

# Belize

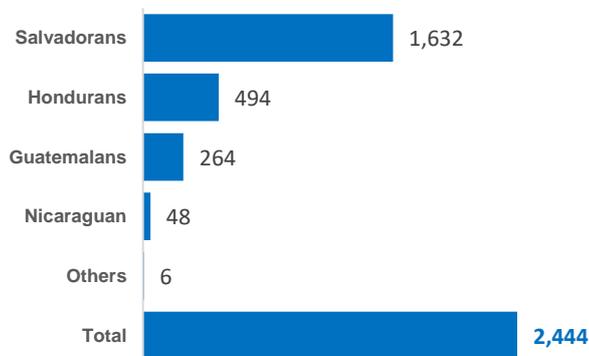
April - June 2021

Belize is home to **more than 2,400** registered refugees and asylum seekers, and an additional estimated 3,400 persons in need of international protection.

**548** asylum seekers benefitted from community empowerment and protection -activities across different host communities and **71** were provided with legal counselling and assistance between April and June.

**374** refugees and asylum-seekers received multipurpose cash to cover basic needs of food, rent and medicine during the months of April, May, and June.

## Population of concern\*

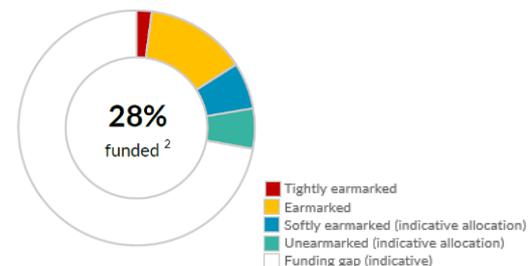


Data includes registered refugees and asylum seekers. Source: Refugees Department, as of June 2021

## FUNDING (AS OF 22 JUNE 2021)

**US\$ 48.7 M**

requested for the Panama Multi-Country Office 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

## CONTEXT

As part of state's commitments to improve the asylum system, 63 asylum-seekers were granted refugee status in Belize.

During the regular virtual MIRPS meeting in May, the Government of Belize announced that about 600 asylum-seekers who have been recommended for refugee status will be granted a special work permit and access to work rights in the banana, sugar and citrus industries. This important decision comes at a time where countries across Central America strive to recover from the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic.

UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM signed a workplan to support the national joint strategy of the Government of Belize and the UN Inter-Agency Response Team to strengthen international protection, to preserve the dignity of refugees, migrants, and their children, and to strengthen birth registration to prevent statelessness.

UNHCR partnered with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to share a Public Service Announcement that all persons, including refugees and asylum seekers, are a part of Belize's vaccination process.



UNICEF, IOM, and UNHCR signed a joint workplan to strengthen targeted advocacy efforts of the three organizations. The plan includes enhancing the protection of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and their children, contains the revision of government policies which cover refugees, migration, and child protection and aims to support the improvement of the birth registration system in Belize. It also envisages the delivery of public information on asylum and migration procedures for asylum-seekers and migrants in remote areas across Belize.

## UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR works in close coordination with the Government, civil society, UN agencies and refugees and asylum-seekers in Belize. A partnership with the Refugees Department is maintained, to channel support and continue strengthening the asylum system in the country. Additionally, UNHCR works in close coordination with the NGO partners Help for Progress, HUMANA People to People Belize, and Human Rights Commission of Belize. Furthermore, UNHCR supports the government in implementing its 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 through its partner, Human Rights Service Commission of Belize (HRCB), assisted **71 asylum seekers and other persons of concern to UNHCR with legal services**. UNHCR and HRCB visited Belama Phase 4, a community that hosts 23% of refugees and asylum seekers in Belize City, to encourage community leaders to join the Community Protection Based Network.

UNHCR **formulated an Asylum System Capacity Development Framework** with the Refugees Department to provide technical support and build the capacity of the state to improve the asylum process. The framework includes holding discussions on country of origin information, a learning programme on how to interview for protection, a regional asylum capacity workshop, and a mentorship or twinning project. This effort will take place in different stages throughout the rest of this year.

### Advocacy and peaceful coexistence

UNHCR and the UN Resident Coordinator in Belize issued **a call for the inclusion** of refugee women in Belize's women empowerment activities and **expressed the need for further support to achieve gender equality for both refugees and the local population**.

As member of the UNCT Belize, UNHCR shared key results from the UN Common Country Analysis with members of the appointed Senate and the elected House of Representatives. These results included refugees and asylum seekers as **one of the population groups that are most left behind in the advancement of the SDG Agenda 2030**. UNHCR expressed its willingness to strengthen the knowledge of parliamentarians on refugee and international protection issues, as well as to discuss opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to access local integration as the most suitable durable solution.

UNHCR partnered with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to share a Public Service Announcement **that all persons, including refugees and asylum seekers, are a part of Belize's vaccination process**.

Grupo de Mujeres Unidas y Refugiadas (GMUR) **led workshops for refugee and Belizean women on mental health and resilience**, with the support of UNHCR and partner Help for Progress. GMUR and UNHCR celebrated World Refugee Day in the community of Valley of Peace, with the inauguration of a mural at the village's community center and a message on **inclusion and equal rights for all**.

### Cash-based interventions and assistance

Between April and June, UNHCR provided **cash assistance to 374 refugees and asylum seekers** through partners, targeting areas of food, medicine, education, gas, documents, rent, and other basic items.

### Health

UNHCR is supporting the national COVID-19 Vaccination Plan of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, focusing on the main refugee-hosting areas and donated chairs for the Belmopan Vaccination Programme. UNHCR also provided funds to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to carry out a workshop with leaders of various churches and denominations to support efforts to tackle misinformation about vaccines within their communities.

**16** asylum seekers received **counselling services** through partner, Help for Progress, to strengthen mental health and boost resilience.

### Durable solutions and livelihoods

Through HUMANA People to People and Help for Progress, UNHCR delivered **livelihood training courses for 193 asylum seekers** on skills to enhance their self-reliance. These include courses on basic electricity, furniture making, cosmetology, sewing, business and investment courses, and English as a second language, which aim at supporting their local integration into Belizean communities.

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

#### For more information:

**In Belize, Yolanda Zapata**, Head of National Office, ZAPATAHE@unhcr.org, Tel: +501 615 9191

**Aida Escobar** Senior Public Information Assistant, escobar@unhcr.org, Tel: +501 672 2399

**In MCO Panama, Diana Diaz Rodriguez**, Communications Officer, diazdi@unhcr.org