora's professional competencies and remittances.^{xlii} In addition, the country needs emigration to support its local population; therefore, most of its citizens live outside its borders.^{xliii} The internal labour market is unable to absorb the surplus population and to provide livelihood to those who remain and often end up in social exclusion.^{xliv} Moreover, many female emigrants are part of the solidarity networks looking after those women staying in the country with their children,^{xlv} making the migratory project a collective process rather than an individual one.^{xlvi}

Furthermore, the ties between the diaspora and Cape Verde have been preserved, not only materially but also symbolically, thanks to the engagement of many first-generation migrants.^{xlvii} Returnees are becoming more and more involved in the development of their country.^{xlviii} Thus, through a Mobility Partnership, among other initiatives, the Government promotes the reintegration of returning *expats* from the E.U. and the growing transnationalism of the diaspora.^{xlix} This initiative has been undertaken in partnership with the Institute for Development Assistance of Portugal and with migrants living in Italy and the Netherlands.¹

Cape Verdean migrants often face discrimination issues abroad. Political, media and social responses to their presence convey pervasive structural racism.^{li} This portrays immigration as a threat and fosters their exclusion and marginalisation in destination countries, hindering their integration.^{lii}

IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Climate Displaced Persons)

Currently, UNHCR has a Senegal Cluster Office based in Dakar, responsible for operations in Cape Verde, Benin, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal.^{liii}

Cape Verde has not signed the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. It acceded to the 1967 Protocol to the Convention in July 1987, although with some reservations.^{liv} In this regard, the law does not grant asylum or refugee status, and the Government has not established a protection system for refugees.^{lv} Likewise, the country has not set any legislation or institutional agency to grant asylum or refugee status.^{lvi} Asylum applications are rare. In 2021 and 2022, no people were registered seeking refugee or asylum status.^{lvii} This is due to the lack of national legislation and proceedings in international protection.^{lviii}

Cape Verde has neither signed nor acceded to the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.^{lix} Furthermore, it is not a state party to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.^{lx} Despite that, in 2022, 115 stateless persons were registered in Cape Verde.^{lxi}

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Cape Verde is listed as a Tier 2 country, because it does not fully meet the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking, but it is making significant efforts towards it. Traffickers exploit local and foreign children in several locations, sometimes for sex tourism. Child sexual abuse has been reported in the past, including also parents who encourage young girls' sexual exploitation hoping for a potential marriage and the possibility to obtain visas to the USA, or remittances. In addition, West African women living in Cape Verde are often subjected to human trafficking for sexual and domestic servitude purposes.^{lxii} In the case of minors, the Cape Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents (ICCA) identified vulnerable and potential child trafficking victims as susceptible to care.^{lxiii}

Despite its efforts, the Government is still facing major challenges: state agencies do not have enough resources for training, and victim identification and protection services remain inadequate.^{lxiv} Furthermore, the Observatory for Monitoring and Rapid Identification of Situations of Trafficking in Persons cannot pursue or coordinate anti-trafficking activities, regardless of national agencies' efforts.^{lxv}

However, some law enforcement endeavours must be recognised. Article 271-A of the Penal Code, for instance, criminalised sex and labour trafficking and determined penalties of up to 10 years of imprisonment. These measures are consistent in the case of human trafficking for sexual purposes, with penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Nevertheless, there are no public shelters specifically designed for victims of trafficking, although agencies funded by the Cape Verdean government have been providing this type of emergency services, as well as psychosocial care for women and children victims of crime and populations at risk of trafficking. Security officials and first responders can refer underage victims to the ICCA, and victims requiring long-term care can be directed to the Public Ministry. Adult women, instead, are entrusted to the Cape Verdean Institute for Gender Equality (ICIEG) or some other NGOs. Foreign victims are usually referred to the High Authority for Migration (AAI) and several international organisations.^{lxvi}

In addition, police have protocols to follow while interviewing victims that are sexually exploited, in cooperation with psychologists, and with parents or legal guardians in cases involving minors. However, in 2021 there were no official reports regarding services provided to trafficked victims.^{lxvii}

VI. National Legal Framework

The national Constitution regulates the Cape Verdean Nationality Law as amended, the Nationality Act in 1992 and its revisions, and various international agreements to which the

country is a signatory. These laws determine the eligibility for Cape Verdean citizenship,^{lxviii} and also the freedom to migrate is enshrined as a constitutional right in the country.^{lxix}

Cape Verde's main legal document regulating immigration is Law No. 66/VIII/2014, as amended by Decree-Law No. 2/2015 and Law No. 19/IX/2017. This law (REJ) establishes the legal requirements for entry, residence and exit of non-nationals in Cape Verde. The REJ introduced protections for victims of human trafficking, including temporary residence permits and fines for crimes such as smuggling or promoting irregular immigration. The Cape Verde Penal Code also criminalised human trafficking for the first time in 2015, and in 2018 the first-ever National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking was approved. Cape Verde's immigration policy is outlined in the National Immigration Strategy (ENI). This policy, launched in 2012, was later on supplemented by the second Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Immigrants.^{lxx}

Cape Verde has no national legislation and no institutional body within the Government taking responsibility for asylum-seekers and refugees.

Cape Verde has not signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, but it did accede to the Convention's 1967 Protocol in July 1987 with the following reservation.^{lxxi} Cape Verde is not a state party to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.^{lxxii} Neither has it signed nor acceded to the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).^{lxxiii}

Nevertheless, Cape Verde has been a party to the regional Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969 OAU Convention) since 1989;^{lxxiv} the African charter on Human Rights and People's Rights;^{lxxv} and the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW).^{lxxvi}

VII. Main Actors

The State

The High Authority for Immigration replaced the General Directorate for Immigration (*Direcao General de Imigracao*) in July 2020, following Decree-Law 55/2020, and is responsible for coordination and implementation of immigration policies and measures, with a particular focus on the creation and monitoring of an integrated system to host and assimilate immigrants in Cape Verde. The High Authority more significantly operates under the supervision of the Ministry of State, Parliamentary Affairs and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.^{lxxvii}

The National Immigration Council (*Conselho Nacional de Imigraçao*), created in 2012 to assist the Ministry of Family and Social Inclusion (*Ministério da Família e Inclusão Social*) in defining and implementing immigration policies, handles the interministerial coordination system.^{lxxviii}

Two national bodies deal with border management. The Foreign and Borders Directorate (DEF) of the National Police is under the direction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is

responsible for controlling the entry and exit of persons at borders as well as issuing visas and 'Resident Permits for Foreigners'. Meanwhile, under the Ministry of Defence, the Coast Guard is responsible for protecting borders and patrolling waters. ^{lxxxix}

About Human Trafficking, the Public Ministry oversees long-term victims, and the Cape Verdean Institute for Gender Equality (ICIEG) supports adult women.^{lxxx} Foreign victims are usually referred to the High Authority for Migration (AAI) and different international organisations. In all cases, the Cape Verdean National Police Forces are the first authority to respond while dealing with trafficking cases. ^{lxxxi}

The institutional framework responsible for emigration (and diaspora) issues is overseen by the Directorate General for Consular Affairs, Communities and Migration, which falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Communities (MNEC). Meanwhile, at the local level, there is the National Network of Municipal Focal Points, comprising 22 of them responsible for emigration issues within each municipality. ^{lxxxii}

International Organisations

Some international organisations have strengthened their presence in Cape Verde, since the number of immigrants arriving there has increased in recent years.^{lxxxiii} In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), IOM promotes the 'Migration House' programme, including migration data research and analysis to develop the Government ability to address the main issues related to migration.^{lxxxiv} Data analysis is then mainstreamed in order to support the Cape Verdean Government response to the challenges posed by the new migration trends on the islands.^{lxxxv} The International Labour Organization (ILO) works in Cape Verde to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all. ^{lxxxvi}

The UN agency for refugees (UNHCR) is not present in the country. However, it works through the Multi-country Office (MCO) out in Senegal, based in Dakar.^{lxxxvii} It is responsible for Cape Verde, Benin, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal operations.^{lxxxviii} In collaboration with UNHCR, UNICEF is also active in Cape Verde supporting the national response to HIV/AIDS - with the Ministry of Health and Social Security and UNAIDS - and promoting access for the most vulnerable population, especially women and children, to essential services such as education and health. ^{lxxxix}

The World Health Organization (WHO) is also active in the country, handling epidemics such as COVID-19 and Zika to the threat of infectious diseases, including HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis, that primarily affect vulnerable people.^{xc} Moreover, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) works in the country to ensure food and nutrition security governance and aid to the most vulnerable groups through protection and social inclusion policies. In the case of Cape Verde, after more than four seasons of considerable rainfall deficit, agricultural productivity has drastically dwindled, and aquifers did not recharge, thus affecting water access for the population and their livelihood activities.^{xc}

NGOs and Other Organisations

The International Committee of the Red Cross works in Cape Verde, but the regional office is located in Senegal.^{xcii} The Red Cross in Cape Verde is involved in the drought crisis in the country, with a special assistance program to help vulnerable people through the distribution of food goods and provision of medical aid to people in need and with difficulties to cover their medical expenses. This program is also supported by the Spanish Red Cross, the Livelihoods Centre, and the Cape Verde Diaspora Charity.^{xciii}

Cape Verde's Diaspora Charity provides access to Food & Nutrition, Health Care and Education.^{xciv} As a UK-based project, the CVDC aims to raise funds in the diaspora to support essential human provision to the most vulnerable.^{xcv}

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is also present in the country with several projects. The programme 'Dias de Cabo Verde', promoted by the 'Instituto das Comunidades' of Cape Verde, counts on diaspora professionals in the Netherlands, Italy, and Portugal.⁹⁷ Its objective consists in creating and strengthening the sectors that are fundamental to the development of Cape Verde, such as health, education, tourism, and infrastructure.⁹⁸

Médecins Sans Frontières is also present in Cape Verde, specifically bringing humanitarian medical assistance to victims of conflict, natural disasters, epidemics, and healthcare exclusion.^{xcvi} For instance, MSF was very active in the country by sending in 2009 a response team during the first dengue fever outbreak in Cape Verde.^{xcvii}

The Catholic Church

Caritas Cape Verde handles especially situations where food security is threatened by drought and the scarcity of arable land. It has developed programmes to help vulnerable families and communities to create favourable conditions that allow people to adapt to climate changes.^{xcviii} One of its projects aims at strengthening the poor neighbourhoods of the islands of Santiago and Santo Antão, as well as the João Varela agroecological project. Current problems that Caritas Cape Verde has been facing are related to rising crime and an increase in the number of immigrants from the west coast of Africa, resulting in a saturation in the attention to their needs.^{xcix}

On the island of São Vicente, in the Diocese of Mindelo, the Congregation of Sisters Adorers, Handmaids of the Blessed Sacrament and Sisters of Charity are involved in a social project, 'Kreditá na bo' (Believe in you), to aid women in prostitution.^c The project, which has been running since March 2016, has assisted more than a hundred women and systematically monitors a large group of them living in vulnerable situations (teenagers, pregnant women without resources, and victims of trafficking).

This organisation has provided victims with social and legal assistance to create awareness of their situation and plan life projects.^{ci} They also receive vocational training in cooking, computers, and sewing. Likewise, they get information on health problem prevention. These women are also helped during the process of setting up their own businesses and be able to access microcredits. Even the Diocese of Mindelo has always supported the 'Kreditá na bo' project.

In the Diocese of Santiago, there are two chaplaincies ministering to the English and French speaking migrant communities. Thanks to the work carried out by these chaplaincies, since January 15, 2022 the Government has initiated the extraordinary process of regularisation of undocumented migrants.

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