

Belize

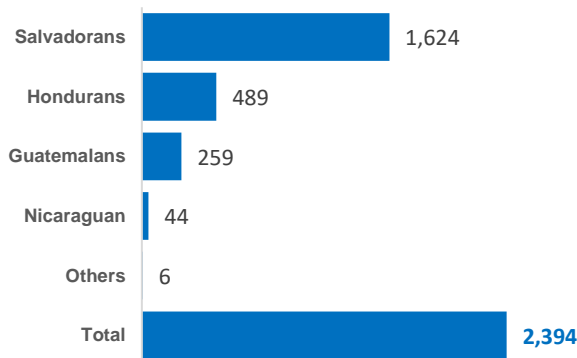
February - March 2021

Belize is home to **more than 2,000** refugees and registered asylum seekers, and an additional population of more than 3,000 persons potentially in need of international protection..

1,051 of people benefited from UN joint mobile centers across three host communities, and **319** benefitted from community empowerment and protection related-activities across different host communities during the reporting period.

327 refugees and asylum-seekers received basic needs multipurpose grants in February and March.

Population of concern*



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

*The number of people in need of international protection in Belize may be higher; the Government of Belize is currently reviewing the results from a recent POC profiling exercise.

CONTEXT

Despite the closure of land borders since March 2020, movements of people seeking international protection continue, with slight increases in the numbers of refugees arriving from Honduras and Nicaragua. New arrivals are now being tested for COVID-19 at the border. Persons testing negative no longer need to be quarantined for two weeks before proceeding with their asylum application.

The public health and socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to create barriers to accessing various social services as well as to both formal and informal jobs.

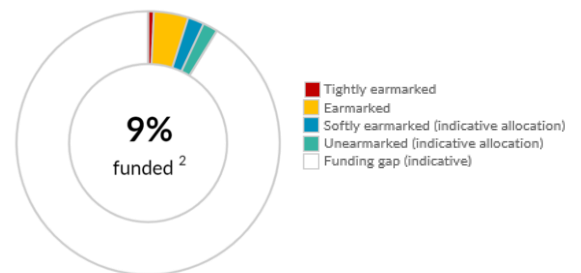
Due to a ruling of the Supreme Court in late 2020, the Government started to register asylum claims, no longer applying a 14-day registration time limitation, since January 2021.

At the start of the COVID vaccination program in early March, UNHCR and other UN agencies collaborated with the Ministry of Health in exchanging relevant demographic information and providing direct operational support for comprehensive coverage of refugee-hosting communities.

FUNDING (AS OF 6 APRIL 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



UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and IOM, with the support of Vital Statistics, Belize Family Life Association, and partners Human Rights Commission of Belize and HUMANA People to People, provided services across several host communities through mobile clinics. These services included birth registration, legal services, sexual and reproductive health services, psychosocial services, immigration and asylum information services.

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 partners Help for Progress, HUMANA People to People, and Human Rights Commission of Belize. Recently, it has begun efforts to establish a new partnership with the Department of Youth Services, a government department under the Ministry of Youth and E-Governance. 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 through a joint partnership with UNFPA, UNICEF, IOM, Human Rights Service Commission of Belize (HRCB) and Vital Statistic Institute of Belize provided birth and late birth registration services POCs, migrants, and Belizeans through four mobile centres. A total of 387 persons benefitted from this assistance which aimed at reducing the risk of statelessness.

Help for Progress along with UNHCR visited two border points in Belize in order to disseminate information on the asylum-seeking process in Belize. An estimated 85 persons received information on how to apply for asylum in these border villages, including the chairman, police officers, store owners, and members of the communities.

UNHCR and its legal protection partner Human Rights Commission of Belize assisted 20 asylum seekers with renewing their asylum claims at the Refugees Department and 15 asylum seekers with renewing their passports at their respective Embassies. HRCB supported a total of 48 asylum seekers with legal assistance during February and March.

Advocacy and peaceful coexistence

A Facebook page – [UNHCR Belize](#) – was recently opened to provide educational information to the Belizean public on asylum seekers and refugees living in the country, as well as information on UNHCR and work being done across the country.

HUMANA People to People, UNHCR's partner at the south of Belize, held various activities that supported 125 asylum-seekers as well as Belizeans in a effort to support peaceful coexistence in the community. These activities included soap making courses, cake baking and decorating, community cleaning and beautifications, proper hygiene and cleanliness, creating mats and vases from recycled material, and trainings to strengthen a Community Based Protection Network with both asylum seekers and Belizeans.

Cash-based interventions and assistance

During the months of February and March, UNHCR, through partners, provided cash-based assistance to 327 refugees and asylum seekers for food supplies, medicine, education, gas, documents, rent, and basic needs such as essential items for their homes (stoves, mattresses, gas tanks) and travel allowance.

Health

51 asylum seekers received psychosocial services through partners Help for Progress and HUMANA as well as through a UNHCR women's activity led alongside Grupo de Mujeres Refugiadas on the occasion of International Women's Day. These psychosocial services helped to strengthen participants' resilience and provided support to asylum seekers suffering from traumas. These sessions also brought awareness to the importance of mental health, self-esteem, and self-reliance, especially for women.

Durable solutions and livelihoods

UNHCR, through partners HUMANA People to People and Help for Progress, conducted livelihood training courses for 95 asylum seekers on skills to enhance their self-reliance. These include courses on basic electricity skills, furniture making, cosmetology, sewing, business and investment courses, and English as a second language, to support their local integration. 20 refugee and asylum seeker students are currently enrolled at the Center for Employment Training (CET). There are further efforts to incorporate the private sector in the initiative.

Thanks to donors in 2021: The UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the United States of America and the European Union, as well as to the following donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Algeria | Armenia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | Estonia | Finland | France | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Portugal | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Sweden | Switzerland | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | United Kingdom | Private donors

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