

Panama

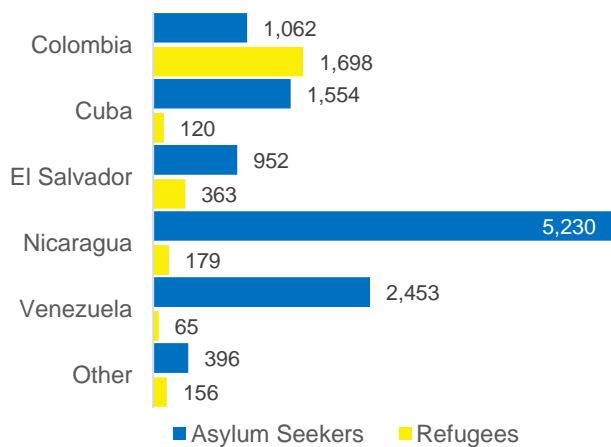
November - December 2021

Panama is home to approximately **14,200 refugees and asylum-seekers**. By end 2021, **128,000 Venezuelans** were estimated to be living in the country.

On 21 December, **9 cases** (totalling 30 individuals) were **granted refugee status** by CONARE. With these new recognitions, the total number of **refugees in Panama** is **2,611**.

More than **1,600 asylum-seekers and refugees** have been supported with **multipurpose cash or vouchers** in 2021. In addition, **1,470 refugees and asylum-seekers** have been provided with **legal assistance** in 2021.

Population of concern*



* Source: ONPAR, as of June 2021

CONTEXT

The refugee population is mainly composed of people from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama continue to face exacerbated risks and increased vulnerabilities, mainly due to the loss of opportunities to generate an income. Consequently, daily subsistence and rent has become a challenge.

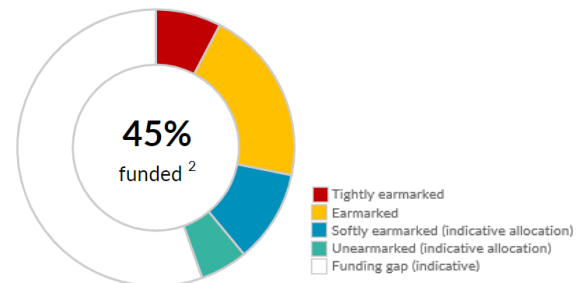
Movements of people entering through Darien (southern border with Colombia) decreased drastically during November and December. However, during 2021 these movements reached a new record number of 133,726 persons¹ entering irregularly through the Darien gap, including 29,524 children. Small numbers of people within these movements requested international protection in Panama, the overall majority continued their transit northward. Protection risks and humanitarian needs have increased in Darien, particularly for children and women within mixed movements.

¹Source: National Migration Service, as of December 2021

STATE OF PLAY: FUNDING RECEIVED VS. FUNDING NEEDS (AS OF 29 DECEMBER 2021)

US\$ 48.7 M

requested for the Panama Multi-Country Office¹ for 2021



¹ The financial requirements for the Panama MCO include requirements for the Coronavirus Emergency and the Venezuela Situation. Belize is part of the Panama Multi-Country Office in 2021 along with Panama, Nicaragua, Cuba and the Southern Caribbean

² The percentage funded includes indicative allocations of softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions

UNHCR celebrates Panama's Bicentennial with emotional flashmob



Venezuelan musicians perform "Patria" from Ruben Blades during a flashmob performance to celebrate Panama's independence day. The flashmob was part of the video "¿Qué significa 'Patria' para ti?" launched by UNHCR in celebration of the bicentennial, together with the Camerata Panama Orchestra. For the press release and video, click [here](#).

Credit: UNHCR/Alí Díaz

UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR works in close coordination with the Government, civil society, UN agencies, and refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama. Close coordination with the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) is maintained to channel support and continue strengthening the asylum system in the country. UNHCR closely liaises with the Ombudsperson's Office, the Electoral Tribunal, and the National Migration Service as well. UNHCR co-chairs with IOM the UN inter-agency group on human mobility, which coordinates humanitarian support and interventions related to the mixed movements in Darien and Chiriquí provinces. UNHCR has also established partnership agreements with different national and international organizations, including NRC, HIAS, the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH), Panamanian Red Cross, *Fútbol con Corazón* (FCC), and *Fundación Espacio Creativo* (FEC). Furthermore, UNHCR supports the government in implementing their commitments under the [Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework \(MIRPS\)](#).

Main Activities

Alongside the government, partner organizations, civil society, development actors, and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes protection and solutions activities, including:

Protection

- UNHCR has carried out the third round of the **High Frequency Survey** to assess the needs and priorities of refugees and asylum-seekers. According to preliminary results, 46% of the interviewees reported having access to 1-2 meals a day; 40% informed that at least one family member is working at least 2-3 days per week, mainly in the informal sector; and 72% said they have been completely vaccinated with the first and second doses.
- More than **1,000 refugees, migrants, and members of the host community** participated in family fairs in La Chorrera (West Panama) and San Miguelito, as part of the **16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence**. UNHCR, partners, and government entities participated with **informative booths on services** to support host communities and refugees.

Humanitarian Assistance

- UNHCR through partners supported **775 individuals** with **multipurpose cash** (for food, medicines, rent payments) and/or **temporary accommodation** between November and December.
- UNHCR donated **12,000 garbage bags** and **5,000 pairs of gloves** to National Migration Service in Darien to support the **Reception Centres in San Vicente and Lajas Blancas**. Moreover, considering a slight increase of malaria and dengue cases in certain communities in Darien, UNHCR delivered **17,352 soaps, 700 blankets, and 1,500 mosquito nets** to the Fundación Pro Niños del Darién to **support** these communities.
- Solar panels** were installed in the **health centre of Bajo Chiquito** (Darien), one of the main communities receiving mixed movements in 2021. The installation of the solar panels ensures electricity for the Centre's operation and the necessary refrigeration required for critical medication.

Durable Solutions and Livelihoods

- 40 refugees** graduated from a **Community Management course** delivered by UNHCR through HIAS and Quality Leadership University. The course aimed to enhance the participants' digital skills and use of social media for businesses to strengthen their access to livelihoods, employability, and income-generation alternatives.
- UNHCR and partner *Fútbol con Corazón* concluded **La Liga de Todos**, with an event that included authorities from the Ministry of Education, teachers, school directors, and local and refugee students. The football league aimed to create and strengthen friendship ties between young locals and refugees through soccer. The **240 persons** who **participated** in the league reinforced their commitment to continue **strengthening local inclusion and integration** between refugees and Panamanians.

Advocacy and Peaceful Coexistence

- UNHCR and partners supported host and transit communities in Darien** with interventions to **improve the overall living conditions** in their community. Focus group discussions were held and – based on identified needs – interventions were prioritized within the sectors of WASH and education, mainly.
- Within the framework of the **Somos Lo Mismo** campaign, UNHCR and IOM launched **four anti-xenophobia "kits"** with tools to promote **respect, empathy, and integration** between nationals and non-nationals residing in Panama in public spaces, work environments, and in the media.

The UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: United States of America, Spain, European Union, France, United Kingdom, and the UN Programme On HIV/AIDS, as well as to the following donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Algeria | Armenia | Australia | Austria | Belgium | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Cyprus | Denmark | Estonia | Finland | France | Germany | Holy See | Iceland | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Latvia | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | Morocco | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Peru | Philippines | Portugal | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Slovakia | South Africa | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | Thailand | Turkey | United Kingdom | United States of America | Uruguay | Private donors, including Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Spain, Sweden, and United States of America.

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