



## HIGHLIGHTS

**1,830**

New asylum applications registered in Panamá in 2015. **55%** increase in comparison with 2014.

**890**

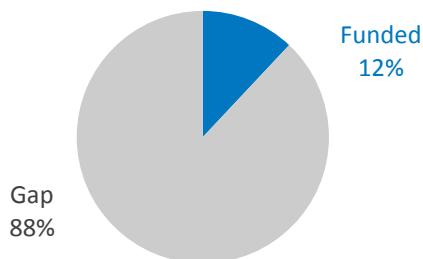
New asylum applications from Colombian citizens in 2015 (49% of total new applications). Trends show an **increase** in claims from other nationalities, such as El Salvador and Venezuela.

### Access to Education

A law that grants refugees to enroll in schools without showing documents from their country of origin was passed in 2015.

## Funding – Regional Office Panama

**USD 16.9 million** requested



- UNHCR’s Regional Office in Panama is implementing the Regional Protection and Solutions Strategy for the NTCA situation in close collaboration with partners.
- The Regional Office financially oversees UNHCR’s operations in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, as well protection activities in Cuba, and Nicaragua.
- UNHCR plans to significantly scale up its operational capacity in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in order to better respond to complex protection and programmatic needs.

## UNHCR Presence

### Staff:

7 national staff  
8 international staff

### Office:

Regional Office for Central America, Cuba and Mexico located in Panama City

## UNHCR Panama: Operational Map

June 2016



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.  
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## WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- UNHCR works in close coordination with the Government, civil society, UN agencies, regional bodies and persons of concern. In terms of coordination with partners, UNHCR leads a protection – roundtable with the participation of the Norwegian Refugee Council, RET, HIAS, the Human Mobility Pastoral and the Panamanian Red Cross towards objectives based on the Participatory Assessment developed in 2014-2015; namely access to education, reception conditions, livelihoods, local integration and public attitude towards persons of concern.
- The National Office for the Attention of Refugees is an agency within the Ministry of Government with a fundamental role in the refugee status determination procedure, along with the National Commission for Refugee Protection. UNHCR also works in close coordination with government institutions, namely, the child protection office, border police, national institution for women protection and the Ombudsman Office.

## MAIN ACTIVITIES IN PANAMA

### Protection

- Strengthen the asylum system including access to territory and to effective legal remedies for persons of concern through the implementation of the Quality Assurance Initiative regional programme. A Memorandum of Understanding on the Quality of Asylum was signed between the UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior during the year 2013 and since then over 50 joint recommendations have been consented to improve the asylum process.
- Technical support for the drafting of the Protocol to reduce the risk of *refoulement* between the National Immigration Service and the National Office for the Attention of Refugees, with a view to improving identification and referral of asylum-seekers at all entry points.
- Advocacy to ensure that cases identified through the UNHCR's Heightened Risk Identification Tool have access to the national asylum system. Since its implementation in 2014, the Heightened Risk Identification Tool proves useful for the context of Panama to identify those cases with certain risks of protection.
- Support partners in the provision of legal and psychosocial assistance and interpretation services to persons with specific needs. In the absence of a government - funded reception programme, UNHCR partnership with local NGOs proves instrumental to ensure reception conditions standards, especially for vulnerable cases.

### Education

- Monitor the implementation of the Executive Decree No. 1225/2015 that allows refugees enroll to primary and secondary education without submitting country of origin documentation. Furthermore, refugees not bearing country of origin documentation are welcome to take a placement test, thus facilitating access to the education in the context of Panama.

### Durable Solutions

- Enhance the local integration environment; inter alia, access to education, banking services and public services for refugees in Panama, including those from the Northern Triangle of Central America. Therefore, a Memorandum of Understanding on Local Integration between UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior is expected to be signed in the second half of 2016.
- Advocate for a provisional work permit for asylum-seekers to facilitate livelihoods opportunities.

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