

# Panama

February - March 2021

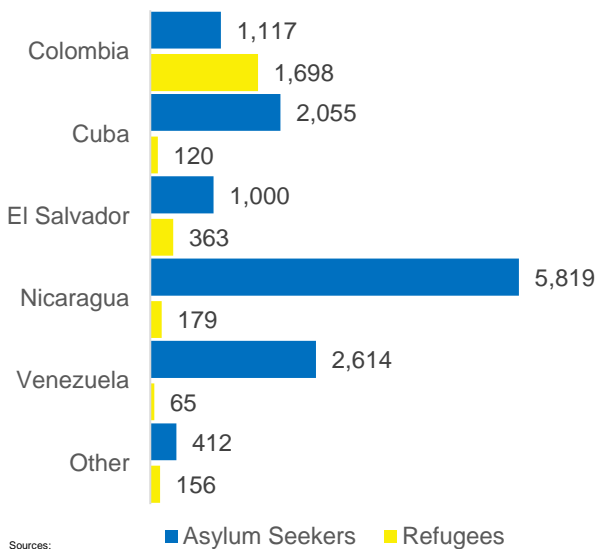
Panama is home to **+15,500** refugees and asylum-seekers.

**115,768** Venezuelans displaced abroad are estimated to be living in the country.

**Over 310** persons were provided with legal counselling and assistance between January and March.

**1,121** refugees and asylum-seekers were supported through CBI and multipurpose grants between January and March

## Population of concern<sup>1</sup>

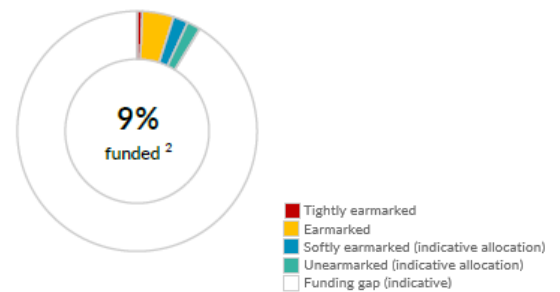


Sources:  
 1. ONPAR, November 2020  
 2. National Migration Service, December 2020  
 3. National Migration Service, January 2021

## FUNDING (AS OF 06 APRIL 2021)

# USD 48.7 M

requested for the Panama Multi Country Office CO



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

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

## CONTEXT

The refugee population is mainly composed of persons from Colombia, El Salvador, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. During the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees and asylum seekers in Panama have faced new and exacerbated risks, especially, with the loss of opportunities to generate an income, daily subsistence has become a challenge.

Movements of people entering through Darien (border with Colombia) increased during 2019 (more than 23,000 people<sup>2</sup> with small numbers requesting international protection Panama, whilst most others transited northward. In 2020, due to the pandemic, the number was significantly lower (6,465 people<sup>2</sup>). As a result of border closures in March 2020, over 2,000 persons remain in the Reception Centers in Darien and Chiriquí. As of end of March, 5,472 persons<sup>3</sup> have entered through the Darien border. These persons remain in the Reception Centers of Lajas Blancas and San Vicente.



UNHCR was part of an interinstitutional mission to Darien to update and renew the documents of Colombian refugees and asylum seekers in remote locations of the province. ONPAR, the National Migration Service, the Civil Registry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and the Ombudsman's Office were part of the mission.

Credits: Ministry of Interior

## Working with Partners

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. Additionally, UNHCR closely liaises with other entities including the Ombudsperson's Office, the Electoral Tribunal, National Migration Service. 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. UNHCR has also established partnership agreements with different national and international organizations, including NRC, HIAS, the Human Mobility Pastoral (PMH), the Panamanian Red Cross, Fútbol con Corazon, and Programa Enlaces (Fundación Espacio Creativo). 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 accompanied ONPAR, the National Migration Service, the Civil Registry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and the Ombudsman's Office in a [mission to renew documents for refugees and asylum seekers in Darién](#). [400 legal processes were provided](#) including refugee ID card renewals, asylum claims, applications for permanent residency and work permits, assistance to people at risk of statelessness, and legal advice.
- UNHCR [donated two mobile clinics](#) to the Ministry of Health in Panama for primary medical care to support access to health services for Panamanians, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at community level. Furthermore, UNHCR supported the Health Center in Canglón, Darien with furniture and medical equipment, strengthening health services for local communities, refugees, and migrants in remote locations.
- UNHCR [trained 56 border officers on international protection](#), as part of a broader strategy to strengthen access to territory and asylum process at border points, especially in Darien. The training was coordinated through the UN Human Mobility Working Group.

### Humanitarian assistance

- UNHCR [strengthened Panamanian Red Cross' capacity](#) for logistic, storage and humanitarian assistance through an office container to be used for emergency supplies and hygiene kits, ensuring quick responses for emergencies affecting locals and refugees.
- The Panamanian Red Cross supported [80 families with cash interventions](#) to buy food, medicines and pay rent.

### Education

- In a "back to school" event organized by UNHCR's partner, Panamanian Red Cross, [70 tablets were donated](#) to children and [75 families were supported](#) through cash interventions for school supplies.

### Durable solutions and livelihoods

- HIAS, UNHCR's partner has supported [190 refugees and asylum seekers](#) through economic and social inclusion initiatives and mental health services. HIAS also conducted [15 home visits to entrepreneurs](#) from the Entrepreneurship School Program to follow up on businesses and continue providing the necessary tools for the development of the projects.

### Advocacy and peaceful coexistence

- As part of the activities to commemorate International Woman's Day, UNHCR supported [a workshop for adolescents on creating healthy relationships](#), organized, and facilitated by PROBISIDA, a local NGO. 19 adolescents actively participated and discussed topics on GBV, positive and healthy dating relationships and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.
- UNHCR and partners carried out a consultation process with refugees and asylum seekers to consolidate proposals for the Bicentenary Pact, a government-led initiative to address inequality. 14 proposals were submitted regarding access to health, post COVID-19 economic recovery, education, social and cultural inclusion.

**Thanks to donors:** UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation globally, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding: [Belgium](#) | [Canada](#) | [Denmark](#) | [European Union](#) | [Germany](#) | [Ireland](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [Norway](#) | [Sweden](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [United States of America](#)

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