

Panama

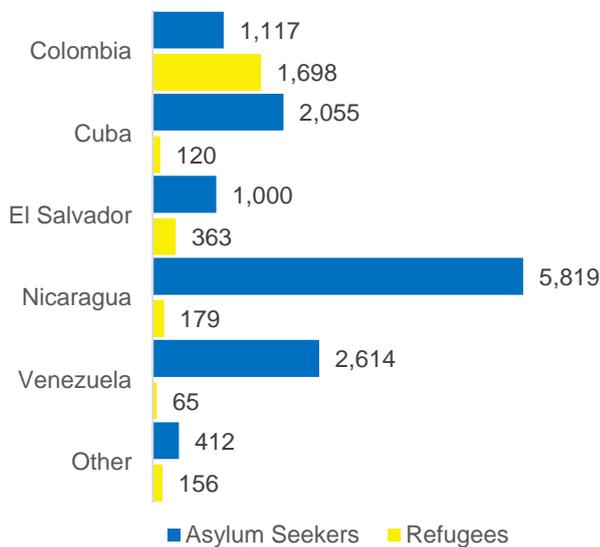
June 2021

Panama is home to more than **15,500** refugees and asylum-seekers. By 2021, **128,000** Venezuelans displaced abroad are estimated to be living in the country.

747 refugees and asylum-seekers were provided with legal counselling and assistance between January and June.

Over 2,500 refugees and asylum-seekers were supported through CBI and multipurpose grants between January and June.

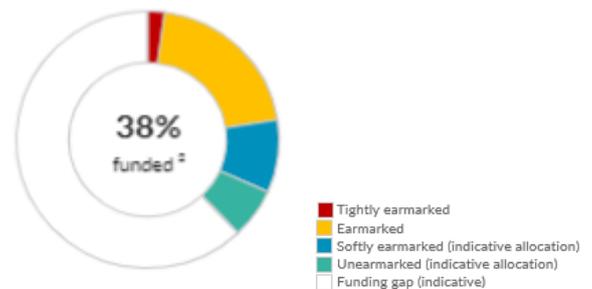
Population of concern¹



FUNDING (AS OF 2 JULY 2021)

USD 48.7 M

requested for the Panama Multi Country Office¹



- 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
- 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 (southern border with Colombia) increased during 2019 (more than 23,000 people²) with small numbers requesting international protection in Panama, whilst most others transited northward. In 2020, due to the pandemic, the number was significantly lower (6,465 people²), but as a result of border closures in March 2020, over 2,500 persons remain in the Reception Centers in Darien and Chiriquí. 2021 has seen a significant increase in entries through Darien, with 26,992 persons³ having entered through the Darien border halfway through the year. Some of these persons remain in the Reception Centers of Lajas Blancas and San Vicente.



Dayana García, 14, and her family are rebuilding their lives in Panama City after leaving their home in Caracas, Venezuela. She is part of Programa Enlaces, a dance program that builds bridges between communities, helping young refugees adjust to life in their host country. Read her story [here](#).
UNHCR / Diana Díaz

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

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 Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH), Panamanian Red Cross, Fútbol con Corazón (FCC), and 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 trained 25 National Migration Service and National Civil Protection Service officials on international protection, as part of a broader strategy to strengthen access to territory and asylum process.
- The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR's partner, provided legal counselling and assistance to 136 refugees and asylum seekers in June.

Humanitarian assistance

- UNHCR's partner, The Panamanian Red Cross supported 394 persons (139 households) with cash interventions to buy food, medicines and pay rent. NRC also supported 69 refugees and asylum seekers with rent money and counselling regarding tenant's rights and obligations.

Durable solutions and livelihoods

- UNHCR, the Panamanian Red Cross and Microserfin, a financial entity, renewed its Cooperation Agreement to strengthen future collaboration for micro credit opportunities and financial inclusion for refugees and asylum seekers.
- HIAS, UNHCR's partner has supported 213 refugees and asylum seekers through economic and social inclusion initiatives and mental health services in June.
- UNHCR, HIAS and City of Knowledge Foundation held a "Refugee Market" for World Refugee Day, to promote the businesses, skills and abilities that refugees and asylum seekers have. All entrepreneurs participating in the market were strengthened through UNHCR supported livelihood programmes.

Advocacy and peaceful coexistence

- UNHCR and IOM joint campaign #SomosLoMismo continues its implementation, reaching locals, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants living in Panama with solidarity and inclusion messages. The campaign launched its first social experiment, a video that presents the experiences of Panamanians during the pandemic in 2020 and how these experiences are similar to those of refugees and migrants when arriving to a new country.
- UNHCR and FCC officially launches La Liga de Todos 2021, with the support of the Ministry of Education. With La Liga de Todos, 500 local and refugee children and adolescents will be part of training programmes focused on valued, leadership development and social inclusion.
- For World Refugee Day, UNHCR, the Ministry of Interior and Fundación Espacio Creativo presented the contemporary dance piece "Regreso al Camajorú". The dance was an ode to refugees and displaced persons worldwide, and the struggles they face to reach safety.

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 | France | Germany | Ireland | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America

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UNHCR Panama Operation

Refugees, asylum seekers and mixed movements

