

# Panama

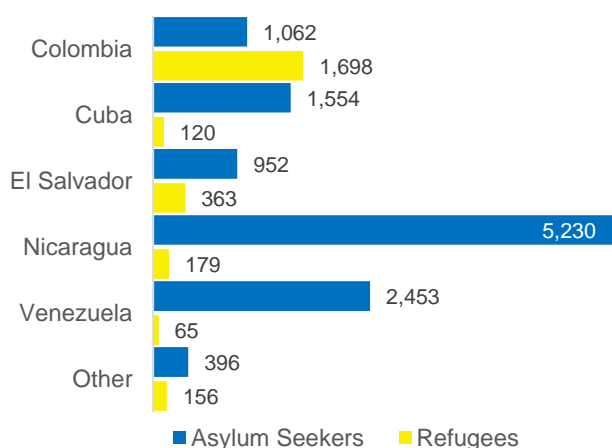
September - October 2021

Panama is home to approximately **14,200 refugees and asylum-seekers**. By 2021, **128,000 Venezuelans** displaced abroad are estimated to be living in the country.

**1,412** refugees and asylum-seekers have been provided with **legal assistance** and **963** people were **trained** on protection issues between January and October 2021.

**More than 900** asylum-seekers and refugees have been supported with multipurpose cash or vouchers, between January and October 2021.

## Population of concern\*



\*As per ONPAR, June 2021

## CONTEXT

The refugee population is mainly composed of people from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama continue to face exacerbated risks and increased vulnerabilities, mainly due to the loss of opportunities to generate an income. Consequently, daily subsistence and rent has become a challenge.

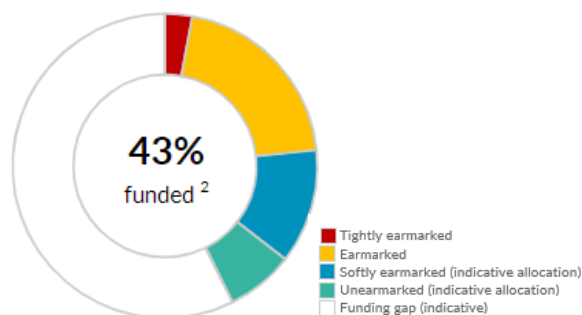
Movements of people entering through Darien (southern border with Colombia) increased considerably, with only small numbers requesting international protection in Panama, whilst the overall majority continues in transit northward. So far in 2021, a new record number of 121,737 persons<sup>1</sup> have entered irregularly through the Darien gap, including 26,650 children. In October alone, the highest inflow was recorded for the year at 29,604 persons. Protection risks and humanitarian needs have increased in Darien, particularly for children and women within mixed movements.

1. As per National Migration Service, October 2021

## FUNDING (AS OF 9 NOVEMBER 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

## RefugiArte, an art exhibition on solidarity and displacement in Panama



UNHCR inaugurated the temporary exhibition of RefugiArte at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) in Panama. The exhibition seeks to raise awareness about forced displacement through art and promote inclusion and solidarity. The complete third edition of RefugiArte is on permanent display [here](#).

Credit: ACNUR/ Diana Diaz

## UNHCR Response and Strategy

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. UNHCR closely liaises with the Ombudsperson's Office, the Electoral Tribunal, and the National Migration Service as well. 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 provinces. 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* (FEC). 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 together with staff from the Ombudsman's Office, NRC, HIAS, RET and ONPAR delivered jointly a 3-day International Protection Workshop **74 government officials** from SENAFRONT, National Migration Service, National Police, Ministries of Labour, Education and Social Development, Electoral Tribunal, SENADIS, SINAPROC, and peace judges participated in the workshop. Moreover, UNHCR delivered a training on international protection to **25 Human Rights Officers** of the Ombudsman's Office.
- UNHCR conducted **field missions to the Reception Centres in Darien** to monitor the mixed movements conditions. UNHCR will support various actions to improve the infrastructure of the RHU in San Vicente and equip the healthcare centre in Bajo Chiquito with solar panels. Additional community based interventions are being implemented in the transit communities of Lajas Blancas and Peñitas.
- UNHCR and HIAS delivered a **donation of construction materials** to the municipality of La Chorrera to support the building of the municipal **service centre for GBV survivors**, where asylum-seekers, refugees and host communities will have access to essential response services from state institutions and civil organizations.
- UNHCR through partner *Fútbol con Corazón* (FCC) trained **16 public-school teachers** on forced displacement, human rights, basic principles of protection and timely referral mechanisms for asylum-seekers.



### Humanitarian Assistance

- UNHCR through partners supported **271 individuals** with multipurpose cash (for food, medicines, rent payments) and/or temporary accommodations between September and October.
- UNHCR donated **5,000 blankets** to the Migratory Reception Center in Chiriquí for the most vulnerable people within mixed movements who must stay in the Center for a longer time due to illnesses or lack of resources to continue their transit northward. Furthermore, UNHCR donated **mosquito nets** and **solar lamps** to the transit community of Canaan Membrillo in Darien. Also solar lamps were donated, in alliance with the Panamanian Red Cross, to Lajas Blancas migratory reception center, targeting the sector where temporary COVID partners are maintained under quarantine.



### Durable Solutions and Livelihoods

- UNHCR together with City of Knowledge, HIAS, and the Panamanian Red Cross held the Urban Market of Refugee Entrepreneurship, where **20 entrepreneurs** showcased and sold their products.
- After a three-month training on aesthetic treatment techniques, **12 persons** graduated from the Beauty Course at the Maribel Technical School. Moreover, **18 people** participated in a livelihoods workshop on soft and employability skills as part of the *Talento sin Fronteras* programme.
- UNHCR through partner Panamanian Red Cross delivered cash assistance for access to education to **12 university students** enrolled in different majors.



### Advocacy and Peaceful Coexistence

- UNHCR through partner *Espacio Creativo* inaugurated the **photo exhibit *Travesías: del desarraigo a la pertenencia***, as part of the local cultural movement *FotoSeptiembre*. The exhibit is the final phase of a social cohesion project between refugee and Panamanian youth.

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

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**UNHCR Panama Operation**

Refugees, asylum seekers and mixed movements

